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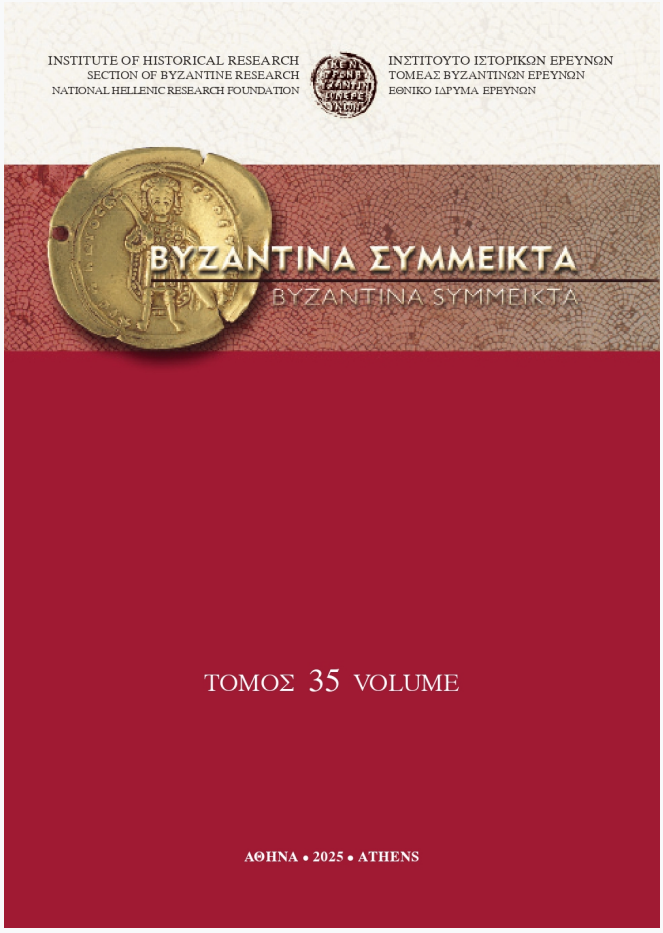

The Judge as Hierophant in Psellos' Or. min. 14

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Georgios Diamantopoulos

The Judge as Hierophant in Psellos' *Or. min.* 14*

1. Introduction

The Problematics of Psellos' Hermeneutics in General

One of the main issues in research on Psellos is determining his philosophical stance. He is most often presented as a Neoplatonic philosopher and an advocate for the exaltation of philosophy in relation to theology. Some researchers argue that he attempted to break with the Christian world, even if only covertly[1]. In earlier years, there was even a hypothesis concerning a 'religion of philosophers'[2]. Other scholars regard Psellos as a Christian philosopher who was not opposed to Christianity, while emphasizing that his method is purely philosophical[3]. However, a question that goes beyond

* I thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for their valuable comments.

1. A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia* [Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 68], Leiden/Boston/Köln 1999, 89-92, 117-127; A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* [Greek Culture in the Roman World], Cambridge – New York 2007, 202-209; A. Kaldellis, Byzantine philosophy inside and out: Orthodoxy and dissidence in counterpoint, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou et al. [Papers and monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4.1], Bergen 2012, 129-151, at 142-146.

2. J. Gouillard, La religion des philosophes, *TM* 6 (1976), 305-324; G. T. Dennis, A Rhetorician Practices Law: Michael Psellos, in: *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. A. E. Laiou – D. Simon, Washington D. C. 1994, 187-197, here 188, 191; D. Walter, *Michael Psellos: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz: Mittelalterliche Philosophie im Verhältnis zu Antike und Spätantike* [Quellen und Studien zur Philosophie 132], Berlin – Boston 2017, 36, 37, 90, 185, for the rejection of this theory.

3. See e.g. Walter, *Psellos*.

the relationship between Psellos' philosophy and Christianity concerns the genre of his philosophy: on which branch of philosophy does he place particular emphasis, and what is his basic philosophical position[4]?

In my recent studies on the hermeneutics of Niketas Stethatos[5] and of Psellos[6], the importance of hermeneutics in Psellos' thought was highlighted. In the second study, which focused on Psellos, it was argued that this constituted his preeminent philosophical proposal. The study also suggested that Psellos presents the proposal as his own, that is, as a Psellian rather than a Neoplatonic philosophy. The same study distinguished two main aspects of this theory: one aspect was more philosophical, wherein Psellos emphasizes the need for a philosophical method and philosophical allegorisis during interpretation; the other was more mysterial, based on the ancient world.

A basic tool of his hermeneutical theory is the interpreter's role as a hierophant[7], who is permitted to see and reveal the hidden mysteries of an adyton, in the context of the symbolic interpretation of a ceremony, modeled on the Eleusinian Mysteries[8]. In the aforementioned studies, these

4. Walter, *Psellos*, discusses Psellos' theology, ontology and ethics.

5. G. Diamantopoulos, *Die Hermeneutik des Niketas Stethatos*, vols. 1-2 [Münchner Arbeiten zur Byzantinistik 3/1-2], Neuried 2019 (München 2021), see the second volume.

6. G. Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική στα Theologica και Allegorica του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού* [Κόσμος-Επιστημονικό Περιοδικό του Τμήματος Κοινωνικής Θεολογίας και Χριστιανικού Πολιτισμού Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης – Μονογραφίες 14], Thessaloniki 2023 [https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/kosmos-series/article/view/9503/8866, access: 16.10.2025].

7. The hierophant was the high priest of the Eleusinian Mysteries; he had the right to access the sanctuary, from where, at the height of the ceremony, he displayed the sacred things, that is, revealed and explained to the initiated the mysteries of the adyton. See *LSJ*[9], entry ἱεροφάντης; G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton – New Jersey 1961 (1969), 69, 84-86, 226, 229-230, 236, 273, 282; K. Clinton, The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 64.3 (1974), 1-143 (on hierophantes 10-47); K. Dowden, Grades in the Eleusinian Mysteries, *Revue de l' histoire des religions* 197.4 (1980), 409-427. Therefore, the hierophant combines two crucial elements for Psellos' thought, the entry into the sanctuary and the revelation of the hidden sacred things, i.e. the interpretation.

8. See on the telestic consideration and the problem of the adyton in Psellos' hermeneutics G. Diamantopoulos, Remarks on Psellos' Attitude Towards the Patristic Exegetical Tradition in his *Theologica*, *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa* 66.1 (2021),

concepts were related to the intellectual issues of Psellos' time, particularly his confrontation with the mystical theology of the eleventh century and its chief representative, Niketas Stethatos. I discussed relevant passages, mainly in the *Theologica*[9] and *Allegorica*[10], as well as some passages in the *Encomium in matrem*[11] and other writings of Psellos'[12].

Psellos' Philosophical Background

Psellos draws the association between philosophy and mystery cults, particularly the Eleusinian Mysteries, from a long philosophical tradition. This tradition originates with Plato[13] and culminates in Neoplatonism,

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39-80 (https://doi.org/10.24193/subbto.2021.1.02, access: 16.10.2025); Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 283-448, 590-592, 594-595; especially on the matter of the hierophant, Diamantopoulos, *Die Hermeneutik*, 801-817; Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 32-33, 303-304, 311-320, 356-367, 436-437, 590, 595-597.

9. *Michaelis Pselli Theologica*, ed. P. Gautier – L. G. Westerink – J. M. Duffy, vols. 1-2 [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], München – Leipzig 1989, 2002 [= *Theol.* 1, *Theol.* 2]. I discussed *Theol.* 1.1.3-37, 117-128; 1.30.2-32, 152-158; 1.64.168-179; 1.70.3-16; 1.76.3-17; 1.78.22-27; 1.81.94-98; 1.94.2-25, 47-52, 87-93 and *Theol.* 2.1.17-21, 83-86.

10. *Michaelis Pselli Philosophica minora*, ed. J. M. Duffy, vol. 1 [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Stuttgart – Leipzig 1992 [= *Phil. min.* 1], 42-48. See for the ritual consideration and the hierophant especially *Phil. min.* 1.43.23-27; 1.44.2-14; 1.46.21-27. See also *Ἔκφρασις ἢ ἀλληγορία*, ed. A. R. Littlewood, *Michaelis Pselli, Oratoria minora* [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Leipzig 1985 [= *Or. min.*], 33. To these are added six works known as *Ἑρμηνεῖαι εἰς κοινολεξίας*, ed. K. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 5, Venice 1876, 525-543. Most important is No. 2: *Περὶ τῆς ἐν Βυζαντίῳ γυναικείας πανηγύρεως τῆς Ἀγάθης*, 527-531. However, their authenticity is not certain, see P. Roilos, "Unshapely Bodies and Beautifying Embellishments": The Ancient Epics in Byzantium, Allegorical Hermeneutics, and the Case of Ioannes Diakonos Galenos, *JÖB* 64 (2014), 231-246, at 234-235.

11. Psellos, *Encomium in matrem*, ed. U. Criscuolo, *Michele Psello, Autobiografia: Encomio per la madre* [Speculum 11], Napoli 1989, 5.319-338; 29.1828-1838, 1850-1851.

12. Psellos, *Χρονογραφία*, ed. D. R. Reinsch, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia* [Millennium-Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr. 51], vol. 1, Berlin 2014, 6.45; *<Νικηφόρῳ> τῷ γενικῷ, τῷ ἀνεψιῷ τοῦ πατριάρχου*, ed. S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellus: Epistulae* [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2030], vols. 1-2, Berlin – Boston 2019 [= *Ep.*], *Ep.* 134.55-68.

13. Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium* formed a focal point for the reference to the

encompassing Stoic Philosophy[14], Middle Platonism[15], and the Second Sophistic[16]. In this context, philosophical thought was deeply influenced by the initiatory language and imagery of mystery cults, which were used to describe the philosophical experience and to provide a theoretical basis for the gradual access to knowledge and union with the divine.

In Neoplatonism, references to the Mysteries –rooted in the Platonic theology of Proclus– became central, along with the use of terminology and symbolism derived from the mystery cults introduced by Plato. In particular, references aligning the hierophant of the Eleusinian Mysteries with the philosopher as a revealer of knowledge appear in the works of Plotinus[17],

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mysteries, see B. M. Dinkelaar, Plato and the Language of Mysteries. Orphic / Pythagorean and Eleusinian Motifs and Register in Ten Dialogues, *Mnemosyne. A Journal of Classical Studies* 73 (2020), 36-62 (49-58 on the Eleusinian Mysteries) and contributed substantially to the dissemination and elaboration of the lexicon of mystery cults from the Hellenistic period onwards. For example, in the imperial period, philosophers following Plato created models of philosophical initiation based on the rites of mystery cults, especially the Eleusinian Mysteries, see N. Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries in Ancient World*, Berlin-Boston 2014; cf. also C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandria* [Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 26], Berlin 1987.

14. Cleanthes, Chrysippus, and Epictetus, as noted by P. Boyancé, Sur les mystères d'Éleusis, *Revue des études grecques* 75 (1962), 460-482. See more in section *Egyptian secret teachings and ἄδυτα of Philosophy*.

15. Posidonius, Numenius of Apameia, and Plutarch, in which the influence of the Mithraic mystery cult is detected, see R. Turcan, *Mithras Platonicus. Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra* [Etudes Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain 47], Brill 1975.

16. A kind of 'sacralization' of Platonic philosophy is observed, coinciding with a 'mysteric turn'. The mysteric terminology was extended to many sciences such as medicine (e.g., Galen), mathematics (e.g., Theon of Smyrna), and rhetoric and became commonplace, see the articles in N. Belayche – F. Massa – P. Hoffmann (eds), *Les mystères au IIe siècle de notre ère: un tournant* [Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études, Sciences religieuses 187], Turnhout 2021.

17. Porphyrius, *Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου βίου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῶν βιβλίων αὐτοῦ*, 15.4-6, where Plotinus says of his disciple: *ἔδειξας ὁμοῦ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ τὸν ἱεροφάντην*, ed. P. Henry – H. R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, vol. 1 [Museum Lessianum. Series philosophica 33] Leiden 1951. "You have shown yourself at once poet, philosopher and hierophant." English translation from: http://www.ldysinger.com/@texts/0260_plotinus/03_life_porph.htm (access: 16/10/2025).

Marinus[18], and Proclus[19]. Mysteries and myths (along with their allegorical interpretations) were regarded as "two parallel paths leading human beings to the divine"[20]. Specifically, the rite was seen as a "mythe en acte"[21].

However, philosophy also shaped the conceptual structure of mystery cults, primarily through the process of platonization (as described by Turcan), since the obscure teachings of the mysteries required philosophical clarification. This process culminated in Neoplatonism after Plotinus. The *Great Eleusinian Mysteries* were seen as parallel to Platonic philosophy, whereas the *Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries* were associated with Aristotelian studies[22]. In the preface to *Platonic Theology*[23], Proclus attests to the direct connection between philosophy and mysteric revelations. The Neoplatonic *curriculum*, together with exegetical teaching, was accepted as a path that mirrored the rituals of the mystery cults[24].

