

Theodore Metochites, *On Morals or Concerning Education*. Translated by SOPHIA XENOPHONTOS (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 61). Cambridge, Massachusetts – London: Harvard University Press 2020. xxvi, 285 pp. – ISBN 978-0-6742-4463-4

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The *Ethikos* of Theodore Metochites, a protreptic speech promoting the idea of *vita contemplativa*, is one of the “iconic” works that mirror the intellectual identity of the most prominent scholar of the early Palaeologan period.¹ Addressing a (rather fictitious) young man who has neglected his studies the author “teaches” about the value of knowledge/wisdom, which is principally acquired through a way of life devoted to the scientific study of the world, in order to discover its essence and the laws that govern it. This way of life, namely the life of the mind, may lead the man to direct contact with God and offers, in any case, an ineffable spiritual delight to those who follow it. As POLEMIS puts it in a recent study, Metochites adopts in *Ethikos* “the mask of a Greek sage of ancient times” –like Plato, Philo of Alexandria and Synesios of Cyrene, whose ideas he shares– and projects through it his self-image as an intellectual.²

IOANNIS POLEMIS, the Metochites scholar *par excellence*, was the first to edit and translate the *Ethikos* in a modern language, namely modern Greek,

1. Metochites himself characterizes this work as the “herald of his mind”; see Theodore Metochites, Poem XII, 200–206, ed. IOANNIS POLEMIS, *Theodori Metochitae Carmina* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 83). Turnhout 2015, p. 232: ἀμφί τε παιδείης ἐπικαλέσας ἢ δ’ Ἠθικόν, / τὸν σύ γ’ ἐτήτυμον ὡς γ’ ἐδούκεις τῆμος ἔμοιγε / πευκαλίμησι μεμεστῶσθ’ ἔκρινας εὖ φρεσὶ πάντα, / ἀτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω τόνδ’ ἔμμεν’ ἡμετέροιο / νοῦδος κήρυκα, τὰ στροφάοντ’ ἐνὶ γ’ ἔνδοθεν αὐτῷ / δῆλα τιθεύμενον, ἃ μὲν εὖ μάλ’ ἀμφοδόν, ἃ δὲ / τοῖσιν ἔπειτ’ ἐφοράουσ’ ἐς βάθος εἴσω γνωτά – English translation by IOANNIS POLEMIS, *Theodore Metochites, Poems* (Corpus Christianorum in Translation 26). Turnhout 2017, p. 251: the first, as you know, is the speech I called *Ethikos*, dealing with the problem of education, which you thought at the time was meaningful in all respects; but in my view it is the herald of my mind, bringing forward all my inner thoughts; some of them can be easily comprehended, some others are hidden deep within, waiting for the man who could penetrate my mind in order to understand them.

2. See IOANNIS POLEMIS, *Theodore Metochites: Patterns of Self-Representation in Fourteenth-Century Byzantium* (New Directions in Byzantine Studies). London 2024, 95–129.

about 30 years ago.³ A revised version of both the text edition and translation appeared in 2002,⁴ while a new edition of the original Greek text, following modern editorial practices, was published, as part of the whole corpus of Metochites' rhetorical works, in 2019 in the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* series by both POLEMIS and the signatory,⁵ coinciding temporally with the preparation of the first English translation of the text by SOPHIA XENOPHONTOS for the series *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*. This English translation of the *Ethikos* that appeared in 2020 is the subject of the present review.

The book under consideration opens with a short introductory chapter (pp. vii–xxvi), dealing briefly with subjects such as the biography of Theodore Metochites, the author's historical and intellectual milieu, as well as his literary production, the date of composition and structure of the *Ethikos* (rendered in English as *On Morals*),⁶ the genre of the work and its place in the tradition of moral philosophy, and, finally, its multifaceted character that offers versatile material for scholarly research/analysis. In the last section of the Introduction XENOPHONTOS describes the basic principles guiding the English translation of the text.

The English translation of the *Ethikos*, which covers the main body of the

3. Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης, Ἠθικός ἢ περὶ παιδείας. Εἰσαγωγή – Κριτική ἔκδοση – Μετάφραση – Σημειώσεις IOANNIS D. POLEMIS (Κείμενα Βυζαντινῆς Λογοτεχνίας 1). Athens 1995.

4. Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης, Ἠθικός ἢ περὶ παιδείας. Εἰσαγωγή – Κριτική ἔκδοση – Μετάφραση – Σημειώσεις IOANNIS D. POLEMIS. Second, revised edition (Κείμενα Βυζαντινῆς Λογοτεχνίας 1). Athens 2002.

5. Theodorus Metochites, Orationes. Ediderunt IOANNIS POLEMIS et ELENI KALTSOGIANNI (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2031). Berlin – Boston 2019.

6. As regards the date of composition of the *Ethikos*, XENOPHONTOS seems to accept the argument of VOUDOURI that Metochites' complaints about the lack of time for scholarly activity should be associated with his heavy administrative duties owing to the crisis caused by the Catalan campaign, and she thus places the composition of the work in the period between 1307 and 1317/20 (pp. xii–xiii); cf. ALEXANDRA VOUDOURI, Representations of Power in the *Byzantios* Oration of Theodore Metochites: Illusions and Realities. *Parekbolai* 3 (2013) pp. 107–130, here pp. 110–111. However, as I have argued in a recent article, these statements of Metochites should not be taken at face value, for the author wishes, in any case, to stress the difficulties in combining the life of action with contemplative life; see ELENI KALTSOGIANNI, Theodore Metochites' Hagiographical Orations: An Introduction, in: FREDERICK LAURITZEN (ed.), Theodore Metochites: Statesman and Philosopher, 1270–1332 (THEANDRITES. Studies on Byzantine Philosophy and Christian Platonism). Steubenville, OH, 2024, pp. 57–77, here p. 61 with n. 26.

book (pp. 1–245), is given side by side with the original Greek text, which reproduces the 2002 edition taking also into account some improvements from the most recent one. These are indicated in a short chapter entitled “Notes to the Text” (pp. 255–256), preceded by another short note about the editorial history and manuscript tradition of the *Ethikos* (pp. 251–253). The translation is accompanied by some brief explanatory notes (pp. 257–273), focusing mainly on the “identification”⁷ of Metochites’ sources, especially as regards direct quotations. There follows a list of concordances of the chapter numbers between the Greek text that serves as basis for the translation and its 2019 edition in the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* (pp. 277–278), a bibliographical list (pp. 279–282), and an Index of proper and other names deriving from the translation (pp. 283–285).

The “unorthodox”, as XENOPHONTOS aptly characterizes it, style of Metochites (p. xxi) makes the translation of his work an extremely challenging task. Compared to the modern Greek translation by POLEMIS this English translation of the *Ethikos* is basically more accurate, for it remains as faithful to the syntactic structure of the original text as possible. Of course, there are some points where a free rendering of the text, following POLEMIS’ model, seems to be the only way, but even in such cases XENOPHONTOS’ translation is slightly more exact. In the following I will suggest a few improvements or, at least, I will underline some points of the translation that could be further improved:

2.3 καὶ δευτέρων ἀμεινόνων, φασίν, ὧν ἐξῆς πλέως ἦν ἐπὶ σοί, ζημιούμενος: and moreover when I pay the price of losing one after another the even better hopes with which, as they say, I was filled for you] the even better hopes, as the say, with which I was thereafter/continually filled for you.

4.1 μετὰ τινος ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν ἀναγκαίου δικαίου: with what seems to me a certain fitting necessity] with an essential, as it seems to me, right to do that.

5.2 οἱ νοῦν φοροῦντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐλάθοντο, οὐδ’ ἐπιστρέφονται καθάπαξ: although these people have rationality within them, they do not realize this; they totally abstain from introspection] although ..., they do not realize this; they pay to it (i.e. rationality) no attention at all.

5.2 ἀτεχνῶς ὅσπερ τὰ ἀνδρείκελα τῶν τυπωμάτων: just like unskillfully molded human statues] just like human statues.

5.3 πρὸς τὴν ἔσω σπουδαζομένην πραγματείαν καὶ πολιτείαν: for our internal spiritual occupations and the public arrangement of our lives] for our internal spiritual occupations and the intellectual polity/constitution/way of life.

7. I am using quotes, because the text’s sources had almost totally been identified in the 2002 edition.

7.1 καὶ κατ' ἔθη τε καὶ ἥθη καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἱερὰν διακόσμησιν πολιτεύματα: regarding religious covenants, the customs and behavior of the congregation, and the administration of the remaining aspects of the holy government of the Church] regarding the administration of religious covenants, customs, and the remaining/all other aspects of the holy order/government of the Church.

