

12 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2020, 10 H.
EUROPA COMO PLATONISMO

3. Platón bizantino

Prof. Dr. Antonio Lastra

Enlace al webinar: <https://zoom.us/j/96181843668>



EUROPA COMO PLATONISMO

Logos

Prof. Juan Antonio Negrete

Sábado 3 de octubre de 2020, 10 h.

Proclo y el neoplatonismo

Prof. Fernando Vidagany

Sábado 14 de noviembre de 2020, 10 h.

Platón bizantino

Prof. Dr. Antonio Lastra

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EUROPA COMO PLATONISMO

La torre del Virrey. Instituto de Estudios Culturales Avanzados
CEFIRE Humanistic i Social

3 Platón bizantino

Prof. Dr. Antonio Lastra

Webinar/Sábado 12 de diciembre de 2020, 10 h.

Platón bizantino

... *et Roma de more, et Constantinopolis de imitatione*: la corrección de la historia bizantina después del capítulo 48 de *Decline and Fall* de Edward Gibbon e "... il problema della continuità della storia europea" (Arnaldo Momigliano). "... the supplementary constitution of Byzantium" (Steven Runciman) y los "supersticiosos de la ciudad" (Eusebio de Cesarea: πόλεις δεισιδαιμόνωνιφόβω, *superstitiosorum in civitatibus*). Bizancio, entre la historia y la poesía: de Cavafis a Yeats, de Andrea Caffi a Joseph Brodsky.

Definición de los términos: filosofía, teología, dioses poliados, Platón y platonismo, helenos/gentiles/paganos, imperio romano, Cristo y cristianismo, politeísmo/monoteísmo/Trinidad, teocracia, iglesia. Bessarion en Roma.

Λέξις y νοῦς, ἀμετάστροφον y νόστος: Filipo de Opunte, Aristóteles, los *falsafa*, Jorge Gemisto Pletón, Leo Strauss, Catherine H. Zuckert, W.H.F. Altman y el problema de la lectura de las *Leyes* de Platón. La filosofía en el extranjero (περί ἀποδημίας). "Platón bizantino" significa "Platón sin Sócrates".

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1

The most lofty titles and the most humble postures, which devotion has applied to the Supreme Being, have been prostituted by flattery and fear to creatures of the same nature with ourselves. The mode of adoration, of falling prostrate on the ground and kissing the feet of the emperor, was borrowed by Diocletian from Persian servitude; but it was continued and aggravated till the last age of the Greek monarchy. Excepting only on Sundays, when it was waved, from a motive of religious pride, this humiliating reverence was exacted from all who entered the royal presence, from the princes invested with the diadem and purple, and from the ambassadors who represented their independent sovereigns, the caliphs of Asia, Egypt, or Spain, the kings of France and Italy, and the Latin emperors of ancient Rome. In his transactions of business, Liutprand, bishop of Cremona, asserted the free spirit of a Frank and the dignity of his master Otho. Yet his sincerity cannot disguise the abasement of his first audience. When he approached the throne, the birds of the golden tree began to warble their notes, which were accompanied by the roarings of the two lions of gold. With his two companions, Liutprand was compelled to bow and to fall prostrate; and thrice he touched the ground with his forehead. He arose; but, in the short interval, the throne had been hoisted by an engine from the floor to the ceiling, the Imperial figure appeared in new and more gorgeous apparel, and the interview was concluded in haughty and majestic silence. In this honest and curious narrative, the bishop of Cremona represents the ceremonies of the Byzantine court, which are still practised in the Sublime Porte, and which were preserved in the last age by the dukes of Moscovy or Russia. After a long journey by the sea and land, from Venice to Constantinople, the ambassador halted at the golden gate, till he was conducted by the formal officers to the hospitable palace prepared for his reception; but this palace was a prison, and his jealous keepers prohibited all social intercourse, either with strangers or natives. At his first audience, he offered the gifts of his master, slaves, and golden vases, and costly armour. The ostentatious payment of the officers and troops displayed before his eyes the riches of the empire: he was entertained at a royal banquet, in which the ambassadors of the nations were marshalled by the esteem or contempt of the Greeks: from his own table, the emperor, as the most signal favour, sent the plates which he had tasted; and his favourites were dismissed with a robe of honour. In the morning and evening of each day, his civil and military servants attended their duty in the