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18. Similarly, Marinus uses the term in relation to Proclus, in *Πρόκλος ἢ περὶ εὐδαιμονίας*, 19.483-487: *καὶ γὰρ πρόχειρον ἐκεῖνο εἶχεν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔλεγεν ὁ θεοσεβέστατος ἀνὴρ ὅτι τὸν φιλόσοφον προσήκει οὐ μιᾶς τινὸς πόλεως οὐδὲ τῶν παρ' ἐνίοις πατρίων εἶναι θεραπευτήν, κοινῇ δὲ τοῦ ὅλου κόσμου ἱεροφάντην*, ed. R. Masullo, *Marino di Neapoli. Vita di Proclo* [Speculum], Napoli 1985. See on this passage also Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 565. For the hypothesis of Proclus' influence on Psellos' symbolism of the hierophant, see Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 564-568.

19. Proclus, *Περὶ τῆς κατὰ Πλάτωνα θεολογίας*, 1.1, p. 6.2-7: *ὃν οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοιμι τῶν ἀληθινῶν τελετῶν, ἃς τελοῦνται χωρισθεῖσαι τῶν περὶ γῆν τόπων αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ τῶν ὁλοκλήρων καὶ ἀτρεμῶν φασμάτων ὧν μεταλαμβάνουσιν αἱ τῆς εὐδαίμονος καὶ μακαρίας ζωῆς γνησίως ἀντεχόμεναι, προηγεμόνα καὶ ἱεροφάντην ἀποκαλῶν*, ed. H. D. Saffrey – L. G. Westerink: *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 1, Paris 1968. Proclus calls Plato a hierophant, because he reveals the mysteries of philosophy, as the hierophant of the ancient mysteries revealed the hidden sacred objects, see also note 1 of the editor.

20. L. Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, Chicago 2004, 60-61, see especially for Psellos 118-123.

21. J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos* [Collection d'études anciennes], Paris 1972, 172.

22. See Marinus of Neapolis, *Πρόκλος*, 13.321-322: *ὥσπερ διὰ τινῶν προτελείων καὶ μικρῶν μυστηρίων, εἰς τὴν Πλάτωνος ἦγε μυσταγωγίαν.*

23. Proclus, *Περὶ τῆς κατὰ Πλάτωνα θεολογίας*, ed. H. D. Saffrey – L. G. Westerink, *Proclus: Théologie platonicienne*, vol. 1 [Collection des universités de France 181], Paris 1968, 1.1, p. 5.6-7.1.

24. P. Hoffmann, Le néoplatonisme tardif et les mystères. Quelques jalons, in: *Les philosophes et les mystères dans l'empire romain*, ed. N. Belayche – F. Massa [Collection Religions 11], Liège

Aim of the Study

My intention in this paper is to analyze a text that further strengthens this argument, as it extends into the field of Byzantine jurisprudence. I will specifically examine Psellos' mysterical references in *Or. min.* 14[25], entitled *Εἴς τινα κάπηλον γενόμενον νομικόν* (To some tavern keeper who became a judge) as a further testimony to the importance he attributes to the language of ancient ceremonies and the figure of the hierophant in the context of hermeneutics. In this work, he extends initiatory language and imagery to everyday culture, even while speaking ironically about it. Psellos criticizes the son of a tavern owner who wished to become a judge[26] without gradually acquiring a legal education. In this context, he introduces the imagery of initiation and the hierophant's entry into an adyton. He also presents other arguments and images in this work, with the main point of reference being the material culture of the craft of the κάπηλοι and Byzantine oenology, in addition to Greek mythology. However, he places particular emphasis on mysterical argumentation.

Key Passages under Discussion

I quote the key passages from Littlewood's edition (*Or. min.* 14.31-66 and 151-161) along with English translations[27], to enhance the accessibility and clarity of my argument:

Belgique 2021, 193-203; see also P. Hadot, The Divisions of the Parts of Philosophy in Antiquity [1979], in: *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as Practice*, M. Sharpe – F. Testa (transl.), London 2020, ch. 6, 105-132, esp. 119 sq. See more on that issue in *Or. min.* 14 in section *Grades of Initiation in Jurisprudence and Philosophical Initiation in Plato's Academy*.

25. *Or. min.* 14, ed. Littlewood. Perhaps the *Or. min.* 14 is related to the previous work in Littlewood's edition, *Πρός τινα κάπηλον μεγάλαυχον καὶ φιλοσοφοῦντα διάκενα Or. min.* 13, because, firstly, the addressee of the speeches is probably the same person and, secondly, similar issues are raised (need for pre-education for philosophy and law). See also the editor's foreword of both works.

26. Although in Byzantium νομικός means scribe or secretary, or teacher of law, see *ODB*, vol. 2, entry Nomikos (A. Kazhdan), here Psellos refers to a scholar of law and mainly to a judge, as can be seen from the descriptions of the duties of his addressee, see *Or. min.* 14.2, 14-21, 54-55, 84, 169-170 (issuing adjudications); 23, 87-88, 129-131, 148-150 (jurisprudence's scholar); 91-92, 155-156 (legislation and adjudication), not excluding an advocate's duties, see *ib.*, 107-119.

27. I am grateful to Prof. Stratis Papaioannou for reading my translations that follow and for his very useful comments.

Καὶ Αἰγύπτιος μέν τις ἀνὴρ Ἑλληνικὴν ἑρμηνεῦσαι προστεταγμένος φωνὴν ἀπηγόρευσεν ἂν καὶ τῷ προστάγματι σωφρόνως ἀντείρηκε· πῶς γὰρ ἦν οὐκ ἐφθέγξατο πώποτε ἡρμήνευκεν ἄν; σὺ δέ, οὔτε τὴν Ἑλληνίδα γλῶτταν εἰδὼς οὔτε τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν μεμαθηκώς, οὐκ οἶδα εἴτε ἐκ τῶν παρ' ἐκείνοις συρίγγων ἐπὶ τὴν Στοὰν θαρρούντως ἐβάδισας εἴτε ἐκ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν ἀδύτων ἐπὶ τὸν Νεῖλον πεποιθότως ἐχώρησας. ἡδέως δέ σου πυθοίμην ποτέρα τῶν δυεῖν τούτων τεχνῶν, καπηλείας φημὶ καὶ νομομαθείας (ἀπαριθμείσθω γὰρ καὶ ἡ βαναυσία ταῖς τέχναις), σεμνοτέρα τῆς ἑτέρας καὶ τῇ φωνῇ καὶ τῷ σχήματι. θήσεις που πάντως τὰ πρωτεῖα, εἰ μὴ μεθύεις, τῇ νομικῇ, εἶτα δὴ προσχωρῶν τῇ ἐλάττονι[28] (οἶδα δὲ ἐκ τριχὸς τῇ ἀσχήμονι ἐργασίᾳ καταγηράσαντα). Ἆρ' οὖν, ὁπότε σε ὁ πατὴρ τῷ λέβητι καθιέρωσεν ἢ τοῖς ἐξαγίοις προσήνεγκεν, εὐθὺς δὴ καὶ μεταβαλεῖν οἶνον ἐκέλευσε καὶ τὴν μῖξιν ἐπέτρεψε τῶν ὑγρῶν, ταῦτα δὴ τῆς σεμνῆς ὑμῶν τέχνης τὰ ἱερά τε καὶ ἄδυτα; ἀλλὰ ταῦτα δὴ πῶς ἂν καὶ ἐπεποιήκεις ἐπιτραπείς, πρὸ τῆς ἥβης τε ὢν καὶ οὔπω σοι τῆς ἡλικίας χωρούσης τὰ ὑπερμεγέθη τῶν πράξεων; ὑπανῆψας οὖν[29] πρῶτον τὸν ἰπνολέβητα καὶ συνήνεγκας τοὺς δαυλοὺς καὶ τὸν κυπελλοδόχον διέκλυσας εἶτ' οὐκ ἐρυθριᾷς, εἰ κάπηλος μὲν εὐθὺς οὐκ ἐγεγόνεις, ἀλλὰ προὔκαμές τε πολλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς προτεμενίσμασι τοῦ βωμοῦ ἐπὶ χαμεύνης κατέδαρθες, τὰ δὲ τῶν νόμων ἱερουργεῖν μέλλων αὐτίκα ἐδαδούχησας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄδυτα εὐθυδρόμησας, οὔτε τὴν νόμων ἀρχαιολογίαν προμυηθεὶς οὔτε τὴν τοῦ Δυοδεκαδέλτου σοφίαν προτελεσθεὶς οὔτε τὰ πραιτώρια προλαβὼν νόμιμα, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τὸν Πανδέκτην ἀναβεβηκὼς καὶ τοὺς Κώδικας, οὐχ ὥστε παρ' ἑτέρων λαβεῖν ἀλλ' ὥστε ἑτέροις διανεῖμαι τὸ μέγα τῆς νομικῆς σιτηρέσιον;

Καὶ ὁ μὲν σοφὸς Πλάτων οὐ συνεχώρει τοῖς φιλοσοφεῖν ἐθέλουσιν εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τὴν θεολογίαν χωρεῖν, ἀλλὰ πρῶτον τὴν ἠθικὴν τοὺς ὁμιλητὰς ἐξεπαίδευε κἀκεῖθεν ἐπὶ τὴν φυσιολογίαν παρέπεμπεν, εἶτα δὴ τῆς μαθηματικῆς τούτοις τὰς εἰσόδους ἀνεπετάννυε καὶ οὕτω τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς ἐναρμόσας κανόσιν ἐκεῖθεν ἐπὶ τὴν θεολογίαν ἐπτέρου. σὲ δὲ τὰ τῶν νόμων ὥσπερ ὑπερβὰς τέμπη ἐπὶ τὸ ἄβατον ἄστυ κεχώρηκας ἐκ τῶν

28. I follow Prof. Papaioannou's suggestion for the lines 40-41. Littlewood's text: *– οἶδα δὲ ἐκ τριχὸς τῇ ἀσχήμονι ἐργασίᾳ καταγηράσαντα– ἆρ' οὖν*, ... See also the critical apparatus on lines 40-41.

29. According to Papaioannou the word οὖν should be changed to ἂν, otherwise the aorist does not make sense.

τριόδων καὶ τῶν βαράθρων[30] *προφήτης ἅμα καὶ ἱεροφάντης γινόμενος. καὶ πρὶν ἢ τὰς χεῖρας ἀποκλύσαι τῷ τοῦ σοῦ λέβητος ὕδατι τῶν ἱερῶν βίβλων ἐτόλμησας ἐπαφήσασθαι. εἶτα δὴ τὰς δέλτους ἐπὶ τῶν γονάτων θέμενος καὶ ἀναπτύσσων σεμνοπρεπῶς τὸ ἐντεῦθεν τὸ τῆς παροιμίας ποιεῖς, ὅνος πρὸς λύραν τὰ ὦτα κινῶν* **65**

"And an Egyptian who has received an order to translate a Greek word would give up the undertaking and, thinking prudently, object to the order; for how could he translate a word he had never spoken? But you, while you have learned neither the Greek nor the Egyptian language, I do not know whether, having taken courage from the Egyptian underground galleries, you marched confidently towards the Stoa, or, having taken courage from our own sanctuaries, you proceeded self-assured towards the Nile. Indeed, I would gladly ask you: which of the two arts, I mean the tavern-keeper's art and the knowledge of law (for handicraft must also be counted among the arts), is more august than the other, both in word and form? You will certainly give precedence, if you are not drunk, to the law, but then would join the club and give precedence to the lower art – for I know from your white hair that you have grown old practicing that unseemly work. So then, when your father established you at the boiler or brought you to the jiggers, did he immediately command you to change the wine too and allow you to mix the liquids, that is, these sacred and innermost things of your august art? But of course, how would you have done these things even if you had been allowed to, since you would have been before puberty and your age would not yet permit the most advanced actions? So, you would first light

30. According to Stratis Papaioannou the phrase *ἐκ τῶν τριόδων καὶ τῶν βαράθρων* is a citation. Indeed, it is attested in Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Κατὰ Ἰουλιανοῦ Βασιλέως Στηλιτευτικὸς πρῶτος* (*Or. 4*), ed. J. Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 4-5, Contre Julien* [Sources Chrétiennes 309], Paris 1983, 43.6-7, from whom Psellos obviously draws, as he is very well familiar with Gregorius' writings, and he cites them very often. The phrase is also found in Nikephorus I of Constantinople, *Ἀντίρρησις τρίτη*, in: *PG* 100, col. 492A. Psellos uses the phrase also in other writings, *Χρονογραφία*, 6.177.5-6; *Πρὸς τὴν σύνοδον κατηγορία τοῦ ἀρχιερέως*, ed. G. T. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli orationes forenses et acta* [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Stuttgart 1994 [= *Or. for.*], 1.1072-1073; *Ad incertam personam*, *Ep.* 488.42-43. There is no relevant reference in the critical apparatus of Littlewood's edition. I thank Prof. Papaioannou for this useful reference. For the terms *τριόδων*, *βαράθρων* see below, notes 87 and 88.

the cauldron from below and then bring the torches, and thoroughly wash the vessels for the cups. Are you not then ashamed if, although you did not immediately become a tavern keeper, but first worked very hard to the point of falling asleep on the ground in the vestibule of the altar, now that you are about to serve the sacred science of law, you immediately took on the office of a *dadouchos*[31], and proceeded straight into the sanctuaries, without having been initiated beforehand into the history of the laws, nor into the wisdom of the *Twelve Tables*, nor having received knowledge of the themes of the law of the Praetorians, but rather you ascended immediately to the *Digestae* and the *Codices*, so as not to receive from others, but to distribute to others the great provisions of law?

