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**PETRIĆ'S (PATRICIUS) VIEW OF PLATO
AND ARISTOTLE ACCORDING TO THE APPENDIX
OF *NOVA DE UNIVERSIS PHILOSOPHIA****

In the seventh volume of his *Philosophical Writings*, when writing »de philosophia veterum« and reconsidering the tradition of Platonism, Leibniz refers to Petrić (in this text we shall use the latin form of his name – Patricius), the well-known Croatian philosopher of the Renaissance, as an »esteemed man« and a significant representative of Platonism, chiding him at the same time for working on pseudo-platonic texts. Patricius was the man, from whom one could expect to elaborate the system of Platonic philosophy. It follows from his remark: »Itaque saepe miratus sum, nondum exitisse quendam qui systema philosophiae Platonicae daret; nam Franciscum Patritium, non contemnendi vir ingenii, Pseudo-Platoniorum lectione animum praecorruperat«¹, that it was precisely from the man of »great spirit« such as Patricius is, that Leibniz expected to lay down the system of Plato's philosophy.

This text aims to address what it is exactly that Leibniz means when he refers to pseudo-platonic texts (which will prove interesting given that Patricius, in his foreword to *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, refers explicitly to *Plato's philosophy* which he intends, along with other pious philosophies, to present to pope Gregory XIV). This attempt is based on the insights into the Appendix to the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (that has not been translated and published with the Zagreb edition of this text /further: NUPh/ from 1979) that has so far received little care-

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¹ G. W. Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, vol. 7, p. 148 (ed. by C. I. Gerhardt, Olms, Hildesheim–New York, 1978).

ful study. It is thought that the reason the attitude so far afforded to the Appendix lies with the interpretations whose primary concern is with Patricius' attitude to Plato and Aristotle, whilst his interest in the texts of the so-called »prisca theologia« (published in this very Appendix) is usually thought to be of secondary importance. But it is precisely from this Appendix that one can see what Patricius considers important in the traditions that his philosophy is a continuation of, from Plato's and Aristotle's to Chaldaic and Egyptian philosophy.

However, as the said Appendix is a little known text, its contents will be outlined here.

The contents of the Appendix to the *Nova de Universis Philosophia*

In the first section, entitled »Plato et Aristoteles mystici atque exoterici« Patricius explains over a few pages the reasons why both Plato and Aristotle can be considered mystic, as well as exoteric philosophers. In the text, Patricius also analyses the relationship between Plato and Aristotle, as a relationship between a teacher and a pupil, the pupil that deviates from his teacher's instruction, only to return, in his old age, to the teacher's mystic teachings given at the Academy in the days of his youth, and to eventually write them down and publish them. Aristotle also appears as a mystic philosopher here based on the wrongful attribution of the text *Mystica Aegyptiorum*. The text about Plato and Aristotle as mystic philosophers is in a way an introduction to Patricius' publication of *Mystic Egyptian Philosophy*, published in this Appendix alongside the texts attributed to Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus, representatives of »prisca theologia« (and this is Patricius' edition of these texts that was famous in the Renaissance period); where Plato, and then Aristotle as the mediator of Egyptian and Chaldaic teachings, are seen as continuing this tradition.

Following the exposition of mystic Egyptian philosophy whose full title is »Mystica Aegyptiorum et Chaldaeorum a Platone voce tradita, ab Aristotele excepta et conscripta philosophia« and that he considers to be an »ingens divinae sapientiae thesaurus«, Patricius expounds Plato's dialogues under the title »Plato exotericus«, maintaining that a text of mystic Egyptian philosophy will alleviate the understanding of Plato's dialogues. He then returns to the relationship between Plato and Aristotle in the chapter entitled »Aristoteles exotericus«, whilst aiming,

through comparison of the philosophical attitudes of the two philosophers, to support a thesis given at the Foreword to *Nova de Universis Philosophia* concerning the piety of Plato's and the irreverence of Aristotle's philosophy, as well as the thesis on concordance of Plato's philosophy with Christian teachings and faith. Based on the latter Patricius demands that Aristotle's philosophy be replaced in schools with pious philosophies.

In the Appendix, or rather its translation (as well as the original) he lists all those pious philosophies that are offered as a replacement for Aristotle's philosophy in the foreword to the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* (and these include, alongside his own, presented in the NUPh, Egyptian, Egyptian mystic, Chaldaic and Plato's philosophy).

The primary concern here, though, is Patricius' overview of Plato's philosophy as whole (the Appendix states »universa...per capita Platonis explicata philosophia«), most of all regarding the issues he raises in relation to that philosophy, viewed here in the light of some of the contemporary interpretations of Plato's philosophy. This refers, in the first place, to the issue of his orally transmitted teachings (»unwritten doctrines«), to Plato's concept of dialogue, the issue of systematisation of Plato's thinking, the issue of authenticity and ordering of dialogues etc. Patricius' »later« view of the relationship between Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy is also of interest.

This elucidation of Plato's philosophy in the Appendix to the NUPh was motivated by a curious fact that Patricius, who is described as »renaissance Platonist« in most reviews of renaissance philosophy, dedicates four sizeable volumes of his *Discussionum peripateticarum libri IV* to a meticulous explication of Aristotle's philosophy and its reception (based on which his position in the history of Aristotelianism has been sufficiently valued). On the other hand, as a *Platonist*, he does not in any of his major works explicitly expound Plato's philosophy in its entirety, even though there was already an awareness in his time, the time that thanks to Ficino has the complete *corpus platonicum* in translation (and Patricius explicitly mentions this fact), of a series of unsettled issues related to Plato's philosophy. Patricius' short but significant elaboration of Plato's philosophy in the said Appendix will draw attention to precisely those issues. In fact, as early as the *Discussiones peripateticae* Patricius explicates some of Plato's teachings (his dialectic, his theory of ideas), but in doing that he actually expounds Aristotle's agreement or disagreement with those teachings, i.e. he discusses some

parts of Plato's philosophy but whilst clearly dealing primarily with Aristotle's philosophy. It is possible, however, to read from the *Discussiones*... themselves the fundamental blueprint of Patricius' interpretation of Plato and the tradition that such interpretation inherits².

Based on the insight into Patricius' own philosophy, that can be considered to be an interpretation of Plato's philosophy, or rather a possible form of Platonism (the whole of *Panarchia*, or the discussion of first principles, can be read in this way), as well as an insight into his appraisal of the whole of Plato's philosophy and its reception (the history of Platonism), it can be said that Patricius belongs to the tradition of Platonism in a double-sided way, and so it is legitimate to try to determine *his place in the history of Platonism*. This shall be the primary concern here.

The other concern here is to consider *his opinion of Aristotle's philosophy* (ten years after the *Discussiones*, the Appendix was published together with the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* in 1591) not only in relation to Plato's philosophy but the tradition of »prisca theologia«, based on the text *Mystica Aegyptiorum* wrongly attributed to Aristotle and better known by the name of »Aristotle's Theology«.