8.2 τῶν οὖν δοκούντων φασὶ σφίσι βελτίστων, τούτων περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δοκούντων αὐτοῖς καὶ λεγομένων: those things that seem best for themselves, they say, seem best to them also about the divine and it is these things that they eventually say] those things that seem best for themselves, they say, these are also what they believe and say about the divine.

8.4 κακοὶ καὶ σοφισταὶ καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ σκηνηῆς καὶ δράματος πλέω ἀγροικίαν ἐργολαβοῦντες δῆμου: they are vile sophists, beggars of the stage and the dramatic plays, who make much profit out of the rusticity of people] they are vine sophists and beggars, and/who make profit out of the rusticity of people, more than if they acted on the stage and in a dramatic play.

9.3 ἐκτραγωδοῦντες: pompously proclaim] declaim tragically/act as if in a tragedy.

9.3 πῶς ἂν εἶπη τις: how shall I put it] how shall one put it.

11.3 μόνην δ' ἐκείνην εὐδαιμονίαν ἐμνηστεύσατο: seeking only the prosperity] being only betrothed to the prosperity/espousing only the prosperity.

13.1 καὶ πᾶσαν ... προσπάθειαν ἀποτρέχουσι: that race past every preference] every passion/ obsession.

13.2 τὸ ἀτύρβαστον σφίσι καθάπαξ σοφῶς βουλόμενοι καὶ οἰκονομοῦντες καὶ μὴ τι προσπίπτειν ἐντεῦθεν πολέμου καὶ ἀσχολίας ἔχον ἀνάγκην: they wisely seek absolute tranquility for themselves and also manage to repel anything that might forcibly lead them away from there to disruption and distraction] they wisely seek absolute tranquility for themselves and manage it, and they also manage to avoid that something comes suddenly upon them and forces them to battle and engage with it.

13.4 καὶ εἰ τοῦ παντὸς ἰσοστάσιοι: and if they are equal in value to the rest of the world] to the whole world.

13.4 καὶ τοῦ λογισμοῦ τροπὰς ἐκάστοτε καὶ ἐφ' ἐκάστοις: and to the deviation of our mind toward different paths on various occasions] and to the deviation of our mind on various occasions and for different reasons.

15.3 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐκ ἀφαιρεῖσθαι μήτε τὸν ἀπὸ ταύτης πλοῦτον ἐχθρόν, ὅτι μὴ πέφυκε: no adversary can deprive the possessor of the wealth that comes with wisdom, because it is unnatural for this to happen] because such an adversary does not exist.

17.3 καὶ ἴλεων δὴ καὶ ἀκύμονα καθίστησι τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ πρὸς αὐτὴν καταφυγὴ καὶ παρ' αὐτῆς ὑποδοχὴ καὶ καρποφορία τε καὶ ξενία φέρειν οὐκ ἀγεννῶς τὰ λυποῦντα: and his seeking refuge in wisdom renders his soul gentle and calm, while the acceptance it provides and its fertility and hospitality make his soul bear

the sad events nobly] and his seeking refuge in wisdom, the acceptance provided by the latter, as well as its fertility and hospitality render his soul gentle and calm, so that it can bear the sad events nobly.

18.1 καὶ βιωτικὴν ἰλαρῶναι καὶ καταστορέσαι δυσχέρειαν: and by keeping the misfortune of his life in check] and by appeasing and smoothing the misfortune of his life.

18.2 ἄτε προωδευκότας: since they have already tested them] since they have already paced them.

19.1 σωφρονίζων ἑαυτῶν ἐπιστρέφεισθαι: urging them toward repentance] urging them to return/pay attention to themselves.

19.1 καὶ διαλεγομένων ἐπακροᾶσθαι τὰ βέλτιστα: and can listen to them as they dispense the best advice] and can listen to them, when they talk to each other, giving the best advice.

20.3 (οὐδὲ) πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἅπασαν καὶ τῆς φύσεως ἑτερότητα ἐπιχειρήσεως: it did not venture to discuss in its totality the complexity of what exists and of nature] the diversity of what exists and of nature.

20.3 οὐδ' ὅρους ἐντελεῖς οὐστυνας ἄρα καὶ μέτρα καὶ συνθήματα δεξαμένης καὶ τεταγμένης: it had not yet acquired or determined its complete terminology, rhythm and rules] its complete scope, measures and rules.