palace; their labour was repaid by the sight, perhaps by the smile, of their lord; his commands were signified by a nod or a sign; but all earthly greatness stood silent and submissive in his presence. In his regular or extraordinary processions through the capital, he unveiled his person to the public view; the rites of policy were connected with those of religion, and his visits to the principal churches were regulated by the festivals of the Greek calendar. On the eve of these processions, the gracious or devout intention of the monarch was proclaimed by the heralds. The streets were cleared and purified; the pavement was strewn with flowers; the most precious furniture, the gold and silver plate, and silken hangings were displayed from the windows and balconies, and a severe discipline restrained and silenced the tumult of the populace. The march was opened by the military officers at the head of their troops; they were followed in long order by the magistrates and ministers of the civil government: the person of the emperor was guarded by his eunuchs and domestics, and at the church door he was solemnly received by the patriarch and his clergy. The task of applause was not abandoned to the rude and spontaneous voices of the crowd. The most convenient stations were occupied by the bands of the blue and green factions of the circus; and their furious conflicts, which had shaken the capital, were insensibly sunk to an emulation of servitude. From either side they echoed in responsive melody the praises of the emperor; their poets and musicians directed the choir, and long life and victory were the burden of every song. The same acclamations were performed at the audience, the banquet, and the church; and, as an evidence of boundless sway, they were repeated in the Latin, Gothic, Persian, French, and even English language, by the mercenaries who sustained the real or fictitious character of those nations. By the pen of Constantine Porphyrogenitus this science of form and flattery has been reduced into a pompous and trifling volume, which the vanity of succeeding times might enrich with an ample supplement. Yet the calmer reflection of a prince would surely suggest that the same acclamations were applied to every character and every reign; and, if he had risen from a private rank, he might remember that his own voice had been the loudest and most eager in applause, at the very moment when he envied the fortune, or conspired against the life, of his predecessor.

EDWARD GIBBON
Decline and Fall 53

2

Only on the very last evening of the siege, when it was known that the morrow would be the fateful day, all who could do so came to join the Emperor for a final liturgy in Saint Sophia, forgetting all discord at last. It was too late. On 29 May 1453 the Christian Empire, the Kingdom of God on earth, came to an irrevocable end.

To the last the Eusebian theory had endured, coloured in varied tints down the centuries but structurally unaltered. Eusebius would have approved of the words of the Patriarch Antony, written over a thousand years after his death. Byzantium has often been represented as a static society. It was not static. Its arts and its sciences progressed, though the pace was sometimes slow. It adapted its administration from time to time, to suit changing circumstances. But it was conservative in the truest sense of the word. The Byzantines believed that it was their duty and their privilege to conserve the great cultures of the past, of Greece and of Rome, whose heirs they were, imbued with the Christian spirit, in order that civilization itself might endure in a dark and uncertain world. Their religious sense was sincere and intense. They were deeply conscious of eternity, and deeply conscious, too, that the divine is beyond human understanding and can only be interpreted through symbols. The earthly Empire was an ephemeral thing. It could only be justified if it were brought into relation with the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven was the unseen, everlasting Idea. The kingdom on earth could not be more than its earthly shadow, a tangible but transient symbol that should be a preparation for eternity. To fulfil its role it must be righteous and harmonious, and dominated by the True Faith, as far as the True Faith could be known. But sin stalks through the temporal world. The Byzantines were well aware that

their history was full of tales of frailty and folly, of pride, ambition and greed. It was their sinfulness, they believed, that caused their decline and fall. But the ideal remained high, however far its practical realization might fall short of the ideal. It was a genuine attempt to set up a Christian commonwealth on earth that would be in harmony with Heaven.

In fact the origins of the conception were pagan. It was Platonic thought, transmitted by such interpreters as the pagan Plotinus, the Jew Philo, and the Christian heretic Origen, which was combined with the Oriental tradition of Hellenistic monarchy and the pragmatic authority of the Roman Emperor, that formed the foundation on which Eusebius built up his theory of government. But the theory endured because the Byzantines, for all their piety, were practical. They knew that the Emperor, whatever he might symbolize, was a mere man. In spite of the coronation ceremony, he was not a priest. Indeed, as it was his business to lead armies into battle and sit in judgment in secular courts, he could not be a priest. His divine monarchy was limited. He must not pronounce on doctrine; the defeat of Iconoclasm made that clear. Doctrine was a matter only for a Council of all the bishops within the oecumene, on whom the Holy Spirit would descend as It descended on the disciples at Pentecost. Though he was above the Law, yet he must respect it as the guarantor of harmony. Leo VI had broken his own law, by his fourth marriage; and though he was given a dispensation, the *tomus* that closed the controversy indicated that he had done wrong. He must not commit crimes against morality. Michael VIII had to do penance for his treatment of John IV. If his crimes were intolerable, the people would rise and drag him from the throne, as they dragged Phocas and Andronicus I. If he were dangerously incompetent the army or the Palace officials would see to his disposal. The man must be worthy of his job; but if he were, then he was unquestionably the Autocrat.