And the wise Plato did not allow those who wanted to philosophize to proceed immediately to theology, but first he trained his students in ethics, from there he referred them to the philosophy of natural phenomena, then he opened to them the entrance to mathematics and thus, after tuning them harmoniously to the rules of dialectics, from there he gave them wings towards theology. But you, as if you had overcome the matters of the laws like some narrow valley, have advanced to the untrodden city and have become a prophet as well as hierophant, even though you come from a *trivium* and from pits. And before you had even washed your hands from the water of your kettle, you dared to touch the sacred books. Then, after placing the books on your knees and solemnly browsing through what is inside, you do what the proverb says: 'a donkey, moving the ears to the lyre';"

Καὶ τῶν μὲν παρ' Ἕλλησι μυστηρίων οὐδεὶς μετέχειν ἐθάρρει μὴ προτελεσθεὶς τὴν Μιθριακὴν τελετήν· καίτοι γε νόμος τοῖς τελουμένοις τὰ Ἐλευσίνια ἐχεμυθεῖν καὶ μηδεμίαν προϊέναι φωνήν, ὅπερ δὴ ῥᾷστον ἄλλως καὶ οὐδενὶ τῶν πάντων ἀντιπῖπτον. σὲ δὲ φιλοσοφεῖν μὲν μέλλων μετὰ τῶν Μουσῶν, νομοθετεῖν δὲ μετὰ σοφῶν, δικάζειν δὲ μετὰ τῶν **155** *κρειττόνων οὕτω πάντα τεθάρρηκας, ὥστε αὐτίκα τὰς χεῖράς τε ἀπομάξασθαι καὶ τῆς οὐρανίας ἄντυγος ἀντιδράξασθαι· εἶτα τοσοῦτον ἠγνόησας ὡς ἡ τῶν νόμων ἐπιστήμη οὐ μόνον τὰ πολιτικὰ ἠκρίβωσε πράγματα, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεολογίας ἔχει μυστήρια καὶ περὶ φύσεως φθέγγεται καὶ τὴν ῥητορικὴν κατόπιν ἀφίησιν, ὥσπερ τὴν φύσιν ἡ Ἑκάτη, εἴ που* **160** *τοῖς λογίοις προσέσχηκας.*

31. That is "you began to carry torches in the sacramental ceremonies". See *LSJ*[9], entry δᾳδοῦχος and below, note 67.

"And in the mysteries of the Greeks no one dared to participate without first having been initiated into the ceremony of Mithras; although there was certainly a law for the initiated ones to keep the Eleusinian Mysteries secret and not utter a word, which is certainly the easiest anyhow and is not contrary to anything. However, you, while you are set to philosophize with the Muses, legislate with the wise, and judge with the rulers, you showed so much courage in everything that you immediately wiped your hands and grabbed the heavenly dome. Thus, you showed such complete ignorance of the fact that the science of laws not only investigates political matters with precision, but also has mysteries of theology and speaks of nature and leaves rhetoric behind, as Hecate leaves nature, if you had paid any attention to the *Chaldean Oracles*".

State of Research

To date, this text has received little attention, and certainly not from a hermeneutic standpoint[32]. Moreover, research so far has frequently highlighted the philosophization of rhetoric[33] –and rarely of jurisprudence– in Psellos' thought[34] However, the mysterical hermeneutic aspect of Psellos' philosophy of jurisprudence has not been examined at all, nor has

32. The studies F. Drexl, Ein Theopomp-Fragment bei Psellos, *Philologus* 89 (nf 43) (1934), 389-390; P. Maas, Psellos und Theopompos, *BNJ* 13 (1936/1937), 1-4, are not related to Psellos' philosophical-hermeneutical argumentation in *Or. min.* 14.

33. See the discussion and related bibliography in Diamantopoulos, *Die Hermeneutik*, 501-505. Basic among others S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2013; S. Papaioannou, Rhetoric and the philosopher in Byzantium, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou et al. [Papers and monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4.1], Bergen 2012, 171-197.

34. W. Wolska-Conus, L'école de droit et l'enseignement du droit à Byzance au XIe siècle: Xiphilin et Psellos, *TM* 7 (1979), 1-107, at 57-60, 69-70, 78 (she pointed out Psellos' attempt to philosophize jurisprudence; brief reference to jurisprudence's mysticism); E. A. Fisher, Michael Psellos on the "usual" miracle at Blachernae, the law, and Neoplatonism, in: *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. D. Sullivan et al. [The Medieval Mediterranean 92], Boston· S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellus: Epistulae*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2030 Leiden 2012, 187-204; Dennis, Rhetorician, (especially 187-189), A. Kazhdan, Some Observations on the Byzantine Concept of Law: Three Authors of the Ninth through the Twelfth Centuries, in: *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. A. E. Laiou – D. Simon, Washington D. C. 1994, 199-216 (especially 208-209).

its inclusion in the symbolism of ritual initiation and the figure of the hierophant. In addition, *Or. min.* 14 constitutes valuable evidence for the structure of byzantine legal studies, which has not been adequately used in research until now.

Jurisprudence and Philosophy in Psellos' Thought

However, we must first briefly examine the relationship between philosophy and law in Psellos' thought[35]. The Byzantine philosopher, in *Or. min.* 14, makes only a few allusions to this issue and includes only one reference to the mythical legislators, Minos and Rhadamanthys[36], whom he apparently regards as models of legislation. To seek further evidence regarding Psellos' views on the connection between law and philosophy, we may turn to *Or. fun.* 3, his *Funeral Oration for Patriarch Xiphilinos*[37]. It can be assumed that Xiphilinos (1064-1075) serves as a counterexample to Psellos' criticism of the tavernkeeper's son[38].

Psellos raises the issue of the relationship between law and philosophy in *Or. fun.* 3, as well as in other works. He establishes a hierarchy, placing philosophy above law[39]. The former concerns inner beauty, highlighting

35. On that issue in Neoplatonism see D. J. O'Meara, Political Theory, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, ed. S. Slaveva Griffin – P. Remes [Routledge handbooks in philosophy], London 2014, 471-483, on law especially 474-475.

36. *Or. min.* 14.91-92. See also M. Goarzin, Philosophes et législateurs : les références aux législateurs dans le néoplatonisme de l'Antiquité tardive, *Cahiers des études anciennes* 57.1 (2020), 105-117.

37. *Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν μακαριώτατον πατριάρχην κῦρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ξιφιλῖνον*, ed. I. Polemis, *Michael Psellus: Orationes funebres* [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2013] [= *Or. fun.*], Berlin/Boston 2014, 3.

38. However, Wolska-Conus, L'école, 55, 58 considers that Psellos in *Or. fun.* 3 in the person of Xiphilinus also presents his own philosophical concepts and methods regarding the law. I consider it important that Psellos in *Or. fun.* 3 exalts not only the knowledge and correct use of the rules of philosophy, but that Xiphilinos applied this method without having been taught it but *discovered* it through his own efforts, see *Or. fun.* 3.6.6-9, 28-33, 40-44. In other words, he raises an issue that, as we will see, is particularly important for the text I am examining in this study, namely the discovery of a truth that is considered rather hidden.

39. *Or. fun.* 3.5.30-39; 6.28-33; 22.52-55; *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Ἰωάννην τὸν θεοσεβέστατον μητροπολίτην Εὐχαϊτῶν καὶ πρωτοσύγκελλον*, ed. G. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli: Orationes panegyricae* [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Stutgardiae/Lipsiae 1994 [= *Or. pan.*], 17.232-242.

the deeper meaning of the word, while the latter deals with earthly matters[40]. Law, according to Psellos, requires a philosophical foundation based on its methods[41]. Consequently, he exalts the use of philosophical methods[42], particularly dialectic[43], in which the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy is evident[44]. He also values the application of First Philosophy

40. *Λόγος εἰς τὸν βασιλέα κῦρ Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Μονομάχον*, *Or. pan.* 1.22-24, 31-34. See on these passages Kazhdan, Observations, 208.

41. *Ὅτι φιλοσοφίας μέτοχος ἡ νομικὴ ἐπιστήμη*, ed. G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos* [Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 16], München 1973, Appendix, Text VI.1 with Dennis, Rhetorician, 188. Psellos there refers to division (*διαιρετικὴ μέθοδος*), definition (*ὁριστική*), demonstration (*ἀποδεικνύουσαν*) and reduction (*ἀναλύουσαν*). See discussion on the work and on the passage 1-9, where the relation of philosophy to jurisprudence (dialectical methodology) in Wolska-Conus, L'école, 69-70, 77-78. The researcher considers that the writing has not been substantially influenced by philosophy, despite its sophisticated title. She considers that, in general, there are only few elements of Psellos' personal contribution in his legal writings. He follows the tradition of the classical manuals of jurisprudence; however, he colors them with some philosophical thoughts while remaining in generalities.

42. *Or. fun.* 3.6.13-28, 33-46; 22.41-52. He also invokes Pseudo-Aristotle's theory of winds for the division of laws, see *Or. fun.* 3.22.28-36; see the critical apparatus for Ps.-Arist., *Περὶ κόσμου*, ed. W. L. Lorimer, *Aristotelis qui fertur libellus de mundo*, Paris 1933, 394b13-395a5. But this too is part of a discussion about philosophical methods.

43. *Or. fun.* 3.6.6-9. In verses 9-13 he refers to the need to use the philosophical methods of division and reduction, definition and demonstration in all sciences, implying, of course, also in law. These are the methods that we saw in *Ὅτι φιλοσοφίας μέτοχος ἡ νομικὴ ἐπιστήμη*. At the same point, however, Psellos teaches that there is something that is above them, which should not be approached, because it is supernatural. This connects us more closely with what Psellos teaches in more detail in *Or. min.* 14, see *Jurisprudence and the Chaldean Oracles*. See also *Or. fun.* 3.22.36-40 where he also refers to the relationship of the methods of division and reduction with First Philosophy and *Theol.* 1.3.178-180..

44. See discussion of some of the mentioned passages, namely *Or. fun.* 3.6.1-45; 22.18-55 in Wolska-Conus, L'école, 58-60 (based on Sathas' edition, *Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 4, Paris 1874, 427.26-429.8 and 453.27-455.4 respectively). She identified in these passages the philosophical principles of a) the reduction of multiplicity to a single principle, b) the dialectic of definiteness (*πέρατος*) and indefiniteness (*ἀπείρου*), c) the methods of division (*διαιρέσεως*), reduction (*ἀναλύσεως*), definition (*ὁριστικῆς*) and demonstration (*ἀποδείξεως*), d) the mean term (*μεσότης*), which are attested in the works of Proclus, *Στοιχείωσις Θεολογική*, ed. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of theology*, Oxford 1963[2] (1971), prop. 21, 89, 117, 148 and *Ὑπόμνημα εἰς Α΄ Εὐκλείδου στοιχείων*, ed. G. Friedlein,

in law, namely, the reduction of everything to a primary cause[45]. However, Psellos teaches that philosophy and law are interdependent. Despite the superiority of philosophy, it also requires jurisprudence and rhetoric to achieve completeness in thought and speech[46]. Psellos himself stated that he served both disciplines, considering engagement with law necessary despite the supremacy of philosophy[47]. In fact, Kazhdan argues that in Psellos' thought, philosophy, rhetoric, and the science of law are sister disciplines. Nevertheless, jurisprudence also retains certain practical aspects[48].

In what follows, I examine the unique contributions of *Or. min.* 14 to this philosophical view of jurisprudence, in which the language of the ancient mysteries dominates.

