

# *Notes on the Post-Hellenistic Platonist Debate on Divine Causation: Plutarch, Taurus, Atticus*

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## *Abstract*

Scholars tend to regard the attribution of craftsman-like causation to God as a distinguishing mark of Middle Platonism. In this paper I will show that this view is misleading, for it obscures Middle Platonist theories of non-craftsman-like causation, such as that introduced by Taurus. I shall not only outline the internal economy of this doctrine and of those supporting craftsmanship (e.g., those of Plutarch and Atticus), but also highlight the philosophical exigencies leading to their formulation and the meta-doctrinal strategies which they entail.

## *1. Preamble*

Defining Middle Platonism as a unitary philosophical movement is a hard task. Scholars have attempted to discover a theoretical core shared by almost all Middle Platonists, and this core has been identified in the commitment to a model of divine craftsman-like causation.<sup>1</sup> This model implies that according to the Middle Platonists (with a reasonable, yet minimal and non-influential, degree of flexibility) God exerts a direct action on the world and/or the soul, either alone or through intermediaries, and this action is intentional and entails will in the form of planning directed towards specific external objects.<sup>2</sup> It would be very tempting to maintain this view, which at least ensures a firm point of reference in the puzzling history

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. M. Baltes, *Die Weltentstehung des platonischen Timaios nach den antiken Interpreten I*, Brill, Leiden 1976, *passim*, and J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, Duckworth, London 1977, 19962, *passim*, but especially J. Opsomer, “Demiurges in Early Imperial Platonism”, in R. Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2005 (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 54), pp. 51-99, A. Michalewski, *La puissance de l’intelligible. La théorie plotinienne des Formes au miroir de l’héritage médioplatonicien*, Leuven U.P., Leuven 2014. An attempt to avoid this idea is made by G. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to 250 AD. A Study and Collection of Sources in Translation*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2018.

<sup>2</sup> I am not introducing the notion of ‘efficient’ causation as a synonym for ‘craftsman-like causation’ because the former is broader, at least in its Aristotelian definition (*Phys.* 194 b 29-32): an efficient cause could just be something determining an effect on its target without really intervening towards it. The Stoic notion of *αἴτιον* as defined by M. Frede, “The Original Notion of Cause”, in J. Barnes – M.F. Burnyeat – M. Schofield (eds.), *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1980, pp. 217-49 (repr. in M. Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1989, pp. 125-50), is for sure closer to that of a craftsman-like cause; however, in this case too a strict parallel would be unwarranted, for also Stoic sustaining causes can be regarded as craftsman-like, inasmuch as they imply planning (at least at the level of God) and active cohesive action (cfr. S. Bobzien, “Chrysippus’ theory of causes”, in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1999, pp. 196-243).

of post-Hellenistic Platonism. But this reading must be abandoned, for the narrative is much more complex – and intriguing. In this paper I will get back to my analysis of the role of Taurus’ model I developed elsewhere<sup>3</sup> and provide a more focused picture of my own reading of the Middle Platonist debate on craftsman-like divine causation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The philosophical history of Middle Platonist theology will be depicted as a long quarrel based on the Platonists’ reciprocal criticism and their appropriation of other philosophical models, namely those of the Stoics and the Peripatetics.