Finally, we hope to answer what it is that Patricius is really concerned with, regarding the determination of the relationship of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies to the »pious philosophy« texts published in the Appendix. Is it really an attempt of rehabilitation of Plato's philosophy by stressing its continuance of Chaldaic and Egyptian tradition of pious philosophy, based on which it would also be shown compatible with Christian teaching and belief content, or is his primary interest to promote a philosophical and theological synthesis, in the form of a »pious philosophy« the foundation of which can be found in the Appendix to the NUPh? The title of the Appendix itself that reads »Mystica Aegyptiorum et Chaldaeorum a Platone voce tradita, ab Aristotele excepta et conscripta philosophia«, calls for such a question.

In the first chapter of the Appendix Patricius deals with Plato and Aristotle as *mystic and exoteric philosophers*.

² A concise version of this interpretation can be found in the *Nova de Universis Philosophia, Panarchia, I, p. 1* (»Plato has risen above such mind, and has placed the origin of all things, their perseverance and return, into a certain one (a unity) that he also calls a good. To find and prove it he uses three methods. The first through denial in *Parmenides*. The second through an analogy with the Sun /per analogiam Solis/ in the *Republic*. And the third through motion in the *Laws*«.

Plato and Aristotle – mystic and exoteric philosophers

To understand the exposition concerning Plato and Aristotle as mystic and exoteric philosophers it is necessary to note the difference between these two terms – »mysticus« and »exotericus«. The difference between these two terms is the foundation of a further interpretation of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies.

As early as the *Discussions*, when analysing Aristotle's philosophy Patricius differentiates two basic kinds of texts: the acroamatic, esoteric, epoptic ones and the exoteric, encyclical ones that he also marks by a Greek term *ecdedomeni*. The differentiation is based on the content of the texts, type of argumentation used and the audience they were intended for. The difference consists mainly of the following: exoteric texts are intended for a wider audience, are more popular (encyclic) and once published are called *ecdedomeni*. The other, mystic and epoptic texts, expound the more secret teachings (*archana*), contain an element of demonstration, are intended for a narrow circle of students. The latter can, hence, be thought of as texts of internal character, or *notes* to be read during oral teaching (lecture) in the school. The differentiation of the mystic and the exoteric in the Appendix is not entirely coincidental with the same differentiation in the *Discussiones*, in as much as the term »mysticus« (and thus »esotericus«) is here used in a broader sense. It refers to the texts and the oral instruction, with the accent placed on the oral instruction and Plato's unwritten doctrines, which will *later* be written down or referred to by Aristotle, and the nature of those teachings. When Patricius speaks of Aristotle as a mystic philosopher, he defends the latter's authorship of the text *Mystica Aegyptiorum ...philosophia*, which is in fact his record of Plato's lecture on the teachings Plato received from Egyptian priests during his thirteen years stay in Egypt. In fact, Patricius explicitly differentiates three modes in which Plato acts: the exoteric, the mystic and the third mode (*mos*) of teaching and writing (»tum docendi tum etiam scribendi«) in which the teacher does not record anything, but teaches »viva voce«, and the disciples later record the lectures (»discipuli vero eas doctrinas voce traditas exciperent«).

Patricius on Plato's unwritten teachings

The stated differentiation can serve as an introduction to Patricius' elaboration of Plato's unwritten teachings. Since the 1950s and the intense research by the Tübingen school, the issue of the existence and significance of Plato's unwritten teachings becomes a topic sine qua non of every serious study of Plato's philosophy. Thus, it is interesting to see Patricius' attitude to this problem, that even today is a topic of bitter discussions and polemics.

The following can be stated regarding the above.

- 1) Patricius accepts the existence of Plato's unwritten teachings, which can be seen from the very division of modes in which he acts. Patricius crucial witness for this is Aristotle who speaks of Plato's *agrapha dogmata*. But Patricius calls upon Plato himself as a witness and lists places in the *Letters* – more precisely in *Second* and *Seventh Letter* where Plato expresses objections to written presentation of philosophy (and this is, along with the places in the *Phaedrus*, what is today roughly known as »Plato's critique of writing«). According to Patricius Plato testifies to »se nihil scripsisse neque scripturum de rebus scilicet divinis«.
- 2) Patricius already speaks of the content of unwritten teachings in the *Discussiones*. This is primarily where he refers to some testimonies that Plato wrote about *ideal numbers* (*ideales numeri*). As he is well acquainted with the whole of Plato's written opus, Patricius resolutely denies such testimonies, but leaves open the possibility that Plato taught orally on those matters³. He then lists *the doctrine of the small and the great*, »that Plato establishes as first principles«. This is, thus, explicitly concerned with theory of dyad or duality, i.e. with Plato's theory of first principles expounded through oral tradition or orally transmitted teachings. Patricius points out, however, that these first principles cannot be found in Plato's texts, and it can thus be assumed that they appeared only in lectures (*sermones*). In that he assumes that these lectures dealt with Pythagorean teachings that were transmitted only to the chosen students »in secreto«. These were, therefore, not even acroamatic texts (notes for internal lectures), but were not texts at all (»Non scripta ergo quaedam Plato dogmata in colloquiis secretioribus discipulis quibusdam tradebat«⁴).

³ Cf. p. 330 of the *Discussiones*, vol. III, from the Basel edition of 1581.

⁴ Cf. p. 337 of the *Discussiones*, vol. III, lib. VI.

- 3) Both in the *Discussiones* and the Appendix to the NUPh, Patricius refers to Plato's lecture *De bono* (*Peri t' agathou*), recorded by Aristotle from oral tradition, and he lists Simplicius and Philoponus' declaration on the matter by linking *De bono* with *De philosophia* («*Peri philosophias*»). He cites different testimonies that disagree on whether these are two different texts or not. The Appendix concludes on the matter thus: »...nos colligimus, Aristotelem dum Platoni esset benevolus, et ab eo archana et chariora colloquia admittebatur, libros illos de Bono et de Philosophia ex ore eius exceptos, scriptos ab Aristotele fuisse. Mysticam vero Aegyptiorum philosophiam, tunc temporis itidem a voce Platonis auditam et in adversaria descriptam«⁵.
- 4) It is evident that, when speaking of *unwritten doctrines*, Patricius distinguishes true unrecorded *unwritten teachings* that are only mentioned in the reports, from the orally transmitted teachings that were lectured following *notes* intended for solely internal use and the teachings that were recorded at a later date. When referring to the unrecorded oral tradition, the one that was never written down, but is only mentioned in the reports as Plato's, Patricius uses the terms »*sermones*« and »*colloquia*«. He distinguishes these unwritten teachings from the ones lectured according to written notes (thus in the third volumes of the *Discussiones* he points out: »Atque hoc alia res erat a libris illis, quos scriptos quidem discipulis praelegebant, non tamen publicarunt vocabantque acroamaticos, acusmaticos, esotericos...«⁶). Finally, he concludes that the reports on the orally transmitted teachings »[contain] nothing certain (*nihil firmi*)«.
- 5) In the Appendix to the *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, the text dealt with here, Patricius' attention is focused on one of the texts that was originally part of Plato's *oral instruction* (lectures), and thus falls under unwritten teachings from the second category. It is a part of Plato's lectures on secret teachings that he received from the Egyptians, and which were later recorded by the disciples. Based on Strabo's testimony Patricius determines the sequence of sages who transmitted these teachings. They were Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras and Plato. This is both the genealogy and the succession of the »*prisci theologi*«, which is to become a topos of the Renaissance Neoplatonists. In accordance with the tradition, Plato held these

⁵ Appendix, p. 2.