2. Mysticism of Egyptian Culture and of Tavern-keeper's Art (*καπηλεία*)

Egyptian secret teachings and ἄδυτα of Philosophy

Psellos criticizes the former innkeeper by providing the following example: If an Egyptian who had never spoken Greek was ordered to interpret Greek into Egyptian, he would certainly object[49]. Psellos therefore likens the process of transitioning from a practical art to a science to an act of interpretation treating the two fields (the art of innkeeping and the law) as foreign languages belonging to different cultures. Applying the example of

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Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarii [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Lipsiae 1873 (Hildesheim 1967), pp. 42-43. She discussed the application of these principles to the mentioned passages in *Or. fun.* 3, exposing their content, but she considered it difficult to ascertain what the real relationship is between Neoplatonism and jurisprudence according to Psellos. She also found arbitrariness in his theoretical thinking, as it is based only on approximations and confusions of terms and procedures.

45. *Or. fun.* 3.22.18-28. See also Dennis, Rhetorician, 188. Psellos also includes the *Chaldean Oracles* in this method, see also Wolska-Conus, L'école, 58-59.

46. *Or. fun.* 3.14.16-21; 22.52-55; 23.1-3; Ioannis Xiphilinos is presented as the model of this synthesis; see also *Or. pan.* 17.215-243 with Dennis, Rhetorician, 187-188 and *Phil. min.* 1.2.55-96.

47. *Ὅτε παρῃτήσατο τὴν τοῦ πρωτασηκρῆτις ἀξίαν*, *Or. min.* 8.121-134 with Kazhdan, Observations, 208-209.

48. Kazhdan, Observations, 209.

49. *Or. min.* 14.31-33.

interpretation to the case of the judge, he introduces a metaphor based on the Egyptian underground galleries (σύριγγες) and the Nile River. Σύριγγες were the underground passages leading to the tombs of the Egyptian kings in Thebes, Egypt[50]. These were connected to the Nile because of their proximity; to reach them, one had to cross the river[51].

According to Psellos, without the tavern-keeper's son knowing either language (i.e., Egyptian or Greek), he advanced either from the σύριγγες of the Egyptians to Stoic philosophy[52] or from the Greek adyta to the Nile. The Byzantine philosopher states that he does not know which of the two actually occurred[53]. In these metaphors, the Egyptian galleries and the Nile symbolize the art of the innkeeper, while philosophy is associated with jurisprudence. In both cases, there is a graduation from a lower to a higher level (Nile and σύριγγες; Stoic philosophy and adyta). This is shown by the fact that from the Nile one reached the σύριγγες, and because the adyton requires higher forms of knowledge, as we shall see below. According to Psellos' metaphor, the tavern-keeper's son confused the two cultures, considering them to be identical. Not only did he make the mistake of acting as an interpreter of languages he did not know, but he also considered himself capable of doing something more advanced. In other words, the judge is criticized for believing his past as a tavern keeper sufficient for his transition to legal science, without acquiring a legal education. In fact, it seems that Psellos is also questioning the judge's knowledge of καπηλεία. Moreover, Psellos acknowledges that the two disciplines are fundamentally distinct, akin to two foreign cultures.

However, they share certain characteristics that establish a common denominator. Noteworthy is the invocation of the philosophy's adyton (*ἐκ*

50. See *LSJ*[9], entry σῦριγξ, "subterranean passage, gallery, of the burial vaults of the Egyptian kings at Thebes".

51. See Pausanias, *Ἑλλάδος περιήγησις*, 1.42.3: *ἐν Θήβαις ταῖς Αἰγυπτίαις, διαβᾶσι τὸν Νεῖλον πρὸς τὰς Σύριγγας καλουμένας, εἶδον ἔτι καθήμενον ἄγαλμα ἠχοῦν*, ed. M. H. Rocha-Pereira, *Pausaniae Graeciae descriptio*, vol. 1: libri 1-4, [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Leipzig 1989[2]. Psellos uses the mentioned passage in *Ἕτερος λόγος πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν βασιλέα [τὸν Μονομάχον]*, *Or. pan.* 4.404-405; see also the critical apparatus.

52. *Or. min.* 14.34-35: *ἐκ τῶν παρ' ἐκείνοις συρίγγων ἐπὶ τὴν Στοὰν θαρρούντως ἐβάδισας.*

53. *Or. min.* 14.33-36.

τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν ἀδύτων), by which he means jurisprudence. In fact, Stoic philosophy is considered a kind of precursor to jurisprudence. Psellos places the adyton of law at the pinnacle of his hierarchical scheme, since, as will be discussed later, it is presented as the preeminent space occupied by the highest figure in the hierarchy of initiation, namely, the hierophant. Consequently, Stoic philosophy constitutes a preliminary stage.

But why does Psellos place the Stoa within a mystery framework? It is important to note that, among the Stoics, philosophy incorporated concepts drawn from the imagery of initiation within the context of mystery cults[54]. The foundation of allegory is found in Stoicism[55]. which led to its establishment as a dominant philosophical tool for centuries. Allegoresis, primarily in the sense of revealing hidden meanings, is inextricably linked to the concept of the hierophant, the sanctuary, and initiation, as well as to the methods of philosophy in Psellos' thought more broadly, as I have already shown[56]. These factors may explain Psellos' reference to Stoic philosophy in relation to the adyton, as they render Stoic philosophy and the adyton of law conceptually compatible. Therefore, law approaches philosophy through an initiatic framework in which a hidden element (adyton) is emphasized.

Also important is Psellos' acknowledgment that Egyptian culture possesses hidden aspects. I emphasize the reference to the dark and inaccessible σύριγγες, an implication that the Egyptians also have some obscure culture, which Psellos also invokes elsewhere[57]. Of course, this obscure character of Egyptian wisdom requires philosophical interpretation to render it intelligible.

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54. See R. Brouwer, *The Stoic sage: the early Stoics on wisdom, sagehood and Socrates* [Cambridge Classical Studies], New York 2014, 65, 85-88.

55. See L. Brisson, *Philosophers*, 117.

56. See Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 428-435, 436-437, 441-443.

57. References to Egyptian galleries are also attested in *Theol.* 1.79.131-132. Psellos, as stated in the critical apparatus, is based on a passage of Synesius' *Τῷ ἀδελφῷ*, ed. A. Garzya, *Synésios de Cyrène, Correspondance, vol. 3: Lettres LXIV-CLVI* [Collection des universités de France 397.3], Paris 2000², *Ep.* 104.109. I have some reservations, since Synesius does not mention the Nile; therefore, the most likely source is the mentioned passage of Pausanias. Psellos states in the epilogue of his interpretation that if his solution is not considered successful, it must be hidden in the Egyptians' σύριγγες, where it will be covered by deep darkness. Here again, therefore, the σύριγγες are presented as part of an inferior culture, while the secret element is emphasized.

Egypt was regarded as a land of wisdom, occult knowledge, and magic in the ancient world. Pythagoras and Plato traveled to Egypt to study under Egyptian priests[58]. Neoplatonic philosophers, who largely constitute the philosophical background of Psellos, attached particular importance to Egyptian theology and culture. The latter provided a foundation for justifying and conceptualizing theurgy in relation to Greek philosophy, as seen in Iamblichus[59]. Proclus also traveled to Egypt to undergo initiation into Egyptian rituals[60]. Plotinus highlights key characteristics of Egyptian wisdom, particularly its secrecy and symbolic discourse[61]. A similar perspective is evident in Psellos' writings[62]. Thus, secrecy within an initiatory and telestic framework is a recurring element in ancient philosophy and in Psellos' favorable consideration of Egyptian theology. This secret dimension of the ancient mystery cults forms the common denominator between Egyptian culture, law, and philosophy[63].

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58. For Pythagoras see Porphyrius, *Πυθαγόρου βίος*, ed. É. des Places, *Porphyre: Vie de Pythagore, Lettre à Marcella*, Paris 1982, 6-9. See also: Ch. Riedweg, *Pythagoras: His Life, Teachings, and Influence*, transl. St. Rendall, Ithaca 2005, 7. For Plato see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, ed. T. Dorandi, *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers* [Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 50], Cambridge 2013, 3.6.65. See also J. McEvoy, Plato and the Wisdom of Egypt, *Irish Philosophical Journal* 1.2 (1984), 1-24; Th. Obenga, *L'Égypte, la Grèce et l'école d'Alexandrie: histoire interculturelle dans l'Antiquité, aux sources égyptiennes de la philosophie grecque*, Gif-sur-Yvette 2005, 101-121; *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike*, ed. H. Holzhey, vol. 2.2: M. Erler, *Platon*, Basel 2007, 46-48.

59. Iamblichus, *Περὶ τῶν αἰγυπτίων μυστηρίων*, ed. É. des Places, *Jamblique: Les mystères d'Égypte*, Paris 1966, 1.1-2 and 7.4-5. On Iamblichus and the Egyptian theology see also D. Clark, Iamblichus' Egyptian Neoplatonic Theology in *De Mysteriis*, *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2.2 (2008), 164-205. [Downloaded at 05/03/2025]

60. Marinus of Neapolis, *Πρόκλος*, 8.188-192, with L. Siorvanes, Proclus' life, works, and education of the soul, in: *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. S. Gersh, Cambridge 2014, 33-56, at 34.

61. See, for example, F. Cumont, Le culte égyptien et le mysticisme de Plotin, *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot* 25.1-2 (1921), 77-92.

62. See for instance *Theol.* 1.3.100-103: *Σοφία δὲ Αἰγυπτίων τὸ πάντα λέγειν συμβολικῶς τά τε τῶν θεῶν εἴδη ἐν κιβωτίοις ἀποκρύπτειν ... περιττοὶ δὲ διαφερόντως τὴν σοφίαν Αἰγύπτιοι*; and *Theol.* 1.23.56-57: *Τὰ δὲ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων οὐ πάνυ σαφῆ..., ἀλλὰ πάντα συμβολικά.*

63. It is also possible that Psellos is here making a pun on the word Stoa, i.e. Stoic

Therefore, this aspect of Egyptian culture has a distinct importance, although in Psellos' example it seems unbridgeable in relation to the hidden teachings of jurisprudential philosophy. These references serve to highlight the secret element in a mysterical context, which exists in all fields of human action, even in the art of innkeeping[64]. Indeed, the reference to the σύριγγες is part of a wider association of Egyptian hidden culture with the *Chaldean Oracles*, a text of ancient mystical literature. In fact, this connection is ascertained in other works of Psellos[65]. The ultimate aim is to highlight the *Chaldean Oracles*, while Egyptian culture –and through it, the art of the innkeeper– can act as introductory images of the wisdom of the *Chaldean Oracles*. As demonstrated in the following arguments by Psellos, the *Chaldean Oracles* play a significant role in legal education: they illustrate that law possesses mysteries of theology.

Adyta and the Hierurgy of καπηλεία and Jurisprudence

The reference to a hidden space in a mysteric context relates not only to law and philosophy but also to καπηλεία through the metaphor of the Egyptian σύριγγες. In fact, we find that Psellos refers to the art of tavern keepers, explicitly using the same mysteric terminology, although ironically. He says that the father of the judge did not allow him to immediately enter into the sanctuaries and adyta of the καπηλεία, that is, the transformation of the wine's substance and the mixing of the liquids[66]. However, when he

philosophy, which literally means gallery and the galleries of the Egyptians. This reinforces the hypothesis that Stoicism, as the Egyptian culture, also fits into a secret frame of reference.

64. Of course, Psellos acknowledges a hierarchy between the two domains, clearly attributing primacy (*τὰ πρωτεῖα*) to law, see *Or. min.* 14.36-40.

65. *Theol.* 1.23.33-78 (reference to polyarchy of both); *Theol.* 2.37.21-25 (on demons in both); *Or. pan.* 17.342, 357, 378-379 (apprenticeship is necessary in both); *Τῷ μοναχῷ κῦρ Ἰωάννη καὶ γεγονότι πατριάρχῃ τῷ Ξιφιλίνῳ*, *Ep.* 202.13, 225-226 (he systematically studied the secret teaching of both). In *Τῷ μαγίστρῳ τῷ Ψηφᾷ*, *Ep.* 284.30-33, he argues that he alone investigated both subjects accurately. Perhaps his references to the secret character of the Egyptian culture are also based on Iamblichus' *Περὶ τῶν αἰγυπτίων μυστηρίων*, which Psellos uses elsewhere, see e.g. <*Τῷ μεγάλῳ δρουγγαρίῳ κῦρ Κωνσταντίνῳ, τῷ ἀνεψιῷ τοῦ πατριάρχου Μιχαήλ*>, *Ep.* 125.23-29; <*Τῷ καίσαρι Ἰωάννῃ τῷ Δούκᾳ*>, *Ep.* 53.20-24; *Ep.* 202.146-148 and the critical apparatus.

66. *Or. min.* 14.40-44. The term *μεταβαλεῖν* has a priestly dimension too, as it is used in the Christian liturgy to indicate that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

was about to celebrate (*ἱερουργεῖν*) the laws, he immediately became a torchbearer (δᾳδοῦχος)[67] and proceeded without deviation to the adyta[68]. The reference, although ironic, is important because it shows that in Psellos' thought the concept of adyton does not only concern law and philosophy but also extends to every aspect of human action. It is characteristic that he uses the crucial term *ἄδυτον* for both cases. Moreover, he likens engaging with the καπηλεία and the laws to a hierurgy[69], while he introduces concepts from the ancient Greek mysteries, such as torch bearing (*δᾳδουχία*).