20.5 νῦν μὲν φιλόσοφον ἔννοϊαν προκεχειρισμένοις δόγματα πλεῖστα ὅσα καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἰδέαν καὶ λογικὰς ἐργασίας, καὶ ταῦθ' ἥπερ ἄρα βούλει καὶ τὴν γνώμην ἐκίνησεν ἔρωσ, εἴτε μεθ' ἧς ἔχει φύσιν ἀπλαστίας καὶ πρεσβυτικῆς εὐγενείας φιλοσοφία καὶ ποθεῖς τὸ ἀνεπιμέλητον μὲν παντάπασι διὰ σωφροσύνην: when we examine a particular philosophical notion, we can procure whatever doctrines pertain both to every form and to rational activities, and these in whatever manner as you like, and however desire has prompted your judgment, whether you seek the complete simplicity that comes through moderation, with which philosophy shares a nature of purity and elderly nobility] whether you want them (i.e. doctrines) to be accompanied by the natural purity and elderly nobility of philosophy, and you seek the complete simplicity that comes through moderation.

21.2 καὶ τόπων καινότητος καὶ πράξεων παμπληθῆ καὶ παμμεγέθη φοράν–παλαιά τε καὶ νέα– καὶ βίους οὐστυνας ἄρα καὶ πολιτεύματα: novel places, numerous significant events, and various different lives and constitutions –old and new alike] novel places, numerous significant events –old and new alike– and various different lives and constitutions.

22.1 τὰ οἰκεῖα αὐτῆς ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς δαπανῶσα: using their own resources] using its own resources for itself.

23.2 μὴ γλῶτταν ἔχουσαι νικῶσαν ἐπὶ παντός, ὡς ἔοικε, τοῦ χρόνου: because they lacked a powerful, timeless sort of language, it seems] a sort of language prevailing totally, as it seems, over time.

23.3 καὶ μηδὲν ὅ,τι βραχύ, μηδ' ἀδοξίαν, ὅστις χρῶτο: nothing is disgraceful, however insignificant, for the person who uses it] nothing is insignificant, nor disgraceful for the person who uses it.

25.3 συλλογιζόμενοι πάνθ' ὁμοῦ χρήμαθ' ἃ ξυνίσασι γεωργοῦντα πλοῦτον: they think of every possible means they can to harvest wealth] which they know that can harvest wealth.

25.3 καὶ περινοοῦσι καὶ μαγγανεύουσιν, εἴ τί που ἔξεστιν ἔτι νέον: and try to think of something novel and dress their dishes artificially to the extent this is possible] and try to think of and contrive something novel to the extent this is possible.

26.1 κατ' ἄλλος ἄλλο τι πάντως ἢ ἄλλα καὶ πάντες ἅπανθ': each for a different reason or reasons] each for a different reason or reasons, and all of them for all possible reasons.

26.3 καὶ τοῦ θειοτέρου μέρους ἄκρατος, αὐτῆς μόνης τῆς ψυχῆς, οὐκ οἶδ' ὡς εἴ τί γ' ἄλλο: partaking exclusively of divinity, pertaining to the very soul more than anything else] partaking exclusively of the divine aspect of human nature, the very soul, more than anything else.

26.4 ἄλλ' ἕκαστος καθεωραμένος οἷός τε ἔσται θαυμάσαι τὸ κεκραμένον ἄρα καὶ εὐξύμβλητον ὥρα τοσαύτη καὶ χάριτι: but everyone who beholds it will be able to admire its easily recognizable combination of tremendous beauty and grace] its easily attainable combination with tremendous beauty and grace.

27.2 σὺν ἡδονῇ δ' ὁμως καὶ γλυκυθυμία συμπεφυκὸς πάνυ τοι πλείστη καὶ πολυεράστῳ: it is automatically accompanied by great and highly desirable pleasure and delight] it is by nature combined with great and highly desirable pleasure and delight.

28.1 ἐνταῦθ' οὗ καὶ πλείστον ἔστι καὶ κάλλιστον καὶ εἰς ἀγλαΐαν καὶ τρυφήν τοῦ βελτίστου καὶ βασιλικοῦ μέρους, αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἐπιστήμης καὶ παιδείας τελείωσιν: in this latter case, the pleasure is both great and extremely beautiful, it directs our most important and sovereign part, the soul itself, toward splendor and enjoyment, it is brought to completion through the assistance of knowledge and education] it brings us/the man to completion through the assistance of knowledge and education.