⁶ *Discussiones peripateticae*, III, lib. VI, p. 337.

teachings secret, and if he wrote anything down he did so in riddles (»in aenigmate«). One of the texts revealing these covert teachings is the *Mystica Aegyptiorum*, which is in the Appendix ascribed to Aristotle⁷. Patricius exposition regarding this text consists of several components and requires the explanations that will follow.

»Mystica Aegyptiorum philosophia«

Even though it clearly follows from the *Discussiones*, published in 1581, that Patricius does not think that Aristotle is the author of the so-called »Theologia sive mystica philosophia secundum Aegyptios«, which was ascribed to him during the Middle Ages, but that it was recorded by another one of Plato's disciples. This is argued for by the fact that the said text contains a number of teachings incompatible with Aristotle's philosophy⁸. Nonetheless, in the Appendix to the NUPh, ten

⁷ »Quae quidem omnia, et loca et verba cum aliis, manifestum faciunt, a Platone in colloquiis archanis, ac mysticis exposita fuisse. Et ab Aristotele excepta...fuisse postea conscripta et in hosce libros digesta, non aliter ac alii libri illi de Philosophia et de Bono«, Appendix, p. 3.

⁸ *Discussiones*, vol. I, lib. III, p. 25. »Nunc eos sumamus, qui eodem nomine (sc. Aristotelis) Latine tantum aut Arabice scripti aliquandiu sunt circumlati. Ac primo libri decem et quatuor titulo Theologia sive mystica philosophia secundum Aegyptios (quos Franciscus Rubeus Ravennas anno 1524 Damasci, Arabice scriptos invenit, latinosque fecit Petrus Nicolaus Faventinus) **Aristotelis non esse**, ipso statim initio produunt; nam ibi metaphysica appellantur et res tractandae proponuntur longe ab Aristotelica reliqua philosophia dissidentes«.

We know today that the Greek version of the text known throughout the Middle Ages as »Aristotle's Theology« is lost, but that there is a single Arabic version. It is concerned with an attempt to »amalgamate the Neoplatonist teachings with Proclean leanings with Christian teachings of Dionysius the Areopagite and Aristotle's metaphysics« (following Pierre Duhem, »Le systeme du monde«). The foreword to the text, that did not have a Latin translation, stated that it was translated into Arabic by Abd Almessyeh ben Abd Alaah Maimah of Emessa. In 1519 a Latin version entitled »Sapientissimi philosophi Aristotelis Stagiritae Theologia sive mystica Philosophia secundum Aegyptios noviter reperta et in latinum castigatissime redacta« appeared in Rome. The text was allegedly found in Damascus in 1516 by Francesco Roseo. It was translated into Italian in Cyprus by Rova the Jew, and into Latin by Pietro Nicolo da Castellani. As early as 16th century, some philosophers think the text apocryphal based on numerous places revealed to be of Neoplatonist authorship.

The content of the apocryphal text is partially revealed by the subtitles: »Quomodo anima unitur corpori«, »Quod omnis anima et propter quid est immortalis«, »Cur anima descenderit in mundum inferiorem«, »Quod deus creat sine tempore«, »Quid deum sit et qualis«, »Quo modo stellae operantur in inferiora quodque non agunt malum«, »Quod deus est summe perfectus influxusque eius in primo creato est infinitus«, »Quale ens sit intellectus agens et quomodo creet plura entia, cum sit ens unum invariatum«.

years after the *Discussiones*, Patricius returns to the wrongful attribution of the text to Aristotle. Is this a case of a mistake or is something deeper behind it? Should the same argument as the one Patricius uses to interpret Aristotle's decision to record Plato's covert teachings that he remembered from his youth be used when interpreting Patricius' return to the wrongful attribution of this text? Patricius says that Aristotle came to this decision as an old man (»senex«). Or should the motives for it be sought in Patricius' overall understanding of the relationship between Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies towards the Egyptian mystic, and thus chaldaic and hermetical philosophical traditions?

It is interesting that even in the Appendix, Patricius himself expresses doubt in Aristotle's authorship of the text, the strongest reason being the very teachings it expounds. In all of his exoteric texts Aristotle writes »contra Platonem«. This text, on the other hand, has him writing in complete agreement with Plato's teachings. Patricius aims to interpret these facts by establishing that Aristotle himself was one of Plato's disciples, present at the *secret* lectures, as well as Plato's friend who only in his old age understood the value of his teacher's lessons. He has reservations regarding this explanation because none of the interpreters of Aristotle, even among the Platonists (up until Ammonius Saccas) mention this text. But, he points out that numerous other Aristotle's texts lied for a long time »in spelunca quadam«.

In any case, Patricius sees the mystic philosophy of Egyptians and the Chaldaeans as one of Aristotle's late works⁹, because it refers to some of his earlier works, even though he also recognises Plato's teachings in some of the teachings it contains. However, it is clear from the text that it is based on Egyptian teachings. It is interesting to note that Patricius recognises some references from Plotinus in the text, thus holding it as a paradigm for Plotinus' »later« teachings.

Patricius regards the Egyptian and Chaldaic mystic philosophy, ascribed to Aristotle throughout the Middle Ages, as a sort of a compen-

⁹ »Sed credibile quoque est, eum, postquam libros de natura, de caelo, de anima et metaphysicos confecisset (manifesto enim hi, uti ante scripti, ab eo in mystica philosophia citantur) postquam odium in eum evomisset id ei tam in senio accidisse, quod Plato pluribus aliis evenisse, ait, qui ab eo udierant, quos ipse non scripserat sermones de rebus divinis, nimirum, scripsisse«, Appendix, p. 2.

The same page also states: » Quando scilicet Platone et Speussipo vita defunctis, ipse iam senex esset, et tunc cognosceret, quae sibi ante ridicula visa essent, esse vere admiranda«.

dium of philosophy. He regards it as a philosophy, not as a theology, because »Aristotle himself« names it thus in the text. Finally, it seems that the return to the wrongful attribution of the text can be explained by the significance that Patricius accords it. It is in this text that he finds the synthesis of all traditions of pious philosophy (Chaldaic, Egyptian, Plato's, and finally Aristotle's philosophy as mystic philosophy). He is probably trying to afford greater significance to this tradition by interpreting Aristotle, who at this time still carries much authority in philosophical circles, within its framework.

Analysis of Plato's written opus – the exoteric Plato

Patricius performs the true analysis of Plato's philosophy in the part of the text entitled as »Plato exotericus«, the part that follows the text of mystic philosophy.