Here too, the ritual references, although ironic, function as an introduction to the hieratic conception of jurisprudence[70]. From this point onward, Psellos analyzes the telestics of jurisprudence.

3. The Mysteric Consideration of Jurisprudence

Grades of Initiation in Jurisprudence and Philosophical Initiation in Plato's Academy

Psellos later refers to the judge's need to be initiated into the basic knowledge of jurisprudence[71]. In this context he employs the terms *προμυηθείς*[72] and

67. *Δᾳδουχία* means carrying torches during sacraments, but also spiritual enlightenment, see *LSJ*[9], entry δᾳδουχία; Lampe, entry δᾳδουχία; On *dadouchos* in the Eleusinian Mysteries see also K. Clinton, The Sacred Officials, 47-68. For the *δᾳδουχία* in Psellos' hermeneutics, see Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 316-320.

68. *Or. min.* 14.50-51: *τὰ δὲ τῶν νόμων ἱερουργεῖν μέλλων αὐτίκα ἐδᾳδούχησας καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἄδυτα εὐθυδρόμησας.*

69. See also the references to the altar's vestibules (*προτεμενίσμασι*), in which he remained as a learner of the innkeeper's art, *Or. min.* 14.48-50.

70. Here too, in the telestic dimension (adyton, hierurgy), as in the secret element of the Egyptian culture, a hierarchy dominates, where philosophy and law maintain primacy.

71. *Or. min.* 14.51-53. As basic knowledge he mentions *τὴν τῶν νόμων ἀρχαιολογίαν* ("history of the laws": that is the *Institutae*, see *Michaelis Pselli Poemata*, ed. L. G. Westerink [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Stutgardiae/Lipsiae 1992, *Poema* 8.55-56), *τὴν τοῦ Δυοδεκαδέλτου σοφίαν* (the *Twelve Tables*) and *τὰ πραιτώρια ... νόμιμα* ("laws of the praetor", perhaps the Praetor's Edict; according to Psellos a part of the civil law, see *Poema* 8.87-90, *Scholion* 87 in II. Scholia codicis o[s]; see also *Basilica*, ed. H. J. Scheltema – N. van der Wal, *Basilicorum libri LX*. Series A, vol. 1 [Scripta Universitatis Groninganae] Groningen 1955, 2.1.6-9).

72. According to *LSJ*[9], entry προμυέω, the verb means "initiate beforehand".

προτελεσθείς[73], which, once again, belong to ritual language[74]. He therefore parallels the stages of study in jurisprudence with the grades of initiation in ancient ritual[75]. Particularly significant is his reference to an adyton as the highest level and the unhindered *entry* of an uninitiated person into it as problematic[76].

He then presents the *curriculum* of Plato's philosophical school, even though he is referring to law, as an example of the need for gradual initiation. According to this, Plato did not permit his students to progress immediately to theology without first studying ethics, followed by natural philosophy, and then mathematics together with dialectic[77]. In these references, Plato appears as a hierophant who opens wide the entrances to science[78].

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73. According to *LSJ*[9], entry, προτελέω, the verb means "initiate or instruct beforehand"; in Pass.: "to be prepared for the mysteries"; similarly, *l. c.*, *ἱερὰ προτέλεια* means "sacrifice offered before any solemnity," among them also before the Eleusinian Mysteries. *Προτέλειος* is also something or the tax that takes place before an initiation's ceremony; metaphorically it also means the introduction to philosophy. It is possible that Psellos uses the term in a philosophical sense too, as it occurs in Proclus, *Τῶν εἰς τὸν Παρμενίδην τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἑπτὰ βιβλίων*, ed. C. Steel, *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, vol. 1, Oxford 2009, 1, p. 704.16, whom he often invokes. Furthermore, this meaning echoes Psellos' essential positions, in which ritual is linked to philosophy. See also Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 339, note 803. For the term in Psellos' hermeneutics (*Theol.* 1.70) see *ib.*, 339-341.

74. *Or. min.* 14.51-55, especially 51-52: *οὔτε τὴν τῶν νόμων ἀρχαιολογίαν προμυηθεὶς οὔτε τὴν τοῦ Δυοδεκαδέλτου σοφίαν προτελεσθείς*. At the top of the *curriculum*, he places the *Digesta* (*Πανδέκτην*) and the *Codex* (*τοὺς Κώδικας*). This constitutes a testimony to the structure of legal studies in the eleventh century, which until now has not been discussed.

75. In Psellos' writings, we frequently encounter the idea that knowledge must be acquired gradually, a concept linked to his understanding of human perfection. Indeed, even in letters to monks or those pursuing a monastic life, he criticizes forms of spirituality that surpass the intermediate stages of the soul's journey toward perfection, see *Τῷ μοναχῷ Συμεὼν τῷ Κεγχρῇ*, *Ep.* 100.58-63 with E. Delli – D. J. O'Meara, L'ascension mystique néoplatonicienne chez Michel Psellos, *Φιλοσοφία* 52 (2022 [2024]), 209-219, especially 214, note 16.

76. *Or. min.* 14.51: *ἐπὶ τὰ ἄδυτα εὐθυδρόμησας*. For this issue, see my remarks, related to the problematics of Psellos' time, in the conclusions.

77. *Or. min.* 14.56-60.

78. *Or. min.* 14.59: *τὰς εἰσόδους ἀνεπετάννυε*.

Littlewood notes in the critical apparatus with reference to Psellos' *Chronography*[79] that the latter wrongly attributes this *curriculum* to Plato. Moreover, as the same apparatus points out, the teaching about the stages of philosophical studies with the ultimate goal of theology is found in the *Commentaries* (in the prolegomena) to Aristotle's *Categoriae* of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists[80]. It is interesting that only in the *Prolegomena* of Elias (or David) does the ritual terminology appear, namely the term *προτέλεια*[81], which Psellos also employs in his present work.

Psellos is thus clearly aware of the Neoplatonic origins of the *curriculum*, as he himself claims to have studied Neoplatonism in depth[82]. I believe that he is ultimately presenting himself as both a student and a teacher, since he

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79. Psellos, *Χρονογραφία*, 6.36, 38; these are much-discussed autobiographical passages, about his studies. There, however, he refers only indirectly to a structure, which he himself followed after rhetoric (dialectic, natural philosophy and metaphysics). Moreover, he does not refer to Plato as the source of this structure, but presents it as a purely personal course, where the Neoplatonists were at the center, with Proclus at the top. D. R. Reinsch (transl.), *Leben der byzantinischen Kaiser (976-1075): Chronographia: Griechisch-deutsch* [Sammlung Tusculum], Berlin/München/Boston 2015, 824, note 48, notes in connection with Psellos' reference to his studies in this passage that it goes back to Aristotle (*Τῶν μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*, ed. W. Jaeger, *Aristotelis Metaphysica* [Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis], Oxford 1957 (1960), 1064b1-2). See also *Χρονογραφία*, 6.39-40, where Psellos mentions his geometrical, musical, astronomical studies in the context of mathematical studies, as a precursor of higher studies, but also his studies in the secret rites of the Neoplatonics (theurgy) and in the *Chaldean Oracles*, as one *highest* degree of studies, constituting a universal science, together with Reinsch, *Leben* 824, notes 53 and 54.

80. Ammonius, *Προλεγόμενα τῶν δέκα κατηγοριῶν ἀπὸ φωνῆς Ἀμμωνίου φιλοσόφου*, ed. A. Busse, *Ammonius in Aristotelis categorias commentaries* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 4.4], Berlin 1895, p. 6.9-20 (mainly 16-20); Olympiodorus, *Εἰς τὰ προλεγόμενα τῆς λογικῆς*, ed. A. Busse, *Olympiodori prolegomena et in categorias commentarium* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 12.1], Berlin 1902, p. 8.29-9.13, 9.31-10.2 (mainly 9.31-36). For the *curriculum* of philosophical studies in the Neoplatonists' schools see L. G. Roger Castillo, La formación del filósofo en las escuelas neoplatónicas, *Byzantion Nea Hellás* 36 (2017) 83-100. Retrieved from https://byzantion.uchile.cl/index.php/RBNH/article/view/47710.

81. Eliae (olim Davidis) *Ἐξήγησις σὺν Θεῷ τῶν δέκα κατηγοριῶν τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀπὸ φωνῆς Δαβὶδ τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου φιλοσόφου*, ed. A. Busse, *Eliae in Porphyrii isagogen et Aristotelis categorias commentaria* [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 18.1], Berlin 1900, 121.5-16 (especially 5-7).

82. *Χρονογραφία*, 6.38.

himself has followed a similar program of study on his own initiative, rather through any school curriculum, as he states in the aforementioned passage of the *Chronography*[83]. He also assigns similar ritual designations to the stages of the philosophical program he taught[84].

He therefore associates the *curriculum* of law studies with that of philosophy. This is a clear tendency to philosophize the law, which we already found elsewhere in *Or. min.* 14[85]. This is also evident in the title of one of his own legal writings[86]. However, philosophy is assimilated to an initiatory process, as Psellos uses mysteric language and cites the example of the degrees of philosophical studies as an explanation of the need to pass through the grades of ritual initiation.

Jurisprudence and Eleusinian/Mithraic Mysteries

Psellos then accuses the former tavern owner of transgressing the laws, which he compares to valleys, and then proceeding to the *ἄβατον* city, thus becoming a prophet and hierophant despite having come from the *trivia*[87]

83. It is no coincidence that Littlewood too in the critical apparatus refers to the aforementioned *Chronographia*'s passage, accepting that Psellos is indirectly making a self-reference. Psellos mentions the term *προτέλεια* for his own introductory studies in *Encomium in matrem*, 5.338.

84. See *Χρονογραφία*, 6.45, where Psellos referring to how he entered the imperial court narrates that his rhetorical skills were the *προτέλεια* for the emperor Constantinos IX, before the latter entered the adyton of Psellos' philosophy. That is, he uses ritual terminology, but also the concept of adyton to characterize his rhetorical and philosophical thinking, as stages of study that his listener must pass through. See also Kaldellis, *The Argument*, 132-133.

85. *Or. min.* 14.34-36.

86. *Ὅτι φιλοσοφίας μέτοχος ἡ νομικὴ ἐπιστήμη*, preserved in fragments. See on this writing above, note 41.

87. It means a place frequented by soothsayers or by persons of dubious repute. But they were also places where Hekate was worshipped; see *LSJ*[9], entry τρίοδος. The latter meaning could be seen as directly related to the basic ideas of *Or. min.* 14. Perhaps Psellos by showing indirect contempt for Hekate here is trying in an oblique way to fend off accusations against him for his positive reference to her in the same work below, and in his works more widely. Indeed, Psellos is aware of Hekate's connection to the *Trivia*, see *Ἔκθεσις κεφαλαιώδης καὶ σύντομος τῶν παρὰ Χαλδαίοις δογμάτων*, ed. D. J. O' Meara, *Michaelis Pselli Philosophica minora*, vol. 2 [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana], Leipzig 1989

and the pits[88]. Here, the humble social origin of the addressee is emphasized. The reference to an *ἄβατον* –an inaccessible sanctuary like the adyton discussed earlier– *is*important and concerns jurisprudence[89]. The science of law is now directly combined with the concept of the hierophant, who dwells in a sacred space. It even seems that his position lies beyond jurisprudence, located in the valleys, while he himself is in the city. Thus, correct conduct–that is, progressing through all stages of philosophical and legal education, as outlined in Plato's school curriculum–culminates in the philosopher's transformation into a hierophant.

Psellos then refers again with irony to the former status of the judge: "And before you had even washed your hands from the water of your kettle, you dared to touch the sacred books"[90]. Here too an initiatic language prevails, which forbids the uninitiated to touch the books of law, which Psellos characterizes as sacred[91]. Jurisprudence, therefore, entails not only gradual initiation, adyton, and the hierophant, but also sacred books that are inaccessible to the uninitiated. Also mocking his action, he uses a proverb spoken against the uneducated[92]. In this sense, it becomes clearer that when speaking of initiation, Psellos means the gradual education of the initiate in philosophy rather than a religious-type process. Nevertheless, the ritual dimension carries an essential symbolic meaning, because it is connected to the deeper existential meaning that Psellos attributes to the concept of the relationship between philosophy and jurisprudence, especially in how he understands the process of legal education.