## 2. *Craftsmanship as a Platonist puzzle: Plutarch and the Hellenistic Plato*

The Sceptical attitude of the Hellenist Academy prevents us from speaking of a Hellenistic Platonism (at least, if one implies the stronger and more usual understanding of Platonism as a dogmatic philosophy),<sup>4</sup> but this does not imply that there was no Hellenistic Plato. As a matter of fact, at the end of the Hellenistic age a strict commitment to craftsmanship was ascribed to Plato, and criticisms against his cosmology and theology insisted on this doctrine as a fatal shortcoming. This clearly emerges, for instance, in the first book of Cicero’s *De Natura deorum* (18-24), where the Epicurean Velleius jointly attacks Stoic and Platonic doctrines, his focus being mainly craftsman-like divine causation and the related cosmological models. These criticisms highlight two substantial shortcomings implied by craftsman-like causation. First, Platonic craftsmanship entails no effective guarantee of the interaction between God and the world: in principle, nothing ensures that the craftsman-like God, who must directly act upon matter and the world, can really do so. Second, God’s craftsman-like intervention in, and concern for, the world implies in any case a compulsory shift away from his original condition, for God must direct his will towards matter and act upon it at least at the moment of the generation of the world. This also suggests that before this moment God was asleep for *innumerabilia saecula* (I 21), and after it he must have been continuously engaged in preserving the world.<sup>5</sup> Velleius’ criticism is a radical one, then, for it highlights what shortcomings affect craftsman-like causation in principle, especially if it is envisioned from Plato’s perspective.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See F.M. Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut. The Other Side of Middle Platonism*, Routledge, London & New York, esp. Ch. 2 and 3.

<sup>4</sup> Although scholars disagree about the actual rebirth of Platonist dogmatism (see e.g. G. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy. A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2001, pp. 97-150; M. Bonazzi, “Antiochus and Platonism”, in D. Sedley [ed.], *The Philosophy of Antiochus*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2011, p. 307-33, H. Tarrant, “Antiochus: A New Beginning?”, in R.W. Sharples – R. Sorabji [eds.], *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BCE-200 AD*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, London 2007, pp. 317-32) it would be unwarranted to speak of any positive Platonist system in the Hellenistic age (J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1978 [*Hypomnemata* 56], pp. 296-306; Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa. The Last Academic Sceptic*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2001, pp. 73-128 and 220-54).

<sup>5</sup> This argument implies an advanced debate on temporal cosmogony, for Velleius clarifies that by *saecula* he is referring to a sort of *ab infinito tempore aeternitas*: see D. Sedley, “Cicero and the *Timaeus*”, in M. Schofield (ed.), *Aristotle, Plato and the Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2013, pp. 188-213, esp. pp. 193-6. On this section see also Opsomer, “Demiurges” (above, n. 1), pp. 57-9.

<sup>6</sup> It is not by chance that these arguments are not really employed against the Stoics, probably because their notion of God as being immanent aimed to solve at least the problem of the communication between God and the world: see G. Reydam-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence. Stoic and Platonist Readings of Plato’s Timaeus*, Brepols, Turnhout 1999, pp. 41-83, and D. Sedley, “The Origins of Stoic God”, in D. Frede – A. Laks (eds.), *Traditions in Theology. Traditions of Theology. Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath*, Brill, Leiden 2002 (Philosophia

It is not by chance that between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the 1st century AD thinkers such as Eudorus and Moderatus attempted to abolish craftsmanship by radically rethinking the whole system of divine causes in a Pythagorean fashion, identifying God as an absolutely simple entity, transcending all lower levels of divinity and reality.<sup>7</sup> However, the clearest reply to Velleius' criticisms is embodied by Plutarch's Platonism,<sup>8</sup> based on the idea that craftsmanship, puzzling as it might be, cannot be dismissed, for it is the sole possible conception of divine causation ensuring the world's order. A key role, in this respect, is played by the doctrine of the pre-cosmic soul and temporal cosmogony – which Plutarch significantly regards as a revolutionary contribution to Platonism (*De An. procr.* 1013 A-B). The pre-cosmic soul animates matter, which is devoid of any quality in itself, until this whole is temporally ordered by God.<sup>9</sup> The latter's intervention consists in two combined actions: the disorder of the pre-cosmic soul is limited by God through the introduction of a part of himself within it, and in this way the world soul is produced,<sup>10</sup> while the world is built up by him using the forms as standards.<sup>11</sup> The whole cosmogonic process, then, is due to God's intervention, although the world presents all the conditions that make it possible: the pre-cosmic soul is acted upon by God and allows matter to be shaped by him.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, God's intentional involvement in the world never ceases after its creation, for God continues to care for the world's order, ensuring its preservation.<sup>13</sup> Now, according to Plutarch's statements, the pre-cosmic soul has

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Antiqua 89), pp. 41-83, esp. at pp. 81-3. See also Sen., *Ep.* 65, 17, criticising Platonists for their account of God as a transcendent cause (G. Boys-Stones, "Seneca against Plato: *Letters* 58 and 65", in A. Long [ed.], *Plato and the Stoics*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1993, pp. 128-46, at pp. 137, and Michalewski, "Puissance" [above, n. 1], pp. 53-6).