30.4 οὕτε ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ ὀλέσθαι γέγονε: nor was the irrational part of the soul created to act against the rational part] created in order to perish.

30.4 κατατιθασσεῖον εὖ μάλα καὶ ἡνιοχοῦν: taming it effectively] taming (it) effectively and reining it.

31.1 τῷ ὄντι γὰρ πολὺ τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν αὐτὴν ἔχουσαν καὶ μεγίστην ἰσχὺν εἰς τὴν φύσιν συνέξευξεν ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀμείνοσι πράγμασι πλείω ἑαυτῆς ἢ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα ἅπαντα: for, indeed, since pleasure possesses great appeal and enormous power, God has endowed nature with a portion of pleasure that is greater than the portion of all other things that aim at what is best] with a portion of pleasure, aiming at what is best, a portion greater than that of all other things.

31.2 καὶ πρότερον ἤδη εἰρημένον οὐκ ἄλλως τις ἔχον εὐρήσει, εἰ βούλοιο τῶν ἀνδρῶν πυνθάνεσθαι καὶ μάλιστα ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ πεῖραν λαμβάνειν: I have already referred to this before, and there is no other way one can learn about the topic, if one wishes, than to ask men about it or indeed experience it himself] and if one wants to ask men about it or indeed experience it himself, he will find out/discover that it is just as I have put it.

33.1 διὰ πάντων ὡς ἔπος κλεῖζων καὶ ἀνατιθεις αὐτῇ τὰ δοκοῦντα κάλλιστα, ἀφ' ἐστίας, ὡς ἂν τῷ δόξαι, τάναντία δρῶν καὶ περιπίπτων ἑμαυτῷ: I furnished it with whatever praise I considered most beautiful *from* the proverbial *beginning*, so that I might appear to some to be acting contrary to my words and to be caught in my own snare] I furnished it, as they say, with whatever praise I considered most beautiful, so that I might appear to some to be acting *from the* (proverbial) *beginning* contrary to my words and to be caught in my own snare.

33.3 καὶ πρότερον μὲν ἤδη γεγονός τε εὐρήσει τοῦτο καὶ εἰρημένον, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν αὖθις ἐροῦμεν: meanwhile he will find that now again I shall speak in accord with what has previously been done and said] meanwhile he will find that this has already been done and said previously, however I shall speak about it now again.

36.3 καὶ εἰ μάλιστα ξυνεώρακε καὶ καταμεμέτρηκεν ἐξειπὼν εἰς ἀκρίβειαν, παραπλησίως ἔχειν, ὥσπερ ἄρα καὶ περὶ τὸ σωματικὸν τοῦτο κάλλος τότε συμβαῖνον ὁρῶμεν: and if someone has closely examined and assessed this, he could describe it with due precision, behaving much as we see happening in the case of physical beauty] and if someone has closely examined and assessed this, describing it with due precision, he would behave such as we see etc.

37.2 ἄγανται μὲν καὶ καταμεμετρήκασιν, ἦν ἄρα τὰ πλείω τῆς κρείττονος καὶ ἀνεπιτιμῆτου μοίρας καὶ ἀρετῆ καὶ λόγῳ κεκόσμηταί τῷ προσόντα: express admiration and ponder whether the main portions of a superior and blameless fame are adorned in a person by the presence of virtue and reason] express admiration and examine whether etc.

41.2 οὐθ' ἡμῖν αὖθις ξυνδοκεῖ καὶ ἀπανδάνει τὰ πρὶν κάλλιστα καὶ παρεώραται: while beautiful objects we previously were fond of and that pleased us, we later on disregard] while objects that previously looked very beautiful to us, later on do not seem so good, and we (thus) dislike and disregard them.

41.3 καὶ μὴν ἔτι δοῦλοι πρὸς δεσπότας ἅπαντα κρύφα διαλοιδοροῦνται κακουργοῦντες καὶ ὑπολογιζόμενοι: the slaves, meanwhile, make secret fun of their masters, and contriving wickedness of all sorts, they reckon the situation up] make secret fun of their masters on every occasion/for everything, and contriving wickedness/acting with malevolence, they reckon the situation up.

44.2 ὡς οὐκ οἶδ' εἶ τι τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων: and I am not conscious that a more fitting example exists] that there is anything else like this.