[= *Phil. min.* 2], 2.39, p. 147.8-9: *εἰσὶ δὲ παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄζωνοι Ἑκάται, ὡς ἡ τριοδῖτις ἡ Χαλδαϊκὴ* along with Lewy's corresponding note, H. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy: Mystic Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, *Troisieme édition par Michel Tardieu avec un supplément "Les Oracles chaldaïques 1891-2011"* [Collection des Études Augustiniennes 77], Paris 2011[3], 95, n. 122. See also below on this matter.

88. *Or. min.* 14.60-62. *Βάραθρον*: pit in Athens, into which criminals were thrown, see *LSJ*[9], entry βάραθρον.

89. *Or. min.* 14.51.

90. *Or. min.* 14.62-64.

91. *Or. min.* 14.63-64: *τῶν ἱερῶν βίβλων ἐτόλμησας ἐπαφήσασθαι.*

92. *Or. min.* 14.65-66: *ἐντεῦθεν τὸ τῆς παροιμίας ποιεῖς, ὄνος πρὸς λύραν τὰ ὦτα κινῶν* (= Michael Apostolius, *Συναγωγὴ παροιμιῶν: Ὄνος λύρας ἀκούων κινεῖ τὰ ὦτα: ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπαιδεύτων* [*Corpus paroemiographorum Graecorum*, t. II], ed. E. L. von Leutsch, Göttingen 1851 [reimpr. Hildesheim 1958], 563.82).

Psellos later refers more clearly to the relationship between jurisprudence and the Eleusinian Mysteries. He criticizes the former tavern keeper by noting that no one dared to participate in the Mysteries of the Greeks without having been introduced to the preliminary offerings (*προτέλεια*) of the Mithraic ceremony[93], while in the Eleusinian Mysteries those who participated in the ceremony were bound by law of secrecy[94]. He therefore again uses the terminology of the grades of initiation into the pagan mysteries, as well as the principle of concealment, to describe the degrees of study in law, here expressly in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries or Mithraism. Previously, Plato's school of philosophy functioned as an example; now, ancient Greek initiation is featured. This demonstrates how closely connected Psellos considered the two categories to be.

Furthermore, Psellos places the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Mithraic ritual in the same category as pagan mysteries[95]. The two ceremonies are not identical, but the cult of Mithras is similar to the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Mithraic religion was mainly sacramental and included adyton and seven grades of initiation. The initiates performed the mysteries in caves, which were called *mithraea*[96]. The Neoplatonist Porphyry in his work *De*

93. *Or. min.* 14.151-152. The phrase *Μιθριακὴν τελετήν* is a *hapax legomenon* in Byzantine literature; see *LBG*, which in the entry *Μιθριακός* refers only to the passage under consideration of *Or. min.* 14 (https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lbg/#eid=45358&context=lsj, access: 29/08/2024). The adjective *μιθριακός* appears in the phrase *μιθριακὸν μυστήριον* in Zosimus, *Ζώσιμος λέγει περὶ τῆς ἀσβέστου*, ed. M. Berthelot – C. É. Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchemistes grecs*, vol. 2, Paris 1888, p. 114.7. See *LSJ*[9], entry Μιθριακός. For the term *προτέλεια* see above, note 73.

94. *Or. min.* 14.152-153: *νόμος τοῖς τελουμένοις ἐχεμυθεῖν. Τελούμενος* means to be initiated; see *LSJ*[9], entry τελέω.

95. *Or. min.* 14.151: *καὶ τῶν μὲν παρ' Ἕλλησι μυστηρίων.*

96. M. Clauss, Die sieben Grade des Mithras-Kultes, *ZPE* 82 (1990), 183-194 (he considered the seven grades to constitute a priestly hierarchy and not grades of initiation; see on this also M. Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae: Die Abhängerschaft des Mithraskultes* [Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 10], Stuttgart 1992; M. Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, Darmstadt 2012[2] (translation in English of the first edition: M. Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The god and his mysteries*, transl. R. Gordon, New York 2000); R. Beck, Ritual, Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel, *JRS* 90 (2000) 145-180; A. Chalupa, Seven Mithraic Grades: An Initiatory or Priestly Hierarchy? *Religio* 16.2

antro Nympharum, which allegorizes the story of the cave of the Nymphs in the *Odyssey*[97], gives extensive information about the worship of Mithras in the caves[98]. The choice of Psellos to deal in one of his writings (*Phil. min.* 1.45) with the interpretation of *Odyssey*'s Nymphs' cave, where he quotes almost verbatim the mentioned allegoresis of Porphyry, must be highlighted here. It confirms that the Mithraic caves and the mystagogic rites that took place in them have a special significance for Psellos, although he himself does not explicitly refer to the *mithraea*[99]. Psellos utilizes the elements of initiation from these ancient ceremonies in combination with the secrecy of the sanctuary in order to highlight the particular importance that the process of acquiring scientific knowledge possesses for him, as I will show below. I should also note that the Mithraic ritual initiation is generally a source of inspiration for his own writings and is often associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries[100]. In this context, the hierophant is presented as a

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(2008) 177-201 (https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/sites/default/files/pdf/125251.pdf, access: 16. 02. 2024), where the previous bibliography and discussion with it; see also F. Cumont, *Die Mysterien des Mithra: Ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit*, transl. G. Gehrich, Stuttgart 1981 (reprint of the 3rd revised edition of K. Latte, 1923); R. Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*, Oxford 2006; Att. Mastrocinque, *The Mysteries of Mithras: A Different Account* [Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 24], Tübingen 2017.

97. Homerus, *Ὀδύσσεια*, ed. P. von der Mühll, *Homeri Odyssea*, Basel 1962, 13. 102-112.

98. Porphyrius, *Περὶ τοῦ ἐν Ὀδυσσείᾳ τῶν νυμφῶν ἄντρου*, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Porphyry: The cave of the nymphs in the Odyssey: A revised text with translation by Seminar Classics 609* [Arethusa Monographs 1], Buffalo 1969; see also Chalupa, Grades, 192. See also on this subject (Mithraic caves in Porphyry) and in general for the information that Porphyry gives us in his work on the Mithraic Mysteries and the teachings of Mithraism, Beck, Ritual, 147, 148, 149, 151, 157-164, 167-170, 178-180, where also discussion of the earlier literature; L. Albanese, Porphyry, the Cave of the Nymphs, and the Mysteries of Mithras, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 58 (2018), 681-691.

99. In *Phil. min.* 1.45 Psellos does not deal with the Porphyry's passages that give information about the *mithraea*.

100. To Mithras, in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Psellos refers also in *Theol.* 1.70.9-11. He emphasizes that during the initiation process the initiate was purified. In *Τῷ μεγάλῳ δρουγγαρίῳ κῦρ Κωνσταντίνῳ*, *Ep.* 122.22-25 he refers to the trials and punishments of the Mithraic Mysteries, even comparing them to the initiation of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

fundamental concept, since Psellos consciously includes him in the cults of other religions (Mithraism), and in fact gives him a supreme role[101].

The Eleusinian Mysteries per se also constitute a key point of reference more widely in Psellos' forensic didactic theory and practice[102]. In his his *Funeral Oration for Patriarch Xiphilinos*, he extols the Patriarch for teaching the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) jurisprudence mystagogically as if he were performing the Eleusinian Mysteries[103]. Psellos also uses terms of Eleusinian initiation in the titles and in the text of his own law books[104]. Moreover, in *Or. fun.* 9 he refers to the belief of the person being praised (Romanos *referendarios*) that rhetorical education was sufficient for access to the science of law. This led him to apply rhetorical rules when adjudicating cases. However, Psellos emphasizes that if one progresses from basic jurisprudential knowledge to the mysteries

101. See *Τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ τῷ πρωτασηκρῆτις*, *Ep.* 20.31-37, where the need for education in the science of grammar based on the grades of initiation of the Mithraic Mysteries is highlighted. There, Psellos also refers to the punishments foreseen during the initiation. The pinnacle of this is the grade of *hierophant*, who is located in the adyton. However, the Mithraic initiation culminated in the rank of Πατήρ (Father), which was a high-priestly rank, see Chalupa, Grades, 188. Psellos mentions this grade in *Or. for.* 1.152-153. Therefore, in *Ep.* 20 too, as in *Or. min.* 14, Psellos insists on the use of the term hierophant, although he knows that it was not prescribed in the Mithraic Mysteries. See also the critical apparatus of *Ep.* 20. For similar thoughts of discovering hidden philosophical meanings while teaching grammar in the context of a ritual, see also *Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς Νικήταν μαΐστωρα τῆς σχολῆς τοῦ ἁγίου Πέτρου*, *Or. fun.* 4.6.5-27. Therefore, one can find out that the ritual consideration also extends to the studies of grammar. This proves its importance in the thought of Psellos, as it covers many objects of education.

102. For Psellos as a law teacher, see Z. Chitwood, *Byzantine Legal Culture and the Roman Legal Tradition, 867-1056*, Cambridge 2017, 178-181, where also the previous bibliography is mentioned.

103. *Or. fun.* 3.10.49-51: *ἐγὼ μὲν πρὸς ῥητορικὴν ἐξασκῶν καί τι καὶ φιλοσοφίας παραμιγνύς, ὁ δὲ τελῶν τούτῳ τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τὰ Ἐλευσίνια ὥσπερ μυσταγωγῶν.*

104. *Περὶ προτελείων τῆς τῶν νόμων ἐπιστήμης* 1-3; *Περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀγωγῶν διαιρέσεως* 2-4; *Περὶ κονδικτικίων κοινῶς πάντων καὶ περὶ ἀγωγῶν* 3-6, ed. G. Weiss, *Oströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos* [Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 16], München 1973, Appendix, texts VI.2, 3, 4. See for Psellos' writings and discussion of these passages, where the important ritual terms *ἐπιβατήρια* [...], *εἰσάγω καὶ εἰς ἄδυτα*, [...] *προτελεσθέντα* [...] *οὕτω μυηθέντα τὰ Παναθήναια, περιραντήρια*, in Wolska-Conus, L'école, 66-67, 78.

of philosophy, he will become perfect[105]. In this context, he uses telestic terminology of interpretation, pointing out the danger of an approach from a philosophically uninitiated person who is unable to discern the depth of hidden meanings[106].

Therefore, Psellos has fully integrated the ritual concepts into his own teaching program of law, which are projected as a model in the person of Xiphilinos. However, these concepts, as it will turn out, also constitute the fundamental core of his hermeneutical thinking.

This analysis confirms that the Mithraic and Eleusinian Mysteries held special significance for Psellos, shaping his conception of knowledge. Specifically, these traditions illuminate Psellos' perspective on legal education, which he envisions as a lived experience structured in stages. At the culmination of this process, the student acquires a new way of being and acting. This view contrasts with the notion of legal education as the mere assimilation of abstract knowledge. Rather, it is a transformative process akin to initiation into mystery cults, ultimately conferring upon the initiand a new, almost "divinized" status. In this framework, the hierophant serves as the ultimate symbol of perfected existence, revealing through interpretation the mystery of knowledge[107].

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105. *Μονῳδία ἐπὶ Ῥωμανῷ ῥαιφερενδαρίῳ*, *Or. fun.* 9.3.1-18.

106. *Or. fun.* 9.3.7-12: *Ἐντεῦθεν γὰρ χαρακτῆρές τε καὶ διαιρέσεις τῶν ἐν δικαστηρίοις πολιτικῶν ζητημάτων ἐπινενόηνται, κἂν μέν τις ἀπὸ τῶν ταύτης* [*τῆς παιδεύσεως τῶν Ἰταλῶν*] *προτελείων ἐπὶ τὰ ἐκεῖσε βαδίσῃ μυστήρια, τὴν τελετὴν ἐπιγνώσεται καὶ τελεώτερον ἐνθεάσει, εἰ δὲ μὴ προτελεσθεὶς τοῖς ἀδύτοις προσέλθῃ θρασύτερον, φλεδόνας καὶ σκιὰς ὄψεται καὶ οὐδὲν ὑγιές*. Here Psellos uses the term *προτέλεια* to refer to introductory studies in jurisprudence.

107. In *Theol.* 1.19.70-80, Psellos states that when he identifies a rhetorical theme of great value in interpreting the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, he becomes "possessed" (*ἐνθουσιῶ κατὰ τοὺς κατόχους*); that is, he resembles the ancient enthusiasts who gave oracles, were possessed by spirits, or had mystical inspiration. Consequently, he explains these important themes to those who approach him, apparently also to his students, experiencing an alteration (*τὴν θείαν ἀλλοιοῦμαι ἀλλοίωσιν, καὶ ἀνθ' οὗ νῦν εἰμι, καλλίων τὴν φύσιν γίγνομαι*). Therefore, says Psellos, he resembles the Pythia who suffered something similar when she gave oracles; see also *Theol.* 2.1.17-21 where the Byzantine philosopher presents himself as a hierophant who lifts the curtains, transforms himself and becomes *θεόληπτος*, that is, possessed by a divine inspiration, see *LSJ*[9], entry θεόληπτος. He even wishes that the recipient of his work, Michael Doukas, would experience a similar experience. See my

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Psellos presents in *Or. min.* 14 a further level of mysticism. According to him, while the ancient mysteries contained the concept of gradual initiation and the demand for secrecy, which is something easy, this man, showed such great courage when attempting to philosophize with the Muses and legislate with the wise and judge with the rulers, that he immediately wiped his hands of the materials of the innkeeper's art and engaged in legal matters[108]. Here, the argument of the forbidden entry into another genre is repeated and the coupling of rhetoric (Muses) and law with philosophy (*φιλοσοφεῖν*) is ascertained.