<sup>7</sup> I will keep Philo outside this narrative because his philosophical exigencies are bound up with his interest in Jewish theology; however, his doctrine may be viewed as a way to re-think craftsmanship without abolishing it: see now C.S. O'Brien, *The Demiurge in Ancient Thought*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2015, pp. 36-82.

<sup>8</sup> On Plutarch's cosmology and theology see esp. F. Ferrari, *Dio Idee Materia: Dio, idee e materia. La struttura del cosmo in Plutarco di Cheronea*, D'Auria, Napoli 1995, and Id., "Der Gott Plutarchs und der Gott Platons", in Hirsch-Luipold (ed.), *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch* (above, n. 1), pp. 13-25, Opsomer, "Demiurges" (above, n. 1), at pp. 87-96, F.M. Petrucci, "Plutarch's Theory of Cosmological Powers in the *De Iside et Osiride*", *Apeiron* 49 (2016), pp. 329-67, Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n.1), pp. 134-5, 166-70, 195-8.

<sup>9</sup> *De An. procr.* 1014 A-1015 C and 1016 A-C; *PQ* II 1001 A-B, IV 1003 A-C and 1006 F-1007 E (on pre-cosmic time), VIII 1006 F-1007 E; *De E* 393 A-394 A; *Def. or.* 423 C-E and 435 E-436 D; *CQ* I 2, 616 A and VIII 1, 718 A; *De fac.* 926 F and 927 A-D. On Plutarch's theory of the 'pre-cosmic' world, see F. Ferrari, "La generazione precosmica e la struttura della materia in Plutarco", *Museum Helveticum* 53 (1996), pp. 44-55 and F. Ferrari, "Materia, movimento, anima e tempo prima della nascita dell'universo: Plutarco e Attico sulla cosmologia del *Timeo*", in E. Coda – C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge. Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie grecque, syriaque, arabe et latine offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Vrin, Paris 2014 (*Études musulmanes* 44), pp. 255-76; . Opsomer, "Plutarch's *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*: Manipulations or Search for Consistency?", in P. Adamson – H. Baltussen – M.W.F. Stone (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Latin and Arabic Commentaries*, University of London Press, London 2004 (*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement* 83), pp. 137-62, Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n.1), pp. 166-70.

<sup>10</sup> See, above all, *De Is.* 373 A-B; *De E* 393 F; *De ser.* 559 D; *PQ* II 1001 A-C.

<sup>11</sup> See *De Is.* 371 A-B, 373 A-B, 376 C; *Def. Or.* 435 F-436 A; *CQ* VIII 2, 720 B-C; *PQ* III 1001 D-1002 B.

<sup>12</sup> This is Plutarch's doctrine of the ἐπιτηδεύουσα of matter (*Amat.* 770 A-B; *De fac.* 926 F; *De An. procr.* 1015 B-C, with Ferrari, "Materia" (above, n. 9), p. 268, and *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n.1), pp. 95-97 – also concerning Atticus.

<sup>13</sup> See esp. *De E* 393 F, fr. 193, and *CQ* VIII 2, 720 B. God is sometimes said to achieve his task thanks to the action of the immanent world soul (e.g. at *De Pyth. Or.* 404 B; *Sept. Sap. Conv.* 163 D-F), but this does not affect God's craftsman-like commitment: not only does the soul contain a part of God, but Plutarch also recurrently

the function of justifying the presence of evil in the world, a problem which the Stoics were not able to deal with.<sup>14</sup> However, its acceptance will have a further, fundamental pay-off, that of providing the material world in its pre-cosmic state with a cosmological ‘object’ ensuring the possibility for God to communicate with it, that is the immaterial and ungenerated pre-cosmic soul.<sup>15</sup> But this, in turn, makes it possible to avoid one of Velleius’ criticisms, the one related to the possibility of communication between God and the material world: thanks to the pre-cosmic soul, God can in principle act on the material world.