The exoteric Plato is, according to Patricius, the author of the published philosophical texts, i.e. the dialogues. So the following chapter is in fact a *presentation of Plato's dialogues*. The issue of the true meaning of Plato's dialogues is one of the topics that even today give rise different opinions and hypotheses.

The first problem Patricius faces with Plato's dialogues is the fact that in his letters, and Patricius explicitly refers to the *Second* and the *Seventh Letter*, Plato says that he has written nothing (about the divine matters). But it is clear that the dialogues, i.e. written texts, are written by Plato. Plato's disciples and his other contemporaries testify to this fact. Patricius takes it as certain that the dialogues are Plato's published works – that they are »exoterici, ecdedomeni, emissi, encyclici«.

Patricius tries to resolve the dilemma concerning writing in the following way: when Plato, in a letter to Dionysius, specifies that he has not written anything »on that« (»de his« sc. rebus), 'that' refers to »divine matters«, which he has either not written about but has kept secret, or which he did not want Dionysius to learn more about. He was afraid, Patricius explains, that the latter might force him to hand over the books on the matter, or to write more openly about these issues. But the problem is not resolved. It seems, moreover, that even Patricius is prone to contradictions in his interpretation, for he explicitly claims that Plato wrote precisely about divine matters in his dialogues (which follows from his rhetorical question concerning Plato's dialogues »Nonne

fere omnes dialogi »de divinitate docent«?). Patricius elaborates that in the *Seventh Letter*, Plato spoke explicitly about the subject of those teachings that he has kept secret and has written nothing about as of »de primi natura« (»on the nature of the primary«). When Dionysius asked for an explanation of that, Plato replied »per aenigmata« and warned him that it should not fall into the hands of the uninstructed. In the *Seventh Letter* this subject is marked as that which is »honourable and divine« (»honorabilis et divinus«). Thus, Patricius tries to resolve the problem by pointing out that in the letters Plato said that he has not and will not write anything »de rebus divinis« in order to get rid of Dionysius, i.e. so that Dionysius would no longer pester him. For Patricius does not doubt Plato's authorship of the dialogues. In that he calls upon Aristotle as the main witness of this authorship, as well as on Plato's other contemporaries. According to Patricius, Plato published the dialogues during his lifetime (»eos a vivo Platone fuisse emissos«).

The exoteric Plato – the mystic Plato

Regardless of the fact that the dialogues are published and exoteric works, i.e. not the works kept secret, this does not mean that their character does not make them »mystic« in some ways. They too, according to Patricius, contain the mystic teachings »quae archana et vulgo abscondita sunt«¹⁰ (this also makes it clear why it was stated earlier that »mysticus« is in the Appendix used in a broader sense). In that, Patricius thinks of both the content and the form of Plato's expositions. In them he speaks »de Diis« (of gods) in two ways: either »per indicium« (in sketches) or »aperte« (openly), and this is again double-sided: either scientifically or by inspiration, as in the *Phaedrus*. The way »of/in sketches« is also double-sided, i.e. symbolic and mythical. Patricius finds ten, »and maybe more« such stories, both mystical and allegorical, in Plato's dialogues (»Decem enim et forte amplius fabulas easque mysticas et allegoricas eis intermiscuit«)¹¹. Plato uses all these modes of presentation »occultandae sapientiae causa«, i.e. *in order to conceal the wisdom*. Even though he makes his opinion public, he also hides it either behind the symbolic speech or behind mathematical figures. It is clear that, in this instance, Patricius relies on Pythagorean tradition of

¹⁰ Appendix, p. 41 v.

¹¹ Ibid.

the interpretation of the dialogues, the tradition that he inherits from Neoplatonist philosophers; by claiming »Hoc in usu apud eos (sc. »veteres philosophantes«) fuisse...«. It is certainly the case that Renaissance philosophers ascribe to ancient authors the guardianship over secrecy of some teachings concerning the highest matters as a common method. Patricius cites numerous examples from antiquity, stressing that Plato himself, according to Strabo's report, and as a student of Egyptian priests whom he has inherited the secret knowledge from, wanted to preserve the tradition and keep the knowledge secret, and has thus expounded them only through oral instruction. But the issue of a contradiction between writing of dialogues and a conscious intention of concealment of knowledge, of truth, arises again. Patricius find the solution in the following: it was common among the ancients »ut sapientiam quidem docerent, sed ita docerent, ut non intelligeretur, sine viva docentis voce«. They taught, therefore, in a way that they could not be understood without the lecturer's »live voice« (viva voce). What was said »behind a veil« required additional instruction in the form of oral teaching by the lecturer. This was well expressed in a sentence from a chapter on the sequencing of dialogues: »Morem nimirum antiquiorum hac in re est secutus (sc. Plato). Ut scribendo, intelligerentur; ut *sparsim et obscure* scribendo non intelligerentur prophanis, ignaris, atque ignavis«¹². Thus, according to Patricius, the dialogues »point beyond themselves«.

Of course, *different interpretations* of the fact which no school of interpretation of Plato fails to mark out, that Plato's dialogues often withhold answers to some of the key questions, are possible. Patricius holds that this is where dialogues withhold or conceal that part of the teaching that was to be transmitted to the students through oral instruction. This means that the dialogues express only partial truths and require an additional input through oral instruction. It is interesting that with such an attitude Patricius draws nearer to contemporary interpreters who hold that Plato deliberately doesn't express complete teachings, a position that indicates to necessity of oral tradition. Patricius points out the traditions of prophets and Greek poets, Orphics and, most of all, Pythagoreans, who concealed all knowledge (»omnia abscondebant«) »partim per mathematica aenigmata, partim per symbola«. Plato inherits that tradition. This is how Patricius sums up his

¹² Appendix, p. 44 v.

opinion of Plato's way of writing about the divine: »ita de rebus divinis scripsit, ut nisi ab iis qui eum audissent intelligentur atque ita et edita erant et non edita«¹³. Either way, Plato's dialogue in Patricius's opinion requires additional clarification by way of oral instruction; or more precisely, it presupposes such oral instruction. This is especially the case with the places where he withholds a definite answer concerning some questions regarding divine matters.

By »divine matters« Patricius means the theology expounded in *Parmenides*, the concept of creation, teachings on soul and establishment of elements in *Timaeus*, the teaching of first principles in *Philebus*. Although all these things were written scientifically (i.e. not in any of the three ways mentioned above), they are still *obscure* (»obscura«). It is mainly in the *Parmenides*, where Plato presents »totam suam theologiam« that Patricius finds a confirmation for his thesis that Plato's dialogues are difficult to understand. But what is really intriguing in this interpretation of Plato's dialogues is Patricius' explicit opinion that Plato's teachings presented in the dialogues cannot be understood »sine mysticae huius philosophiae, quam edimus ope«. By that he is referring to the text *Mystica Aegyptiorum*. As the said text was unknown before Ammonius Saccas, the preceding interpreters were unable to fully understand Plato. Patricius' opinion as to why it is that the Neoplatonists alone were able to properly understand Plato (i.e. he sees the Neoplatonist interpretation as the only correct interpretation of Plato) is interesting. It was the Neoplatonists who connected his philosophy with the philosophy of the Egyptians (»qui Platoniam philosophiam cum Aegyptia philosophia coniunxerunt«), and based on that »developed Plato's most significant dialogues in enthralling commentary«.