Furthermore, Psellos uses the phrase *οὐρανίας ἄντυγος* to refer to jurisprudence. *Ἄντυξ* means the edge of a circular thing. In the field of astronomy, it denotes the orbit of a planet, the circle of the world, as well as the celestial dome[109], indeed in the context of the *Chaldean Oracles*[110], as handed down by Proclus[111]. So here too, legal science is associated with ancient mysticism, and now with the *Chaldean Oracles*. This ascertainment is important, since, as we will see in detail, Psellos explicitly refers to the *Chaldean Oracles*.

Indeed, he mentions the *Chaldean Oracles* at the culmination of his mystical arguments. He accuses the judge of having ignored so much that jurisprudence not only investigates the affairs of the city but also

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analysis of the two passages in *Η ερμηνευτική*, 322-323, 285-286. It is certain that these references also concern Psellos' thought on the relationship between law and philosophy, given that they too have a common point of reference of hermeneutics as an initiatic process.

108. *Or. min.* 14.151-157.

109. *LSJ*[9], entry ἄντυξ. See for the meaning celestial dome Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 97, note 130. R. Majercik (ed. and transl.), *The Chaldean Oracles: text, translation, and commentary* [Platonic texts and translations 8], Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wiltshire 2013[2], 204 (commentary on fr. 167), expresses reservations about Lewy's interpretation of the passage in question (see my next note), and suggests based on other uses of the term by Proclus the translation "orbits of the planetary spheres." She accepts that it certainly has a cosmological frame of reference, but its exact meaning is not clear.

110. *The Chaldean Oracles: text, translation, and commentary*, ed. R. Majercik [Platonic texts and translations 8], Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wiltshire 2013[2] [= *Orac. Chald.*], fr. 167 [= *Oracles Chaldaïques avec un choix de commentaires anciens*, ed. É. des Places, A.-P. Segonds, Paris 1996[3], fr. 167].

111. Proclus, *Ὑπόμνημα εἰς Α΄ Εὐκλείδου στοιχείων*, p. 155.5.

has mysteries of theology and teaches about nature. In fact, in the end it abandons rhetoric, like Hekate abandons nature. He would have found the latter had he paid attention to the texts of the *Chaldean Oracles*, which he calls *λόγια*[112]. Through this reference, the mentioned theology of Platonic philosophy is now connected with the *Chaldean Oracles*.

Hekate, who was associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries and considered one of their main deities[113], often appears in the *Chaldean Oracles*[114]. She was particularly worshiped by the Neoplatonists (among others she was a goddess of theurgy)[115]. In the *Chaldean Oracles* she represented life, the cosmic soul, nature, and destiny (*εἱμαρμένη*)[116].

What exactly is her relationship with nature? Psellos refers to the subject in *Phil. min.* 2.40[117]. There he describes the springs symbolically found on the statue of Hekate and teaches that nature is the end of the girdle's springs[118] floating on her back. This passage is correlated in the research with fragment 54 of the *Chaldean Oracles*, which teaches that

112. *Or. min.* 14.157-161. The term λόγια is the most frequent way of referring to the *Chaldean Oracles* by the Neoplatonists, see Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 443 (Excursus I).

113. Ch. M. Edwards, The Running Maiden from Eleusis and the Early Classical Image of Hekate, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 90/3 (1989), 307-318.

114. For Hekate in the *Chaldean Oracles* see S. I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* [American classical studies 21], Atlanta Georgia 1990; Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles* 83-98; N. Spanu, *Proclus and the Chaldean oracles: a study on Proclean exegesis, with a translation and commentary of Proclus' Treatise on Chaldean philosophy* [Routledge monographs in classical studies], Routledge, 2021, 61-66. On Hecate in Mithraic mystery cult, see Turcan, *Mithras*.

115. L. Bergemann, *Kraftmetaphysik und Mysterienkult im Neuplatonismus: Ein Aspekt neuplatonischer Philosophie* [Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 234], München 2006, 271-344; Th. Lautwein, *Hekate, die dunkle Göttin: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Rudolstadt 2009, 261-267.

116. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 83-99.

117. *Ὑποτύπωσις κεφαλαιώδης τῶν παρὰ Χαλδαίοις ἀρχαίων δογμάτων: ἔχει δὲ περὶ αὐτὴν ἡ Ἑκάτη πηγάς διαφόρων φύσεων. τῶν δὲ κατὰ τὸν ζωστῆρα πηγῶν ἡ μὲν φύσις τὸ τέλος συμπεραίνει τῶν τῆς Ἑκάτης νώτων ἀπαιωρουμένης τῶν δὲ ἐν τῇ λαγόνι πηγῶν ἡ μὲν τῶν ψυχῶν ἐστι δεξιά, ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐν λαιοῖς*, p. 149.19-22.

118. The girdle's spring was the name of a spring in the *Chaldean Oracles*' system, see *LSJ*[9], entry ζωστήρ, with reference to Damascius, *Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις περὶ τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν*, ed. L. G. Westerink et al., *Damascius: Traité des premiers principes*, vol. 3 [Collection des universités de France, Série grecque], Paris 1991, p. 38.4-6.

abundant nature is suspended from the back of Hekate[119]. Lewy points out that the moon is Hekate's abode. Therefore, she is a moon deity and rules over it[120]. The Chaldean Hekate dwells in the moon while giving her oracles, in the context of theurgy. Lewy also notes that the term *φύσις* is used in the *Chaldean Oracles* (fr. 54, 101, 102) metonymically to represent the moon[121]. Therefore, on her back hung symbolically the disk of the moon, which is one of her most characteristic properties[122]. Hekate herself is also called φύσις[123], namely, ruler of the sensible world; therefore, according to the *Chaldean Oracles* the moon symbolized her rule over this world[124]. Hekate is ultimately identified with nature according to Lewy, by which is meant the world of heavenly bodies too[125]. Nature ensures that the heavenly bodies move according to their laws, based on necessity. She is also related to *εἱμαρμένη*[126]. However, there is also the view that completely distinguishes nature from Hekate so that only the former dominates the material world and the problems the latter causes for the theurgist and the one who seeks salvation[127].

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119. *Orac. Chald.* fr. 54 [= Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, fr. 54]: *νώτοις δὲ ἀμφὶ θεᾶς φύσις ἄπλετος ᾐώρηται*. See on the relevant passage also Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 90: "Over the goddess back measureless Nature is exalted." See also *ib.* note 91. This passage is witnessed and interpreted in the writings of Proclus: a) *Εἰς τὸν Τιμαῖον Πλάτωνος*, ed. E. Diehl, *Procli diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1903 (Amsterdam 1965), p. 11.21; vol. 3, Leipzig 1906, 271.11; b) *Εἰς τὰς Πολιτείας Πλάτωνος ὑπόμνημα*, ed. W. Kroll, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1901, p. 150.21; c) *Τῶν εἰς τὸν Παρμενίδην τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἑπτὰ βιβλίων*, 3, p. 821.5-6.

120. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 49. See also Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 29-38 (discussion of earlier and contemporary sources that influenced the *Chaldean Oracles* on this topic).

121. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 49, 90 and note 92; 98, note 134; 271-272.

122. Lewy, *ib.* 90; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 138 and note 18.

123. For this meaning of Hekate and the following presentation, see Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 95-98; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 136-142.

124. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 90.

125. Lewy, *ib.* 90, note 91, points out that the verb *αἰωρεῖσθαι* of fr. 54 is sometimes used to define the course of the stars, which shows the astronomical view of nature's symbolism in the statue of Hecate. See also Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, 81, note 3.

126. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 98, 272.

127. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 164, commenting on fr. 54 considers *contra* Lewy that *φύσις* is not identified with Hecate, but is born from her. Similarly Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 138. The author, *ib.*, 136-142, even considers that the nature's distinction

Therefore, Psellos, teaching about Hekate and *φύσις* in *Or. min.* 14, presupposes the *Or. Chald.* fr. 54[128]. Rhetoric, Psellos' *φύσις*, is associated with the lower forms of existence, the heavenly bodies, and the dark material world[129]. Yet he considers that Hekate leaves nature[130] and hence functions as a symbol that rhetoric is abandoned by the judge. According to Psellos' image, nature is therefore not identified with Hekate, as Lewy argues[131].

Psellos teaches that jurisprudence contains teachings of natural philosophy (*περὶ φύσεως φθέγγεται*), a lower branch of philosophy, and also reaches theology. It is quite possible that he considers these teachings to be secret as well. However, they are considered the precursor of theology. Hekate's φύσις would then be the symbol not only of rhetoric, but of this natural philosophy too, contained in rhetorical studies. One could assume that through Hekate's image he is referring to the need to abandon the search for natural philosophy in the context of these studies, since these studies must also be abandoned by the jurist in order to investigate the mysteries

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from Hekate is based on the Middle Platonism's concept of the double cosmic soul, where the lower, irrational, deals with the sensible world, so that the superior soul remains intact with the latter. See *ib.*, 136, note 11 for bibliography and sources regarding this teaching of Middle Platonism. In the *Chaldean Oracles*, therefore, Hekate appears divided. The image of nature hanging from Hekate is a symbol of this view. Johnston, in addition to fr. 54 is based on fr. 70, 88, 101, 102. See also below in this paper, note 130.

128. In the research on the *Chaldean Oracles*, especially on Hekate, the quoted passage of *Or. min.* 14 has not been discussed until now, although it is of particular importance in Psellos' argumentation and illuminates the teaching of the *Chaldean Oracles*.

129. For Hekate as the source of nature, with whom in the context of the existence of seven physical worlds the heavenly and material worlds are related, where negative characterizations are formulated for the latter, see *Phil. min.* 2.40, p. 149.19: *Ἔκθεσις κεφαλαιώδης καὶ σύντομος τῶν παρ' Ἀσσυρίοις δογμάτων*, *Phil. min.* 2.41, p. 152.4-8.

130. I have not been able to locate any passage in the *Chaldean Oracles* that directly testifies to this movement of Hekate. Certainly, Psellos adopts the traditional image of nature on Hekate's back, but he gives her another perspective. Perhaps he is based on the aforementioned Middle Platonic distinction of the cosmic soul into superior and inferior, on the basis of which in the *Chaldean Oracles* nature appears as a separate existence in relation to Hekate, where the former only deals with the earthly world, see Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 138-142, especially, *ib.*, 139: "Physis –previously the lower half of the Cosmic Soul– became a goddess, a sort of chthonic Hekate", also, *ib.*, 142: "In effect, the traditional Hekate became two goddesses in the Chaldean system–the celestial Hekate/Soul and the earthly Physis".

131. See also Spanu, *Proclus*, 64.

of theology. Clearly, rhetoric and the mysteries of the visible world are considered a cover that prevents the emergence of the theological mysteries of jurisprudence. In fact, Hekate, Psellos' jurisprudence, leaves the world of heaven and matter. The image functions as a symbol of law studies, where one from the valley of laws ends up in the city of philosophy, and constitutes an indirect testimony to the structure of legal studies in Psellos' thought and his didactic praxis of law, which is of the eleventh century.

Psellos wonders whether the judge has read the *λόγια*[132]. He considers this a necessary condition for the completion of legal education, and through this for the correct interpretation of the laws too and not just a basis for the example he invokes. The proof of this lies not only the previous analysis of his sources, but also in the fact that he uses the teaching about Hekate as an essential interpretive tool elsewhere in his writings[133]. Furthermore, he

132. For the influence of the *Chaldean Oracles* on Psellos, as well as his writings on them, see K. Chrestou, Ἡ ἐπίδραση τοῦ Πρόκλου Διαδόχου στὸ φιλοσοφικὸ ἔργο τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Ψελλοῦ. Ὁ κόσμος τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς, *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα Θεολογικής Σχολής Θεσσαλονίκης. Τμήμα Ποιμαντικής και Κοινωνικής Θεολογίας* 10 (2005), 38-67; D. Burns, The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster, Hekate's Couch, and Platonic Orientalism in Psellos and Plethon, *Aries*, 6.2 (2006), 158-179; D. J. O'Meara Psellos' Commentary on the Chaldean Oracles and Proclus' lost Commentary, in: *Platonismus und Esoterik in byzantinischem Mittelalter und italienischer Renaissance*, ed. H. Seng [Bibliotheca Chaldaica], Heidelberg 2013, 45-58; D. J. O'Meara, Michael Psellos, in: *Interpreting Proclus. From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. S. Gersh, Cambridge 2014, 165-181, at 169-170, 175-77; F. Lauritzen, Psello e gli oracoli caldaici, in: *Dialoghi con Bisanzio: spazi di discussione, percorsi di ricera: atti dell'VIII Congresso dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Bizantini (Ravenna, 22-25 settembre 2015)*, vol. 2, ed. S. Consentino et al. [Quaderni della Rivista di bizantinistica 20.2], Spoleto 2019, 549-556; Diamantopoulos, Remarks, 44-45, 59, note 120, 67-68; Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική*, 305-306, 321, note 755, 323-327, 437, 552-553, 562-563.