44.2 καὶ οὐδὲν ἱερὸν ὅλως οὐθ' ἐν τοῦτο μόνον χρήσιμον μεταχειρίσαι, ὅπως ἂν

εἴη τις αἰδῶς παρὰ τὸν βίον καὶ χώρα τῷ συστήματι: not revered at all but useful only for a single purpose, namely to help us procure some respect in our life and some living space for our community] not revered at all, nor the one and only useful thing we should deal with in order to procure some respect in our life etc.

45.4 καὶ προσταλαιπωρῶ μὲν ἔτ' ἀμέλει ζητῶν ἄρα καὶ πλανώμενος ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἔρωτα: and I am now still wandering around and suffering hardships as I seek to find my old love again] and I am now still suffering hardships wandering around as I seek etc.

46.2 οὐκ οἶδ' ὧντινων: of one sort or another] I do not know/I am not conscious of what kind.

46.3 ἀλλ' ἀεὶ ζημίαν ἐμποιοῦσι τῷ νῷ πλείστην: but their cares constantly distract their mind considerably] but their cares constantly cause great harm to their mind.

46.3 καὶ τῶν καλλίστων ἀφαιρούμεναι τοὺς προτεθειμένους: and deprive those who have undertaken these obligations of what is best] and deprive of what is best those who intend/aim at it.

47.1 πρὸς τὴν λογικὴν ἐργασίαν τε καὶ φύσιν: against intellectual undertakings and the scholarly nature] and the nature of intellect itself.

48.3 τάντεῦθεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἅπαντ' ἀλλαττόμενον, ὅποῖά ποτ' ἂν μέλλη ξυμβαίνειν, τῆς ἀπὸ ταύτης εὐγενείας καὶ δόξης: changing, it seems, everything from his previous life, whatever its course may have been, for the nobility and glory from this life] for the nobility and glory of/that comes from wisdom.

48.3 ὡς ἐξεῖναι οἱ τάχα καὶ πρὸς ἄλλοις ἔχειν καὶ διαφέρειν: for this could scarcely happen or come to fulfillment in other occupations] so that it would be possible for him to be involved in and carry through/out other occupations.

50.3 εἴρηται δὴ τοῦτο πρότερον πολλάκις, ὃ φιλότης, εἴρηται: this has indeed been said many times before, my friend] this has indeed been said many times before, my friend, it has been said.

50.4 καὶ κατακεκύβευται μικρά τε καὶ μείζω καὶ ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα: and everything alike, significant or insignificant, turns on its head] is beaten in the play (?).

51.1 βούλονται δ' ὅμως ὡς πράττουσι: but are eventually satisfied with the outcome of their actions] but they eventually adjust their will/expectations to the outcome of their actions.

51.3 καὶ τοίνυν δὴ σπουδάζουσιν ἔνιοι σφόδρ' εἰς ἃ δυσχεραίνουσι, καὶ συντείνονται πλεῖν ἢ πρὸς ἃ ἐρῶσι καὶ γνώμης ὅλης σπουδάζουσιν ἕτεροι: some people even engage ardently in activities they hate, while other strive for them more than for what they love and pursue with all their will] and strive for them more than others do for what they love and pursue with all their will.

51.5 καὶ ποτὲ μὲν δὴ θύουσιν εὐκολία τινὶ καὶ καθάπαξ ἐρραστωνευμένῳ βίῳ καὶ πάντων ἀπολύτῳ τε καὶ ἀπραγματεύτῳ, θύουσι δ' ἐκ μεταστροφῆς ἄλλοτε τοῦναντίον φερεπόνῳ καὶ τολμηρᾷ γνώμῃ: some times they offer sacrifices contentedly with a way of life that is completely idle, utterly relaxed, and free from

worldly anxieties, and then they change again and sacrifice instead with a patient, brave spirit] sometimes they give themselves over to ease/softness and to a way of life ..., and then they change again and give instead themselves over to/acquire a patient, brave spirit.

51.5 ἀλλ' ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταχωρεῖ τε καὶ τρέπεται ἀτεκμάρτοις τισὶ παντάπασι καὶ ἀορίστοις εὐμεταβόλου φύσεως καὶ λογισμῶν εὐρίπτοις καὶ κύβοις καὶ περικλίσεισιν εἰς πάνθ' ὁμοῦ καὶ τάναντία πράγματα: but everything turns upside down and changes, depending on every sort of boundless and indefinite current of variable nature and on the unstable dice game of our thoughts, into every direction and its opposite] depending on some sort of utterly boundless and indefinite currents of our variable nature and thoughts, like on a dice game, and sliding towards every direction and its opposite.