But this doctrine also provides a suitable framework for re-introducing the notion of God’s craftsman-like causation, whose conditions of possibility are never directly addressed by Plutarch. The point is not that craftsmanship is a sort of obvious Platonist tenet,<sup>16</sup> but that in this new scenario craftsman-like causation becomes a philosophical advantage rather than a shortcoming: if the world entails a disorderly immaterial principle, then there must be a craftsman-like God who contrasts this principle by intervening in the pre-cosmic world. In other words, given the necessary cosmological assumption of a pre-cosmic world, explaining the presence of evil, the sole suitable way of conceiving God’s causation is by invoking the idea of craftsmanship, which at once invalidates Velleius’ attack against it.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, Plutarch’s cosmology is an ingenious attempt to justify in principle both the possibility and the necessity of divine craftsman-like causation. Not by chance, the key philosophical tool of his strategy, namely the appeal to a disorderly immanent entity, still lies at the basis of Numenius’ Platonism: Numenius too posited a disorderly factor intrinsically embedded in matter and making direct intervention from an ordering God necessary. However, whatever interpretation of the identity and interaction of the so-called second and third Numenian gods is accepted,<sup>18</sup> it is widely acknowledged that Numenius’ first God is neither directly involved in the generation of the world nor (*a fortiori*) is conceived of as a craftsman-like cause. Rather, Numenius ascribes this role to his secondary god, which in turn acts according to a craftsman-like model.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, Numenius’ model is an attempt to safeguard two different theoretical exigencies: on the one hand, he maintains a disorderly soul

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states that God determines the world’s order according to his rational plan (e.g. *De E* 393 F, *Pyth. Or.* 398 D-E, *Def. Or.* 423 C-E and 426 D-E, CQ VIII 2, 720 B-C, *Stoic. Rep.* 1055 D, fr. 193).

<sup>14</sup> See *De Is.* 369 A-B and *De An. procr.* 1014 D-1015 C, where Plutarch explicitly emphasises this pay-off of his doctrine, but also *Stoic. Rep.* chaps. 34-36 and 1055 D, and *Comm. Not.* 1077 C-F. On Plutarch’s relationship with Stoic philosophy, after D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1969, see J. Opsomer, “Éléments stoïciens dans le *De E apud Delphos* de Plutarque”, in J. Boulogne – M. Broze – L. Coulobaritsis (eds.), *Les platonismes des premiers siècles de notre ère. Plutarque, L’E de Delphes*, Vrin, Paris-Bruxelles 2006 (Ousia - Mythes Religions), pp. 147-70 and “Is Plutarch Really Hostile to the Stoics?”, in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism? On a Possibly Asymmetrical Relationship of the Two Philosophical Schools in the Period 100 BCE-100 CE*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2017, pp. 296-322. Arianna Piazzalunga is currently producing a research aimed to establish Plutarch’s substantial appropriation of Stoic theory of causes: one can at the moment refer to her still unpublished PhD thesis: *Stoic Threads, Platonic Answers*.

<sup>15</sup> See esp. Opsomer, “Demiurges” (above, n.1), p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> Scholars have deduced from this silence that Plutarch is not particularly concerned with this point. This is hardly plausible, however: Plutarch must have been acquainted with such criticisms, just as he was with other Epicurean and Stoic attacks against Plato.

<sup>17</sup> See especially CQ VIII 2, 720 B-C, *De Facie* 926 F and 927 A-D, *Pyth. Or.* 398 B.

<sup>18</sup> See esp. fr. 5, 8, 11, 17, 15, 18, 21 (numeration according to des Places’ edition).