It follows unequivocally from the attitude that it is only possible to understand Plato with the aid of Egyptian mystic philosophy that Patricius publishes in the Appendix to the NUPh, that *it is impossible to understand him fully and correctly from his written work alone* (that is, Patricius denounces the principle of self-sufficiency of texts, given that a certain interpretation is considered a criterion of understanding). Thus, even in the Appendix the mystic philosophy precedes the text on exoteric Plato in the printed sequence.

But, along with using the mystic form of exposition for his teachings, thus not making their sense obvious to all, Plato makes use of an-

¹³ Appendix, p. 41 v.

other mode of occultation (»occultatio«) of knowledge. This is the *very dialogical* form of writing. That is, he does not write »exodice et continuanter«, but »dialogice at disputando«. Regarding the dialogues, Patricius stresses that Plato does not present his thoughts systematically (there is no ordering of matter or persons in the dialogues, nor temporal continuity; elsewhere he stresses that »Plato wrote the dialogues with no order, on different occasions and at different times«¹⁴). On top of that, the dialogues are not thematically unified. Regardless of this form of exposition, however, a *finis (scopus)* of his philosophy is evident in *all of Plato's works*. According to Patricius, all of Plato's works are directed towards a single goal: drawing people to the truth and thus making man more like God (which was, since Eudorus, if not earlier, an accepted interpretation of Plato's philosophy, contained in the formula »*homoiosis theo kata to dynaton*«). By the *sparsity* of dialogues (»sparatione«) and their thematic *dispersion* – »respiratione« – Plato aims to create an effect of »*obfuscation of truth*«. It is precisely this attitude that the dialogical form can be an organon *for obfuscation* of truth, that is most intriguing in Patricius' analysis and interpretation of Plato's dialogical form.

Patricius points out that Plato is not the originator of the dialogical form. It was used in stage poetry before Plato, and Zeno – the discoverer of dialectic – uses it as well. But the glory of discovery of dialogical form belongs most of all to Hermes (this is Hermes Trismegistus¹⁵), all of whose books were written in the form of dialogues.

Plato, according to Patricius, was also otherwise motivated to use this form, despite the fact that many have objected to it.

On the motives of Plato's use of dialogical form

What follows is an interesting harangue about the dialogue that begins with a claim that it seems easier to expound »*diexodice*«, freely »from the very nature of things« without conversations that interrupt the progression and essence of things, and is followed by a sort of apologia of Plato's dialogues.

He then presents the »*nobilissimae rationes*« followed by both Hermes and Plato when using the form of dialogue.

¹⁴ Appendix, p. 3 v.

¹⁵ On Hermes Trismegistus cfr. E. Banić-Pajnić »The sense and meaning of Hermes' Revelation«, Zagreb, 1989.

The first reason is related to the parts of human soul – *logos*, *thymos* and *epithymia*, where lies the origin of all human action. It is first and foremost possible to affect a man, and turn one towards the good, through conversation (»conversation«). This is precisely the goal of Socrates' actions. He affects the youth through conversation, thus turning them away from the malignant influence of the three kinds of wicked people – dishonest lovers, politicians and sophists, by acting on each of the said parts of the soul respectively. Patricius names concrete examples with the effects of Socrates' conversations in the specific dialogues. These conversations, through which Socrates tried to draw young men nearer to the truth, were later written down by some of them. In an extraordinary presentation of Socrates' activity Patricius particularly stresses the moment of irony. The foundational goal – to draw nearer to the truth through questions and answers, through guidance towards admitting mistakes and ignorance is impossible to accomplish by any other means but conversation. But these conversations, the ones with dishonest lovers and with politicians, which he uses to fight against false opinions, as well as the confutative conversations with the sophists that are used as a cleansing medicament, could only have been written in dialogical form (»Neque Plato potuit ea colloquia alia ulla via repraesentare, quam dialogo sicuti fuerant peracta«¹⁶). In this Patricius primarily sees in Plato's dialogues the reproduction of Socrates' style and method, the way that many contemporary interpreters see it as well. The dialogical form in Plato is determined primarily by the scope (»scopus«) of the whole of Plato's philosophy, this being the teaching of truth, the drawing towards truth. Thus Plato's dialogical form performs the function of accurately presenting Socrates' mode of action.

The second reason for Plato's decision to use the dialogical form is the fact that that is the form we think in. Patricius explains that the Greeks call the thinking (»ratiocination«) *dianoia*, and to think *dianoieisthai*, which is none other than the soul's conversation with itself (»sermo animae cum seipsa«, referring to the *Theaetetus* 190a). *Dianoia* is in fact »logos«, »sermo«. This is the process of asking questions and answering them within the soul itself. Thus, the *dianoia* is actually a dialogue. In the dialogues, then, Plato expresses the specific internal action of the soul. Contemporary analyses of Plato's dialogues reflect on the importance of this interpretation of the dialogues, as well (e.g. T. A.

¹⁶ Appendix, p. 43.

Szlezak: »but this is in fact the dialogical nature of thinking itself, if thinking is for Plato a conversation of the soul with itself«¹⁷.

The third reason for use of dialogical form is tied with human nature whose specific activity is – communication. In communication, an interlocutor in a conversation takes different attitudes to the thing discussed. He either does or does not know it, or thinks he knows it, but actually doesn't, or doubts it or believes it (it is obvious here that Patricius refers to Plato's differentiation of the kinds of knowledge depending on the degree of certainty). It will be shown that the dialogue is the most appropriate form of communication, of comprehension, in all these cases (»At dialogus omnibus hisce et illis est accommodatus«¹⁸). It is interesting that Patricius supports this claim with places from Plato's dialogues in which the interlocutors can be classified according to the types mentioned above, but such examples cannot be presented here. All this is very interesting if viewed in the light of contemporary discussions over the meaning of the dialogues (e.g. the »antiesoteric« interpretation of the dialogues or the one that sees the orally transmitted teachings as an adjunction to the dialogues).

The fourth reason to use the dialogical form is also the most convincing one. Patricius argues for the dialogues as follows: It appears that *diexodice* (Patricius here distinguishes two forms of exposition – an exposition »*diexodice et continuanter*«, a continued exposition, and an exposition »*dialogice et disputando*«) Aristotle writes better than any other author. But the texts that are not written in dialogical form do not contain any real proofs (»nulla in eo reperitur demonstratio; nulla est ratio, nisi probabilis«). Plato, on the other hand, provides plenty of real proofs. His conclusions are perfect for they rest on the axioms as their premises. With Aristotle nothing is certain, whilst with Plato »*rarissima ea sunt, quae non sint certissima*«. Plato never strays from knowledge, from wisdom, from correct thinking. Another thing is certain in his texts: they are always »*a divinis incipiunt plerumque in divinitatem desinunt*«. One can unequivocally read the essence of Patricius' interpretation of Plato from this claim.