Despite the efforts of men like Photius and Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch was unquestionably his subordinate. Public opinion approved of the Patriarch acting as the keeper of the Empire's, and the Emperor's, conscience; but he must not put himself on a level with the Emperor, nor meddle in lay politics. After all, God in Heaven has no High Priest there to limit His power. God's viceroy on earth should be similarly unhampered. There was, however, always a vocal minority in Byzantium which challenged the right of the Emperor to give orders to the Church and which, when organized by monastic leaders such as Theodore the Studite, could embarrass and sometimes influence Imperial policy. But, for all its activities, it never succeeded in breaking down the Eusebian constitution.

No form of government can survive for very long without the general approval of the public. In spite of the monks, the ordinary man and woman in Byzantium believed their Empire to be God's holy empire on earth, with the holy Emperor as representative of God before the people and the representative of the people before God. For eleven centuries, from the days of the first Constantine to those of the eleventh, the theocratic constitution of the Christian Roman Empire was essentially unchanged. No other constitution in all the history of the Christian era has endured for so long.

STEVEN RUNCIMAN
The Byzantine Theocracy 161-164

3

Ο τελευταίος χρόνος εἶν' αὐτός. Ο τελευταίος τῶν Γραικῶν
αυτοκρατόρων εἶν' αὐτός. Κι' αλλοίμονον
τι θλιβερά που ομιλοῦν πλησίον του.
Εν τῇ απογνώσει του, ἐν τῇ οδύνῃ
ο Κυρ Θεόφιλος Παλαιολόγος
λέγει «Θέλω θανεῖν μάλλον ἢ ζῆν».
Α Κυρ Θεόφιλε Παλαιολόγο
πόσον καῦμό του γένους μας, καὶ πόση ἐξάντλησι

(πόσῃν ἀπηύδῃσιν ἀπὸ ἀδικίης καὶ κατατρεγμό)
 ἡ τραγικὴς σου πέντε λέξεις περιείχαν.

[Su último año. Y el último emperador griego
 Es él. A pesar mío
 Cuántas voces penosas en torno suyo.
 Desesperado, en el dolor,
 Teófilo Paleólogo
 Dice: “Quiero morir antes que vivir”.
 Ah Teófilo Paleólogo,
 Qué fin de estirpe y cuánto desencanto
 (desaliento por injusticias y persecuciones)
 Encierran esas trágicas cinco palabras.]

KONSTANTIN CAVAFIS

Teófilo Paleólogo (1903, trad. J. M^a Álvarez)

4

I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato. I think I could find in some little wine-shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even, for the pride of his delicate skill would make what was an instrument of power to princes and clerics, a murderous madness in the mob, show as a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect human body. I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers —though not, it may be, poets, for language had been the instrument of controversy and must have grown abstract— spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people. They could copy out of old Gospel books those pictures that seemed as sacred as the text, and yet weave all into a vast design, the work of many that seemed the work of one, that made building, picture, pattern, metal-work of rail and lamp, seem but a single image; and this vision, this proclamation of their invisible master, had the Greek nobility, Satan always the still half-divine Serpent, never the homed scarecrow of the didactic Middle Ages.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

A Vision 279-80

5

Yet my last words must be to admit that the pagans never managed, even with Julian, to produce a consistent case for the interdependence between polytheism and political pluralism in the Roman Empire. If one considers texts carefully, one can see that both sides of the pagan argument were weak. As polytheists, men like Celsus and Julian were making too many concessions to monotheism. Julian at least never really ceased to be a monotheist which does not mean a Christian. On the other hand, the superiority of Greco-Roman pagan culture was still overwhelming and never allowed other cultures to assert their autonomy within the Empire. Celts, Iberians, Pannonians, Punics, and Berbers were latinized; and the Orientals were expected to remain or to become Greeks. As we all know, it was mostly through Christianity that Syrians, Egyptians, and Armenians saved their languages and their souls. We are, however, free to wonder whether at least in the West the Roman Empire would not have been better able to stand up to the barbaric invasions if its plural structure had been taken more seriously both in heaven and on earth. Paradoxically, the plural structure of the pagan state favored an intellectual and linguistic unification which Christianity was unable to preserve. The pagans and the heretics, not to speak of the Jews, lost interest in the

Roman State. Furthermore, the new loyalties toward the Church —or rather the churches— diminished the loyalty toward the State; and the churches attracted the best men, the best leaders. The gain of the Church became the loss of the State. We shall hear again the case for the superiority of enlightened polytheism in a pluralist Roman Empire from an eighteenth-century historian educated, or rather not educated, at Oxford. But it was perhaps Moses Mendelssohn who came nearest to Julian the Apostate at the end of his *Jerusalem* of 1783, though I doubt whether Mendelssohn had ever read Julian: “Brothers, if you care for true piety, let us not feign agreement, where diversity is evidently the plan and purpose of Providence. None of us thinks and feels exactly like his fellow man: why then do we wish to deceive each other with delusive words?” (trans. A. Arkush).

ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO

‘The Disadvantages of Monotheism for a Universal State’ 297

6

Respecto a Platón, se le puede saquear sin fin, extrayendo de él material para las más fastuosas construcciones teológicas, metafísicas, éticas y estéticas. Pero no es posible fundar en Platón (es decir, sobre lo más esencial y significativo que hay en el pensamiento platónico) un movimiento religioso o social, un conjunto de dogmas y de reglas metodológicas que el individuo pueda luego aplicar para caminar por la senda correcta, hacia una meta definida, aunque esa meta sea la salvación del alma.

Llena, como está, de puntos de salida, la obra de Platón no ofrece, por decirlo así, ningún punto de llegada. La irradiación de su pensamiento ha sido continua, y continúa siendo inmensa, en la medida en que indica “cimas”, límites de comprensión y amplitud de miras que hasta ahora no ha sobrepasado ningún pensador. Pero las luces de esas cimas han borrado las huellas de los caminos que conducen a ellas, causando extraños equívocos en lo que atañe a la longitud del camino, es decir, sobre el esfuerzo necesario para llegar. Por ello, desde hace dos mil años hasta ahora, las modas intelectuales de Occidente han visto tantas imitaciones simplificadas o barrocas de lo que impropriamente se llama el “sistema” de Platón. En la obra de Platón no hay sistema, ni siquiera una idea de una “vía única” o de un “método” invariable: todo es creación y, al mismo tiempo, ironía intelectual, y tanto la creación como la ironía son fines en sí mismos. La gnosis, el neoplatonismo de Plotino, la teología cristiana, el sufismo mahometano, el humanismo florentino u oxfordiano se han ennoblecido ataviándose con harapos (casi siempre mal dispuestos con trozos de diversa procedencia) de aquel vestido de luces que es la especulación platónica, siempre indivisible e inaferrable.

ANDREA CAFFI

‘Cristianismo y helenismo’ 14

7

πόλει δέ, ἥτις ἂν μήτε χρηματίζεται πλὴν τὸν ἐκ γῆς χρηματισμὸν μήτ' ἐμπορεύηται, περὶ ἀποδημίας ἑαυτῶν ἔξω τῆς χώρας καὶ ξένων ὑποδοχῆς ἄλλοθεν ἀνάγκη βεβουλεῦσθαι τί χρὴ δρᾶν: συμβουλεύειν οὖν τὸν νομοθέτην δεῖ τούτων περὶ πρῶτον πείθοντα εἰς δύναμιν. ἐέφυκεν δὲ ἡ πόλεων ἐπιμειξία πόλεσιν ἦθη κεραννύναι παντοδαπά, [950 a] καινοτομίας ἀλλήλοισ ἐμποιοῦντων ξένων ξένοις: ὁ δὲ τοῖς μὲν εὖ πολιτευομένοις διὰ νόμων ὀρθῶν βλάβην ἂν φέροι μέγιστην πασῶν, ταῖς δὲ πλείσταις πόλεσιν, ἅτε οὐδαμῶς εὐνομούμεναις, οὐδὲν διαφέρει φύρεσθαι δεχομένους τε αὐτοῖς ξένους καὶ αὐτοὺς εἰς τὰς ἄλλας ἐπικωμάζοντας πόλεις, ὅταν ἐπιθυμήσῃ τις ἀποδημίας ὀπιθεῖν καὶ ὁπότε, εἴτε νέος εἴτε καὶ πρεσβύτερος ὢν.

[Una ciudad que no busca ningún tipo de riqueza, excepto la riqueza de la tierra, ni practica el comercio, debe tomar una determinación acerca de qué hay que hacer con la salida de sus propios habitantes fuera del país y con la admisión de extranjeros. En ese asunto, el legislador debe, en primer lugar, aconsejar y, en lo posible, persuadir. Pero es natural que la mezcla de ciudades con ciudades amalgame todo tipo de costumbres, puesto que los extranjeros [950 a] se influyen unos a otros y se introducen

innovaciones mutuas, lo que, sin duda, produciría el mayor daño de todos a los que leyes correctas les permiten vivir en un buen orden político, mientras que, para la mayoría de las ciudades, como en absoluto están bien organizadas, es indiferente si se confunden con otros, admitiendo extranjeros y recorriendo ellos mismos las otras ciudades, cuando uno desea trasladarse al exterior como y cuando quiera, ya sea joven o incluso viejo.]