133. *Theol.* 1.4.59; 1.23.40 (urges students to read the *Chaldean Oracles* related to her), 1.23a.13, 23-25; 1.51.88. Therefore, Hekate's themes are an important element in the hermeneutical thought of Psellos, indeed in the interpretation of theological texts. Elsewhere he appears negative; see *Or. for.* 1.591-599, 618-623 (references to Hekate's springs); however, see my comments on the tactics he follows there, Diamantopoulos, Remarks, 59 and note 120; 67 and note 159; 68 and note 164; also, Gouillard, Religion, 316; *Or. fun.* 3.24.1-14; *Ἑρμηνεία περὶ τῶν εἰκοσιτεσσάρων στοιχείων συγγραφεῖσα καὶ ἐκτεθεῖσα πρὸς τὸν βεστάρχην κῦριν Ἰωάννην τὸν λιβελλίσιον, ὃς καὶ τὴν περὶ τούτου ἐρώτησιν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατο*, *Phil. min.* 1.36.107-108; *Encomium in matrem*, 28.1792-1797 (condescending

poses a *hermeneutical* issue in jurisprudence as well, as the hermeneutic act of searching for and uncovering physical and theological hidden meanings is required[134].

4. Conclusions

Psellos derives his mysteric view of philosophy from a longstanding philosophical tradition. However, there is also originality in his thought. Specifically, in *Or. min.* 14, the Byzantine philosopher draws upon fundamental elements of mystery cults, as they were incorporated into the philosophical tradition mentioned, particularly the themes of initiation and hierarchy, to establish theoretical foundations and concepts regarding legal training and jurisprudence. Thus, this is not merely a coupling of law and philosophy, a "philosophization" of jurisprudence, which is also evident in other works by Psellos, but a deeper correlation between law and the mysteries of the ancients. The integration of legal science and education into such a telestic framework aligns with Psellos' mysteric approach to hermeneutics, in which the hierophant serves as the principal model.

Psellos presents as a model the mysteries of the ancients for jurisprudence, although he characterizes them as ceremonies of the pagans. He emphasizes the need for initiation into the science of law, as he does in his references

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disposition but he knows Hekate's themes well); *Ὀνειδίζει τοῦς μαθητὰς ἀμελοῦντας*, *Or. min.* 24.84-85, where he encourages his disciples to reject the stories about Hekate, in fact about her springs. However, he places the dissuasion in the context of a larger argumentation (70-104) in which he advises his students to be selective about ancient philosophical and mystical literature, thus presupposing that they must know Hekate's themes.

134. The same concept of discovering Chaldean philosophical truths through jurisprudence is promoted in *Or. fun.* 3.22.18-28. See discussion of these passages in Wolska-Conus, L'école, 58-59. The researcher occasionally raised the question of initiation and not at all that of the hierophant in jurisprudence, although she briefly discussed the quoted passage of *Or. fun.* 3.10.49-51, where Psellos speaks of the Eleusinian Mysteries, but also Psellos' writings mentioned in my note 104. Indeed, *ib.*, 78 and notes 405-408, based on these writings she noted that the Byzantine philosopher presents a false unity of his legal works by presenting them as a gradual initiation of a religious sacramental type. Moreover, the author did not discuss the present *Or. min.* 14 and did not mention the hermeneutical dimension of the mentioned passages.

to philosophy[135]. In fact, he highlights not only the Eleusinian but also the Mithraic Mysteries. Psellos emphasizes that no one can enter the adyton of legal knowledge uninitiated, thus introducing the concept of concealment. He believes that only the hierophant is allowed to enter. By this he means the scholar, as in philosophy, who reveals the mysteries to the initiated, implying himself[136].

Systematic and long-term pre-education is therefore an absolute prerequisite. This includes more than philosophy, however. Indeed, Psellos, in speaking about the mysteries of theology revealed to the judge, presupposes the secret teachings of the *Chaldean Oracles*, particularly their references to Hekate[137]. The image of nature on the back of Hekate, invoked by Psellos, is connected with the cosmology of the heavenly bodies and with the dominance of Hekate in the world of the senses. This symbol is also related to interpretation, as reference is made to oracles, given by Hekate against her stay on the moon in the context of Neoplatonic mysticism (theurgy). The image serves as a symbol of the need for the law student to transcend rhetoric and move into philosophy. Therefore, the knowledge of the *Chaldean Oracles* is presented as being essential. Hence, the philosophical view of

135. See e.g. Diamantopoulos, *Die Hermeneutik*, 811 (based on *Ep.* 134.55-68); Id., Diamantopoulos, *Η ερμηνευτική* 316-320 (based on *Theol.* 2.1), as well as note 106 above.

136. See also Psellos' self-references as a hierophant in *Ἀλληγορία περὶ τῆς Σφιγγός*, *Phil. min.* 1.44.2-14, also the bibliography in note 8 of this paper; see also, <*Μαθητῇ τινι*>, *Ep.* 455.13-18, 23-30, with M. Jeffreys, Summaries of the Letters of Michael Psellos, in: *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*, ed. M. Jeffreys et al. [Oxford studies in Byzantium], Oxford 2017, 143-445, at 319-320, where Psellos, recognizing the value of one of his students, declares using telestic language that he will initiate him, while his student will be the leader of the other students by initiating them; Psellos also possesses secret knowledge in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries; revelations will take place, when he introduces the student to the adyton: *Ἐπεὶ τοιγαροῦν* [...] *φιλόσοφον τὴν ἀπόκρισιν δέδωκας, οὐ τοῖς ἐμοῖς θιασώταις μόνον συναριθμῶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ προαριθμῶ καὶ προτίθημι καὶ τοῦ χοροῦ κορυφαῖόν σε τίθημι, ἵν' αὐτὸς ἐξ ἐμοῦ πρῶτος μυῇ, οἱ δ' ἄλλοι τελῶνται παρὰ σοῦ, καὶ διὰ σοῦ μέσου οὐ τὰ τῶν Ἐλευσίνων μοι ἀπόρρητα δέχωνται, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἡμέτερα θεοφάνια* [...] *Δεῦρο γοῦν στῆθι πλησίον ἐμοῦ; μυήσομαι γάρ σοι ἴσως τὰ τελεώτερα· καὶ εἰς τὰ κεκρυμμένα τῆς ἐπιστήμης εἰσάξω,* [...] *Ἐγὼ δέ σοι οὐκ ἀνακαλύψω νῦν τὰ μυστήρια, ἀλλ' ὅταν ἐντὸς τῶν ἀδύτων γενώμεθα.*

137. According to Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 444 (Excursus I) by the term θεολόγοι, the Neoplatonists refer to either the *Chaldean Oracles* or the Orphics.

jurisprudence presents two main aspects, one secret in a telestic context, related to the Eleusinian and Mithraic Mysteries and one rather mystical, leading to the experience of union with ultimate realities, dependent on the *Chaldean Oracles*. However, in both cases hidden truths are revealed.

Law now appears to be very close to philosophy. However, their common denominator is the hierophant's symbol. The philosophization of jurisprudence and rhetoric is understood through a program where one gradually abandons these sciences to move into secret knowledge as a hierophant. When Psellos speaks of the need to go through all the stages of initiation, he means the gradual ending in hermeneutics, which is understood as the revelation of secrets. In fact, every field of science, every social class, and every culture displays hidden worlds suitable for revelations. They uncover great philosophical meanings or function as images of higher forms of thought. This requires having the right person for their investigation, the hierophant. The hierophant is the high priest of this philosophy.

Why is this hieratic dimension so important? The answer lies in the concept of the revelation of the hidden teachings, an essential feature of the ritual. Only revelation and hieratic hermeneutics, and not simply logic-controlled philosophy, reveal the true meaning of jurisprudence. By this Psellos means not a religious practice but the discovery of philosophical meanings even in texts that are not considered philosophical, such as grammar or legal texts. In this context, the knowledge of secret literature becomes necessary[138]. This is also the true philosophy according to Psellos. In fact, the entrance into and the view of the adyton by only highly initiated persons, guided by the hierophant, have an equally great importance in this hermeneutical context, in relation to the confrontations of Psellos' time. The

138. The following passage briefly shows the inseparable relationship of philosophy with mysticism, indeed with the *Chaldean Oracles*, in Psellian thought, *Ep.* 134.19-24: *Τοιοῦτον γὰρ τὸ φιλόσοφον χρῆμα: ἢ ἐχέμυθον πάντῃ καὶ μυστηριῶδες, ἢ συμβολικὸν καὶ ὑπὸ φαύλοις παραπετάσμασί τε καὶ σχήμασι τὰ τῆς σοφίας κρύπτον ἀπόρρητα. Διὰ ταῦτα τοῖς ἀρχαίοις φιλοσόφοις θεολογοῦσι, πατέρες, καὶ δυνάμεις, καὶ νοῖ, τριαδικαί τε ἴυγγες, καὶ τελετάρχαι, καὶ κοσμαγοὶ τῷ λόγῳ παρελαμβάνοντο.* Philosophy always has a secret character in a mysteric context, which is why the Neoplatonists used the polyarchy of the *Chaldean Oracles* as a cover of mysteries; for this polyarchy see *Phil. min.* 2.39; 2.40; 2.41; *Theol.* 1.23.33-55; 1.51.84-95. Therefore, interpretative revelation becomes necessary. The same applies to jurisprudence, which is also presented as part of philosophy.

entrance and the view to the sanctuary of the church temple was a key point of confrontation between the mystical theologians and the school of Psellos. I considered that the choice of the symbol of the hierophant did not only theoretically and abstractly serve to promote hermeneutics. At the same time, it functioned as a counterweight to the canonical invocation of the mystics (Stethatos) of the permitted entry and view of the sanctuary for the clergy only, which the mystics exploited symbolically. The clergy, through the entrance to the sanctuary, symbolized for Stethatos the theological method, which, beginning with ascesis, culminated in the view of mysteries in a secret adyton. Therefore, the philosophical method was rejected for such a purpose. Psellos opposes the layman philosopher who enters the philosophical sanctuary as a hierophant and discovers the mysteries of philosophical theology[139].

This process shows that the concept of the hierophant and the ritual grades of initiation related to him are not merely a metaphor, in order to highlight the need for pre-education in law and philosophy[140]. They highlight specific epistemic qualities that the process of acquiring knowledge must possess, qualities that extend beyond the mere assimilation of abstract concepts. The hierophant is an essential philosophical symbol because it serves to promote hermeneutics as the philosophy par excellence, which I consider to be the basic philosophical position of the Byzantine philosopher.

139. See in more detail Diamantopoulos, *Die Hermeneutik*, the fifth chapter of the second part, as well as Diamantopoulos, Remarks.

140. For a similar thought see F. Bernard, Educational Networks in the Letters of Michael Psellos, in: *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*, ed. M. Jeffreys et al. [Oxford Studies in Byzantium], Oxford 2017, 13-41, at 25. The scholar comments on the passage *Ep.* 455.13-17, where we find Psellos' references to initiation in the context of his school, see my note 136.

Ο δικαστης ως Ιεροφαντης στο *Or. min.* 14 του Μιχαηλ Ψελλου

Η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει την τελετουργική γλώσσα στο *Or. min.* 14 του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού στο πλαίσιο των απόψεών του για τη νομική παιδεία. Εκτίθενται η ευρύτερη προβληματική της ερμηνευτικής του βυζαντινού φιλοσόφου, το φιλοσοφικό του υπόβαθρο και η σχέση φιλοσοφίας και νομικής στη σκέψη του. Δίνεται έμφαση στην εστίασή του στους βαθμούς της μύησης, στο άδυτο και στον ιεροφάντη των αρχαίων παγανιστικών Μυστηρίων, καθώς και στη χρήση των *Χαλδαϊκών Χρησμών*. Τίθεται ως θεμελιώδης υπόθεση εργασίας ότι ο Ψελλός, μέσω αυτής της τακτικής, εκφιλοσοφεί τη νομική επιστήμη σε ένα τελετουργικό πλαίσιο, ώστε να εξυψώσει την ερμηνευτική ως τη βασική φιλοσοφική του πρόταση.