The fifth reason for the use of dialogues is connected with oratorical figures (»*oratoris ornamenta*«). This is an issue of style, and »*quid*

¹⁷ Cf. T. A. Szlezak, *Čitati Platona*, Zagreb, p. 26.

¹⁸ Appendix, p. 43 v.

autem Platonis dialogis dulcius? Quid suavius? Quid salebrosius?»¹⁹ – asks Patricius. Thanks to this style Plato is never boring to read.

Of course, even after this discussion of dialogue, especially after stressing the fact that dialogue is the most appropriate form of communication among people, the question remains of how convincing the solutions of the contradiction, between the critique of writing and the writing of dialogues, that Patricius offers really are.

The order of the dialogues

Patricius then proceeds with an exposition of the progression of the dialogues, initially by recapitulating the short history of reception of Plato's works and the differentiation of the dialogues from Trasyllus to his day. He also mentions Trasyllus' grouping of dialogues into tetralogies and the total number of dialogues that Trasyllus cites, but at the same time he claims Trasyllus is not an accurate interpreter of Plato's opus. Grouping of the dialogues into tetralogies cannot be linked to Plato in any way, according to Patricius. He then mentions Aristophanes' grouping into trilogies, ending with Ficino as the most significant Renaissance translator and interpreter of Plato.

Following this review of the characteristics of reception of Plato's dialogues, Patricius concludes that Plato himself did not rewrite any of his texts at a later date, nor did he ever arrange them in any particular order. They were written, Patricius says, on »different occasions and at different times«. They are thematically divergent; there is no sequence of themes or characters among them. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be arranged and presented »*scientifico ordine*«. (*It is precisely this scientific ordering*, that he also considers to be the best one, that Patricius proudly accentuates in the dedication to cardinal Borromeo in the Appendix to the NUPh.) It is clear from this that any ordering of the dialogues is a subsequent ordering, and not an original Plato's one. This means that any given order of reading and analysis of the dialogues is always a sort of interpretation as well, which something that Patricius' ordering of the dialogues certainly is.

By relying primarily on Proclus' report about Iamblichus' ordering of the dialogues, Patricius stresses that the latter thought that what is most significant in Plato's dialogues is contained in ten dialogues. But,

¹⁹ Appendix, p. 44.

as no texts by Proclus and Iamblichus have survived, Patricius attempts to find out for himself which ten those are. The same goes for the overall ordering of the dialogues (»reliquos his interferemus, eo ordine, quem nobis ingenii nostri exiguitas dictaverit«²⁰). What follows is an analysis of content of Plato's dialogues, with special emphasis placed on those that he considers to be the backbone of Plato's philosophy. These are (and Patricius supposes that Iamblichus felt the same) the following dialogues: *Alcibiades II*, *Philebus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedo*.

The main criterion when establishing the progression of the dialogues is the development and realisation of the scope (scopus) of the whole of Plato's philosophy, and this what is considered crucial in Patricius' interpretation of Plato.

The goal of his interpretation is to show »quo modo homo quantum fieri possit, Deo similis efficiatur«. To fulfil this goal one must first understand what a man is. Thus, the dialogues with such an »anthropological« dimension are placed at the start of Plato's philosophy. It is clear, though, and Patricius explicitly states this, that Proclus' construction and interpretation is followed. According to this interpretation a single guiding idea (only subsequently to be found through interpretation) lays down the direction for exposition and understanding of the whole of Plato's philosophy, and thus for the ordering of the dialogues as well. So the ordering of the dialogues becomes the actual function of the interpretation.

Patricius takes over Proclus' arguments here and points out that according to Plato man's aim is to become like God, and this can only be realised once he comes to know which part of him is capable of becoming god-alike. Thus *Alcibiades* starts the sequence (»iuxta Iamblichi et Procli traditionem«). In this dialogue Plato sets the goal of coming to understand the essence of man. Man can only reach God if he comes to know which part of him can realise that aim, and *Alcibiades* shows that the mind is the part sought for. As an aside: it is evident that Patricius uses Ficino's translations of Plato, for in places he gives critical notices regarding Ficino's translations.

Generally, alongside a brief review of every dialogue (where he always stresses that which reflects the central aim of Plato's philosophy, that which is related to God and divine matters) Patricius cites the most

²⁰ Appendix, p. 45.

significant translations and commentaries from antiquity to his day, with the greatest emphasis on the commentaries of the Neoplatonist authors and Ficino. In doing this Patricius differentiates the dialogues into thematic groups, claiming that some dialogues aim to cleanse from ignorance, others to lead towards virtue, which cannot be achieved without knowledge. A prerequisite to reach the divine is to cleanse the soul from ignorance.

As he gives remarks about every dialogue, only those that appear interesting regarding Patricius' interpretation of Plato, will be presented here. For example, the one on the tenth book of the *Politeia* where Patricius says: »Quique ad imaginem universi conformatus, sub fabulosis symbolis eius descriptionem in X continet et proxime ad Deum nos evehit. Qui alter erat terminus eorum, cui in *Alcibiade* I. Mens humana iungi debuit«²¹ (emphasis by E. B. P.).

How important he holds the fundamental scope of Plato's philosophy to be is evident from the remark about *Theaetetus* where on page 46 of the Appendix he says: »scientia nihil videtur esse aliud, quam per philosophiam cum Deo coniunctio«, which is what he considers to be the very fundamental scope of the *Theaetetus*.

His opinion of *Parmenides*, already named the example of Plato's theology, is also interesting. Regarding this dialogue Patricius says: »In quem...universam divinitatis coniecit tractationem, multis eam, plus quum geometricis explicans demonstrationibus«²², pointing out that the dialogue was commented on by Proclus and Ficino. He, however, accentuates the meaning of the Damascene's comment (»sed multo magis Damascius libro suo de principiis«).

It is obvious that Patricius is trying to warn of a thematic connection between the dialogues. Thus, he points out that the *Euthyphro* follows the *Parmenides*, for it deals with the issue of piety »qua pietate ac religione erga eam homines deberent in hac vita esse affecti, ut cum Deo uniri possent«. And this is the scope of the whole of Plato's philosophy (»Quae universae platonicae philosophiae erat scopus«). In fact, Patricius sees the whole of Plato's opus as a circle, for (according to a certain progression selected upon a certain interpretation) in his last works Plato actually comes back to the beginning, i.e. to what is expounded in *Alcibiades*. That is, in *Euthyphron* he shows »quae vera sit

²¹ Appendix, p. 46 v.