PLATÓN
Leyes 949 e

8

τὸ Λάχεσιν μὲν τὴν πρώτην εἶναι, Κλωθῶ δὲ τὴν δευτέραν, τὴν Ἄτροπον δὲ τρίτην σώτειραν τῶν λεχθέντων, ἀπηκασμένα τῇ τῶν κλωσθέντων τῷ πυρὶ τὴν ἀμετάστροφον ἀπεργαζομένων δύναμιν: ἃ δὴ καὶ πόλει καὶ πολιτεία δεῖ μὴ μόνον ὑγίειαν καὶ σωτηρίαν τοῖς σώμασι παρασκευάζειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐνομίαν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς, μᾶλλον δὲ σωτηρίαν τῶν νόμων. ἡμῖν δ' ἔτι μοι φαίνεσθαι δοκεῖ τοῦτ' ἐλλείπον τοῖς νόμοις εἶναι, πῶς χρὴ τὴν ἀμετάστροφον αὐτοῖς ἐγγίγνεσθαι κατὰ φύσιν δύναμιν.

[El que Láquesis sea la primera, mientras que Cloto la segunda y, además, Átropo la tercera salvadora de las determinaciones del destino, porque se asemeja a la que con su huso da inmutabilidad a sus tejidos. Esa inmutabilidad, sin duda, tiene que proporcionar no solo salud y conservación de los cuerpos a la ciudad y su sistema político, sino también respeto a las leyes y buen orden en las almas, pero, más aún, salvación y conservación de las leyes. Pero me parece que eso es lo que aparentemente todavía falta a nuestras leyes, cómo debe llegar a darse en ellas naturalmente esa inmutabilidad.]

PLATÓN
Leyes 960 c-d

9

Plethon tells a narrative of return, Scholarios one of departure. The former is Ulysses' path, one of homecoming to the Greek *polis*, ancient onto-theology and the gods that fled away when the ancient ideal of *polis* was abandoned. Plethon's Ithaca is Mistra and the Peloponnese —that is, what was left of Greece. Scholarios opts for Abraham's path and tells the story of a journey that has different points of departure and arrival. Like Palamas, he turns his back for ever on the remnants of the Byzantine Empire and departs from the whole Hellenic tradition of τὰ πάτρια. Salvation is meta-historical. It is apocalyptic, millenarian and messianic. Zion is beyond history, a fatherland represented by the unity of the Church, not by that of the ontological ladder or 'system' as circumscribed in the *Nomoi*, nor by restoration of any 'most-virtuous polity' as envisaged in the *Memoranda*. Plethon sought his utopia within history. Scholarios placed redemption in the world beyond.

NIKETAS SINIOSSOGLOU
Radical Platonism in Byzantium 417

10

It will be seen that the Athenian Stranger is, on this reading, one of the most remarkable characters in world literature. The comparison with Milton's Satan has already been suggested, but it is not so much the Stranger's capacity to deceive others as his narcissism and self-deception that best reveal Plato's consummate artistry. Having created by means of a series of dialogues both an unforgettable Socrates endowed with all the mathematical lore of the Pythagoreans, and a reader astute enough to have already traversed the complexities of *Sophist*, Plato now brings the two together by confronting that reader with a character who both is and is not Socrates, an easily grasped object lesson —not unlike the missing *Philosopher*— in the being of non-being. The claim that the Athenian Stranger is who Socrates would have been had he escaped from prison and thereby avoided the hemlock is, in Plato's hands, not so much

a contradiction in terms or an inconceivable conception as a thinkable impossibility. With something quite like an “unreliable narrator,” *Laws* thus becomes Plato’s most modern work, and is, in any case, his psychological masterpiece, extending as it does the results of *Republic* 9, and in the process, this ponderous and forbidding monument of Plato’s alleged senility, gradually becomes the taut, terrifying, and tragic thriller of an innovative writer at the peak of his powers. Above all, however, it is a pedagogical masterpiece: a dialectical lesson in politics and law, a guided tour through the shadows of the Cave, and an effective trial by fire, designed to prepare Plato’s Guardians for the tests that await them well beyond the precincts of his spacious and eternal Academy.

W.H.F. ALTMAN

The Guardians on Trial 253-254