<sup>19</sup> See esp. Opsomer, “Demiurges” (above, n.1), pp. 70-73, and Michalewski, *Puissance* (above, n.1), pp. 93-6.

as the philosophical justification of divine craftsmanship;<sup>20</sup> on the other, he still feels the need to go beyond Plutarch's model by leaving at least the highest God free from craftsmanship. The latter move, albeit depending to some extent on a re-thinking of the relationship between God (or the gods) and forms,<sup>21</sup> de facto entails the advantage of preserving the first God from the danger of a craftsman-like commitment. Numenius' system thus bears witness to the fact that divine craftsmanship, while being exploited through the doctrine of a disorderly immanent principle and having for sure very good textual bases in Plato's corpus, does not cease to represent a puzzle for Platonists after Plutarch. Ingenious as it might be, Plutarch's philosophical re-thinking of divine craftsmanship was not able to free this doctrine from the accusation of being the weak point of Plato's cosmology.

### 3. Rethinking God: Taurus of Beirut and non-craftsman-like causation

A Platonist operating in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD thus had to tackle the crucial problem of defending Platonism from criticisms directed against the very core of Plato's physics. And this was a key philosophical goal of Taurus of Beirut.<sup>22</sup> In this section I shall demonstrate that Taurus – at least according to our sources – was the first Middle Platonist to develop a model of non-craftsman-like divine causation by strongly re-thinking Platonist physics from its very foundations, in terms of both philosophical consistency and meta-doctrinal strategies.<sup>23</sup>

Scholars have never attempted to draw a comprehensive outline of Taurus' cosmological theory and have limited themselves to regarding him as the standard-bearer of the Middle Platonist metaphorical reading of Plato's cosmogony<sup>24</sup> by drawing on his well-known distinction of four sempiternalistic meanings of γενητόν (T26). In this text, reported ad litteram by Philoponus (*De Aet. Mund.* VI 8, 145, 1-148, 25), Taurus points out that when Plato says that the world is γενητόν (*Timaeus* 28 B 6-8)<sup>25</sup> he cannot be referring to a temporal generation, for the language of the passage excludes this possibility: in brief, according to

<sup>20</sup> See fr. 4a, 11, 33, 41, and especially 18 and 52.

<sup>21</sup> See fr. 16, with Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n.1), pp. 137-8.

<sup>22</sup> The high point in Taurus' career is set in AD 145. On Taurus see Baltes, *Weltenstehung* (above, n.1), pp. 104-21, M.-L. Lakmann, *Der Platoniker Taurus in der Darstellung des Aulus Gellius*, Brill, Leiden [etc.] 1995 (*Philosophia Antiqua* 63) (mainly on his school activity), A. Gioè, *Filosofi Medioplatonici del II secolo d.C.*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2002, pp. 221-376, F. Ferrari, "Lucio Calveno Tauro e l'interpretazione didascalica della cosmogenesi del *Timeo*", in L. Cardullo – D. Iozzia (eds.), *Bellezza e Virtù. Studi in onore di Maria Barbanti*, Bonanno, Catania 2014, pp. 307-19, Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut* (above, n. 3) – Taurus' texts are quoted here according to my own edition in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> I have discussed more in detail these aspects of Taurus' cosmology in Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut* (above, n. 3), ch. 2 and 3.

<sup>24</sup> See, above all, Baltes, *Weltstehung* (above, n.1), pp. 105-21; H. Dörrie – M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike, Band V. Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus. Platonische Physik (im antiken Verständnis) II*, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1998, pp. 428-35 and 454-60; Ferrari, "Lucio Calveno Tauro" (above, n. 22); against this standard view and for Taurus' exegetical strategy see Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut* (above, n. 3), Ch. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Taurus substitutes Plato's γέγονεν with γενητόν: although this move was criticised by Alexander (Taurus' T28), it was a widespread Platonist practice to operate such substitution: see e.g. Plut., *De An. procr.* 1016 D 9-E 3 and 1017 B 9-10. Remarkably, Philoponus' quotations offer the relatively unusual opportunity to directly read the texts deriving from a Middle Platonist commentary, since it is clear that he is quoting Taurus *ad litteram* (though through Porphyry as an intermediate source): see e.g. T26.2 (λέγει γοῦν ἐν τοῖς εἰς τὸν Τίμαιον ὑπομνήμασιν ἐπὶ λέξεως ταῦτα.) or T27.2 (ὁ γοῦν εἰρημένος τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγητῆς Ταῦρος ἐν τοῖς εἰς τὸν Τίμαιον ὑπομνήμασιν ... ταῦτα φησιν ἐπὶ λέξεως).