²² Ibid.

erga Deum pietas«. At the same time, Patricius sees this fact as a confirmation that Plato incorporated Hermes' teachings into his own. For it was Hermes who insisted that it is impossible to be pious without philosophy²³. Thus, through interpreting Plato, Patricius once again affirms the attitude that is a somewhat of a motto of his entire philosophy. The last of the dialogues are, according to Patricius, *Criton*, *Apologia* and *Phaedo*, the dialogue that is to be read as the very last one («postremus omnium legi debet»). It is in this dialogue that Plato shows the human soul to be immortal, and thus, capable of uniting with God after death, and realising the scope of Plato's philosophy. But this, actually, is dealt with in every one of Plato's dialogues, says Patricius.

He reserves a special place for the *Laws*, that he says is an extremely demanding dialogue, that perhaps should not be included in scientific dialogues as does not »deal with universal matters« («non universalia tractat«).

Letters are placed at the end. Even though some ascribe further texts to Plato, in determining the authenticity of the texts Patricius adheres to testimonies of Diogenes Laertius, Suidas and Athenaeus.

Summing up his report on Plato's philosophy, both exoteric and mystic, Patricius says that it is everywhere infused with the divine («divinitatem ubique spiret«). The goal of such philosophy is to make man more like God, and this is in perfect agreement with Patricius' intention to introduce Plato's philosophy into schools to replace Aristotle's. Patricius aims to prove that the former is closer to the Christian doctrine and true piety than the latter. It is precisely in its goal that Plato's philosophy shows its origins »ex Aegyptia«. But, even the exoteric texts incorporate a lot of Hebrew philosophy. It is interesting to note that Patricius holds that Dionysus Areopagita, in Patricius' time still incorrectly dated, converted to Christianity precisely because of Plato, and thus combined the Egyptian, Christian, and Platonic tradition.

In accordance with his intention to construct a »pia philosophia«, when determining the character of Plato's philosophy Patricius says: the true scope of Plato's philosophy is »ut veri philosophi ad deum reducuntur et ei tum assimilantur tum iunguntur«²⁴. Thus, unification with God is the task set before the *philosophers*! Hence, Plato is truly a »pius philosophus« in Patricius' view. An interpretation of *Timaeus* follows, in a

²³ cf. *Foreword* of the NUPh.

²⁴ Appendix, p. 47.

thoroughly Christian spirit, according to which Plato says that God is the father of the world, creator of the soul and of the heavenly and the earthly (in this Patricius recapitulates Arnobius' interpretation). In that Patricius follows in the footsteps of the Renaissance Neoplatonists (especially Ficino). He cites the attitudes of early Christian authors towards Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, and stresses their leanings towards Plato's philosophy, wondering how it ever came to be that Christian thinkers accepted Aristotle's philosophy in the thirteenth century. Moreover, Patricius holds that even the »more recent Platonists« succeeding Ammonius Saccas expressed teachings in accordance with the catholic faith. To support this claim he presents in brief a christianised interpretation of Plotinus' and Porphyry's teachings on principles. But, at the end of this analysis Patricius doesn't fail to point out once again that what the »mystic« Plato taught were in fact Egyptian and Chaldaic teachings. Though he accepts the claims by the neo-platonists, primarily by Proclus', that Plato was an Eleatic (confirmation for this is found in the *Parmenides*) and an Orphic and a Pythagorean, he points out that the origin of all these traditions is once again Egyptian and Chaldaic philosophy.

Aristoteles exotericus

When analysing the exoteric Aristotle, Patricius claims first of all, and based on the incorrect attribution of the text *Mystica Aegyptorum*, that he contradicted himself if he was both an exoteric and a mystic philosopher. That is, his mystic teachings are in complete contradiction to his exoteric teachings. Aristotle's mystic philosophy is in accordance not only with the Chaldaic, Egyptian and Hebrew teachings, but also with the Christian ones; whilst his exoteric philosophy is contradictory to all of them. Giving an answer to »why Aristotle contradicts himself«, Patricius speaks of different phases of his relationship towards Plato as a teacher. This is followed by a series of opinions by Aristotle and Plato, where Patricius attempts to show through their comparison that Plato's opinions are in agreement with the catholic faith, whilst Aristotle's oppose it. However, what is primarily of interest here is Patricius' interpretation of Plato's philosophy that follows from such attitudes.

According to Patricius, Plato in fact teaches that God is a unity (exemplified in the *Sophist*, *Politeia*, *Parmenides*), but at the same time a trinity (»Deum esse trinum et unum«). According to Plato, God creates

the world out of nothing («Deus mundum fecit ex nihilo...»), where, according to *Timeus*, it was created before time (N.B.: this attitude was the issue of great discussion between Middle- and Neo- Platonists).

The world, as a body, has a finite potential. God is (according to the *Sophist* and *Parmenides*) above all beings and all being and above mind – a suprabeing («epekeina» according to the *Politeia*), is not moved and does not move (*Politeia*), God controls totality (according to *Timeus*), knows everything (according to *Alcibiades*), produces the soul of the world and the human soul (according to *Timeus*). Man's happiness is to be like God, and a good man can achieve this after death (according to *Phaedo*), after his soul has been cleansed. It is interesting that Patricius finds in Plato an opinion that people are resurrected after death (according to *Politeia* and *Phaedo*), and according to *Phaedo* good souls go to a delightful place after death, whereas evil ones suffer in hell.

Conclusion

In the end let us draw some conclusions concerning Patricius' view of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies as mystic and esoteric, his opinion on the relations of these philosophies towards a tradition of pious philosophy, mystic Egyptian philosophy and philosophies ascribed to Zoroaster and Hermes.

It is indisputable that Patricius, in his view and interpretation of Plato's philosophy, as well as in his own philosophy, inherits the Neoplatonist tradition of interpretation. But this statement does not exhaust his position in the history of Platonism. To determine this position fully is to analyse his attitude towards all those issues related to Plato's philosophy that have been the subject of discussions and polemics since the days of Plato's first disciples. These issues, particularly those that concern his unwritten teachings, are therefore relevant to contemporary interpreters of Plato's philosophy.

One can assert, concerning Patricius' interpretation of Plato's unwritten teachings and his dialogues, that Patricius is familiar with all the facts, i.e. all testimonies of ancient authors about the existence and content of Plato's unwritten teachings, that contemporary interpreters who stress the importance of these teachings also refer to. He not only acknowledges the existence of Plato's orally transmitted teachings, but also considers this to be Plato's primary occupation. The existence of these unwritten teachings is deduced first and foremost on the basis of