54.1 καὶ κατορθούντων εὐδρομα ἐπιδιδόντα: and manage to handle capably the issues they administer] and manage to prosperously advance in their lives (?).

56.3 πρὸς τοὺς τοσοῦτους ἐργώδεις καὶ πονηροὺς κομιδῆ φροντισμοὺς καὶ τὴν ἀγχόνην τῶν λογισμῶν τούτων, ὡς εἴρηται νῦν, οὓς αἱ μεγάλοι τύχαι τρέφουσι: compared to the troublesome, greivous reflections which, as we have just said, suffocate the person who has them and our nourished by great success in life] compared to the troublesome, greivous reflections and to those thoughts which etc.

59.1 καὶ κακὸν κακῶς τε καὶ κάκιον ἀείποτ' ἐμπομπεύοντα τῇ τύχῃ: always bragging with increasing wickedness about his good fortune] a bad man bragging always with increasing wickedness etc.

60.3 πλέειν δ' ὡς ἔτυχεν ἀνυπόπτως τε καὶ παντάπασι ἀπεριμερίμῳς: but to voyage in a carefree manner with no concern whatsoever] but to voyage anyhow, in a carefree manner etc.

60.6 τῇ δέ γ' ἔπειτα σαυτοῦ ψυχῇ ..., εἴ γε μέλλει σοι καλῶς ἔχειν: if you plan to be in good condition] if you plan to keep it (i.e. your soul) in a good condition.

60.6 καὶ περὶ πλείονος ὄντως ἢ τούτου ζημία: what would matter more than this loss?] and its loss is a really great disaster.

61.3 τὰ μέγιστα ἴσως ἀγνοοῦμεν καὶ γέλῳτα προσοφλισκάνομεν οὕτω πονηρῶς ἔχοντες: perhaps we fail to perceive what is most important and deserves mockery because we are in such a worthless condition] and (we) deserve mockery.

63.2 ῥώμη μὲν γὰρ προὔχειν ἔστι παραπλησίως καὶ ζῳίσι ἄλλοις: for other animals can be nearly equal or superior to men in physical strength] for other animals can, in a nearly equal manner, be superior to men as regards physical strength.

63.2 καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ βασιλείος ἀμέλει νοῦς, ἐποχούμενος αὐταῖς καὶ κατοπτεύων ἔπειθ' ὕστερον, ἕκαστα μέλλοι προσίεσθαι: so that this kingly mind that rides upon and supervises them will later be able to approach everything] that rides upon them and holds an inspection/explores/ observes will later etc.

65.4 καὶ ὅτου ποτ' ἐρώης ἂν καὶ τύχης, ἔξεστιν ὑποστῆναι καὶ συναλλάξαι λόγου

δόματα: and whatever you might love and partake in can be substituted, offering instead the gifts of reason] you can give substance to/achieve it offering in exchange the gifts of reason.

65.6 καὶ μέντοι καὶ τυχόνθ' ὅτου δέοι ἄν, ἔπειτ' εἰσενεγκεῖν, καὶ τοῦτο πολλάκις: and once you get what you need, you can make the same contribution many times] you can then offer what you have promised, and you can make this/the same contribution many times.

Despite these inaccuracies, the overall evaluation of the *Ethikos*' translation proves it to be an excellent work. SOPHIA XENOPHONTOS has successfully managed to render in fluid English a Greek text which is not equally fluid in its original form, and yet to reproduce in an almost perfect manner its stylistic peculiarities. Thanks to this great job both scholars and students are provided with a very useful tool for the study of Theodore Metochites and his work, as well as the intellectual affairs of the so-called *Early Palaeologan Renaissance*. Moreover, as it has already been observed, the book can equally be a useful tool for a broader audience, namely for all those engaged in intellectual activities, inasmuch as the main subject of the *Ethikos*, the value of human *logos* and the question on how intellectual activity could be harmoniously combined with the (always) growing demands of everyday life, is a perennial and constantly topical issue.⁸

Keywords

Theodore Metochites, *On Morals*; translation

8. See JOHN KEE, [What is the value of humanities in a time of crisis?](#) (last accessed: 6 January 2025).