Taurus Plato's use of οὐδεμία and τις attached to ἀρχή in the Timaeon passage excludes that the ἀρχή in question can be temporal. He thus introduces four non-temporal meanings of the word, namely:

That which is not temporally generated, albeit being in the same kind of temporally generated things.

That which is composed only conceptually, but has not undergone any composition.

That which always entails change.

That which depends on a superior cause, determining its orderly structure.

Now, once he has ruled out the temporal option, Taurus must opt for either one or more of these meanings. Scholars suggest that he adopted just one or two of them, namely the third and/or the fourth, because at the end of the fragment he apparently refers only to them,<sup>26</sup> and because they regard the first two meanings as not being applicable to the case of the world. However, Taurus explicitly says that he would just exclude the temporal meaning, while all the four sempiternalistic meanings are suitable (Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, p. 147.9-13 Rabe). Moreover, if Taurus did not regard all the above meanings as effective, it would be totally misleading on his part to list them as being implied by Plato's text, especially considering that they refer to different aspects of the generation of the world. Also, Taurus' fleeting reference to the third and the fourth meaning at the end of the fragment is not decisive, for this section consists in a refutation of the temporal interpretation aiming to show that the grammar of Plato's text does not leave room for it, but allows other explanations, such as those entailed by the third and the fourth meaning. In what follows, therefore, I shall indicate how in my view the four meanings can be applied to the world and which account of divine causation they outline, or imply.

The fourth meaning represents a safe starting point, for it encompasses a direct reference to God's causation (Philop., *De Aet. mund.* 147, 4-9 Rabe = T26.10):

λέγεται δὲ γενητός, ὅτι καὶ τὸ εἶναι αὐτῷ ἀλλαχόθεν ἐστὶν καὶ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς ὃν κεκόσμηται. οὕτως καὶ καθ' οὗς ὁ κόσμος ἀντικρυς αἰδίου, ἢ σελήνη γενητὸν ἔσχε τὸ φῶς ἐκ τοῦ ἡλίου· καίτοι οὐδέποτε ἦν, ὅτε οὐ πεφώτισται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

The world can well be said to be generated also because it gets its being from outside, namely according to God, on account of whom it is intrinsically ordered. In this sense, also for those in whose view the world is definitely everlasting, the Moon receives its light insofar as this is generated by the Sun: for there has never been a time in which it has not been provided with light by it.

All Middle Platonists would agree that the material world is not ontologically self-sufficient.<sup>27</sup> However, supporters of a temporal cosmogony would take this to testify to the

<sup>26</sup> See esp. Baltes, *Weltstehung* (above, n. 1), pp. 109-112 (third and fourth meanings); Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (above, n. 1), pp. 242-246 (fourth meaning); G.E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2006, pp. 180-4. Sedley, "Cicero" (above, n. 5), pp. 196-8, detects in the last part of the text a fifth meaning, namely εἶναι ἐν τῷ γίνεσθαι (p. 147.21-25), which however just rephrases the third meaning: see F.M. Petrucci, "Argumentative Strategies for Interpreting Plato's Cosmogony: Taurus and the Issue of Literalism in Antiquity", *Phronesis* 61 (2016), pp. 49-63, at p. 56 n. 43.

<sup>27</sup> See now Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n. 1), pp. 72-89.

need for God's craftsman-like intervention: the world depends on a superior cause because it needs God as a *πατήρ* and *δημιουργός* who introduces into it a part of himself (Plut., *Plat. Quaest.* II 1001 A-B; *De An. procr.* 9, 1016 C). Taurus strongly refashions this implication. If one applies the example of the Sun and Moon to the case of the world, one finds that the world is generated by God in the same sense as the Moon receives her brightness, which is generated (*γενητὸν ... τὸ φῶς*) by the Sun. Strictly speaking, the world is not really generated by God – just as the Moon is not generated by the Sun: rather, just as the Sun is the cause of an intrinsic feature of the Moon, namely its brightness, so God is the cause of the world because he is the cause of one of its fundamental features. But Taurus also specifies what this feature is: God is responsible for the world's order (*κεκόσμηται*). Moreover, given that *οὐδέποτε ἦν, ὅτε οὐ* [the Moon] *πεφώτισται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ* [the Sun], the condition of being well-ordered is an intrinsic and sempiternal feature of the world. So, the causal relationship between God and the world's order is akin to that between a cause which is coeternal with its effect (i.e. order) and the object affected by it (i.e. the world): if God is intrinsically an ordering principle, it has never been the case that the world existed without order.