tradition, which Plato supposedly inherits, that is defined by the »custom of concealment of knowledge« (»Mos occultandarum scientiarum a Noe derivatus«). The second argument for the existence of these teachings is based, just as is the case with contemporary interpreters, on Plato's critique of written word expounded in the *Letters* (it is curious that, although he presents the content of the *Phaedrus* elsewhere, Patricius does not mention the segments of that dialogue that deal with the critique of written word), i.e. on Plato's own testimony. Finally, Patricius argues that the dialogues are »obscure« and thus require additional clarification through oral teachings. It appears that, for Patricius, Aristotle's testimonies, primarily the report in *Physics IV*, are of the greatest gravity. According to Patricius, *Plato's unwritten teachings are the most important ones, first and foremost because of their content* (these are the teachings about what is primary, divine, »more important«). But it is precisely on the issue of *content* of these teachings that Patricius differs from the contemporary interpreters. Patricius has reservations about the *proper orally transmitted teachings*, about which only second hand reports exist, and which, according to contemporary interpreters, contain Plato's *theory of first principles*, because he thinks that the reports are not reliable. In fact, compared to contemporary interpretations of these doctrines, Patricius *does not stress the difference between the written and orally transmitted teachings* (where the latter primarily deals with the theory of first principles) as much; something that can be explained by the way that he, in accordance with the Neoplatonist philosophy, actually incorporates this theory into his own philosophy. Unfortunately, no record exists of his explicit opinion of the relationship between his own philosophy and Plato's philosophy perceived in such a way, nor of the direct origins of his own philosophy in Plato's orally transmitted teachings. In any case, Patricius considers Plato's oral teachings within the schools as self-evident and complementary to his written opus, i.e. he considers the writing of dialogues to be complementary to oral teachings. The arguments he uses when explicating this view of Plato do not differ greatly from those used by the contemporary representatives of the group that stresses the importance of unwritten teachings for the comprehension of Plato's philosophy.

Unlike contemporary interpreters, Patricius does not deem it necessary to prove the existence and meaning of unwritten doctrines due to the interpretation that he inherits and the assumptions that such interpretation implies. In these assumptions Plato is seen as an heir of a

tradition by which to keep some knowledge secret, to even deliberately conceal it, is self-explanatory – and this in fact is commonplace in the framework of Neoplatonist philosophy that is adopted from Pythagoreanism. And it is precisely these secret teachings about what is primary, about first principles, about the divine that are the subject of Plato's oral teachings. But there is an important difference between his views concerning the concealment of knowledge and that of contemporary interpreters. Patricius stresses the deliberate concealment of knowledge, just as Plato does. For, according to Patricius, Plato had with great difficulty (perhaps even money²⁵) persuaded the Egyptian priests to reveal their »secret« teachings, and was reluctant to spread them further. When citing Plato's letters, Patricius does not pay as much attention to Plato's insistence that some things *cannot be explained in writing*, but as to his declaration that he has not and will not write »about that« (about the »divine« according to Patricius); and at the same time Patricius is searching for Plato's motives for such a statement. He is of the opinion that the statement is not entirely true for Plato's dialogues are (in his interpretation) precisely »about those things«, only enigmatically.

The secret character of the teaching connects and makes interdependent the oral and the written part of Plato's work. Thus, the dialogues, thanks to their (»obscure«) character become the foundational testimony to the oral transmission of the teachings. In any case, Patricius interprets Plato's dialogues in way that makes clear that they do not contain all of Plato's teachings. Following the Neoplatonist and Pythagorean tradition of interpretation of Plato, he explains that which remains unsaid in the dialogues by their mystic character; or rather, by the intention to conceal the deepest insights and knowledge, which seek an explanation, an additional clarification, in the oral teachings. It is thus unequivocal that Patricius also thinks that the dialogues show only a part of Plato's occupations. And such an attitude is not far from some contemporary interpretations of Plato. But this requires a few more words on his use of the term »mystic«, primarily concerning the contemporary insistence on the differentiation between the esoteric and the secret (differentiation that Patricius does not employ).

Patricius covers several different meanings with this term. Thus, »mystic« refers to *written and oral exposition of the teachings* (where the secret teachings are primarily orally transmitted, »in secreto«, through

²⁵ Appendix, p. 41 v.

conversations, and the »obscure« character of the dialogues refers to them), but also to *the very content of these teachings*, to the way the teachings were transmitted and so to the audience they were intended for (they are transmitted only to the chosen ones, they are »vulgo«, thus »abscondita« to the public).

All these differences can in the end be brought down to *two fundamental senses*: one is connected to *the origin of the secret teachings* (Egyptian-Chaldaean-Pythagorean) and the way/custom of dealing with these teachings that Plato inherits (to keep the teachings secret), and the other is connected to the very *character of Plato works*, i.e. to his mode of presentation in the dialogues concerning specific things, the »divine« (silence or an enigmatic way of writing).

If we were now to look closely at what the qualification »secret« really refers to with Patricius, the following can be established: respecting the fact that he deduces these secret teachings of Plato and Aristotle from Egyptian and Chaldaic philosophy, and that it is in fact an example of a Neoplatonist interpretation of Plato's philosophy that says everything there is to say about the first principles, about the divine and about ideas, then it really is a question what else, save for a mere phrase or an inherited legend, can be here seen as mystic. We are, thus, left with the other sense of »mystic«, connected to the character of the dialogues and certain teachings, and this is in turn related to the »places of silence« or »omission« in Plato's dialogues, the interpretation of which is a subject of lengthy discussions even today. This, on the other hand, is connected to one of the deepest issues in philosophy itself, the problem of expressing fully some of the experiences from the very edge of rational thinking. But, when Patricius states that Plato's dialogues are mystic »quia non omnibus sensa eorum erant manifesta«, it is clear that even he leaves the issue of the sense of »mystic« not entirely determined.

Even though he does not consider it necessary to respect the testimonies about orally transmitted teachings in order to understand Plato's philosophy, Patricius is particularly interested in one such testimony. Moreover, he considers *the given testimony* to be beyond dispute. This is the case with *Mystic Egyptian Philosophy*, that enables us to view Aristotle as a mystic philosopher as well, and that testifies to Egyptian origins of Plato's teachings.

This is where Patricius's view of Plato differs significantly from the contemporary interpretations. This is not a mere incorporation of Neo-

platonist systematisation as a restructuring or an interpretation of Plato's theory of first principles within his own philosophy, but is a view of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies as tools of interpretation of mystic, or pious Egyptian and Chaldaic philosophy. Thus, even Patricius holds that an orally transmitted teaching (that was later written down) is crucial for understanding of Plato's (and Aristotle's) philosophy.

From the standpoint of History of philosophy Patricius' ordering of dialogues, as a possible order based on a specific conception – the idea of what should be the backbone of Plato's philosophising, is also valuable.

The crucial difference between the contemporary and Patricius' conceptions is the view of the guiding idea behind Plato's philosophy. Patricius interprets it as a *pious philosophy*, and the thesis, ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, that »it is impossible to be pious without philosophy« could serve as the motto of his entire endeavour (when it comes to his own philosophy, as well as to the interpretation of Plato, and subsequently even Aristotle). Such an interpretation of Plato naturally neglects certain aspects of Plato's philosophy, most of all the significance that Plato ascribes to dialectic procédé, which is another difference with respect to contemporary interpretations.

N.B.: to make this review of Patricius' »Platonism«, or its place in the history of Platonism, complete and objective, one should compare his views to those of all early and late (Renaissance) Neoplatonist philosophers, concerning all of the aforementioned issues related to Plato's philosophy. But that cannot be the subject of this exposition.