This conclusion can be further refined. First, God is an external and hence transcendent cause (*ἀλλαχόθεν*). Second, although God's ordering of the world seems to be equated to his being a cause of the world's being (*τὸ εἶναι*), in Taurus' sempiternalistic account (and consistently with the example) this amounts to saying that God provides the world with a qualified existence (that is, with a feature without which the world cannot subsist), coinciding with its perfect order. And this is possible, Taurus implies, because the world depends on God as a cause inasmuch as the world is intrinsically ordered (*κεκόσμηται*) on account of him (*πρὸς ὅν*, i.e. God).<sup>28</sup> Such phrasing does not mean ascribing to God any kind of craftsmanship: the theory of God's causation just allows the world to enjoy its qualified, orderly existence (*κεκόσμηται*) by referring to God (i.e. it states that it enjoys this qualified existence on account of God). Moreover, this causation cannot be reduced to the paradigmatic role played by the forms, as scholars have tried to do by insisting on the usual function of *πρὸς* in the so-called *Metaphysik der Präpositionen*.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in Taurus' case *πρὸς* does not indicate one of the ways in which God exerts his causation, but the sense in which the world depends on its superior cause: Taurus is not distinguishing different causes through different prepositions, but is indicating the overall dependence of the world on God as its cause.<sup>30</sup> All this shows that Taurus avoids all references to a craftsman-like activity on the part of God: just as producing light is a sempiternal and intrinsic feature of the Sun, there is no reason to assume that God orders the world out of any will to do so, or through a decision, or with any external goal. All in all, according to the fourth meaning of *γενητὸν*, God is a non craftsman-like cause, which is coeternal with its effect and is responsible for the world's order to some extent.

<sup>28</sup> My translation of *κεκόσμηται* stresses the resultative aspect of the perfect.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Dörrie–Baltes, *Platonismus* (above, n. 24), p. 458 n. 26. Specific prepositions have well-defined metaphysical functions, and the phrase *πρὸς ὅ* refers to that of the forms as paradigms: see e.g. Stob. I 127, 19-128, 3; Plut., *De An. procr.* 5, 1014 A 10-B 5; Procl., *In Tim.* I 357, 12-15, with W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neuplatonismus*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1930, pp. 17-23, and H. Dörrie, "Präpositionen und Metaphysik: Wechselwirkung zweier Prinzipienreihen", *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969), pp. 217-28.

<sup>30</sup> In turn, the *Metaphysik der Präpositionen* works well when many prepositions are employed, while isolated uses of *πρὸς ὅ(ν)* are much harder to detect and have no standard characterisation.

Now, a key aspect of the world's order must entail its specific dynamic arrangement, that is its way of being affected by change. This is the focus of the third meaning of γενητόν (Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, pp. 146.20-147.5 Rabe = T26.9):

λέγεται γενητός ὁ κόσμος, καθὸ αἰεὶ ἐν τῷ γίνεσθαι ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ Πρωτεύς μεταβάλλων εἰς παντοδαπὰς μορφάς. καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τοίνυν ἢ μὲν γῆ καὶ τὰ μέγροι σελήνης ἐνδελεχῶς μεταβάλλει εἰς ἄλληλα, τὰ δ' ὑπὲρ τὴν σελήνην τῷ μὲν ὑποκειμένῳ σχεδὸν ταυτὰ ἐστὶν βραχείας γενομένης τῆς μεταβολῆς, μεταβάλλει δὲ κατ' εἶδος, ὡς ὄρχηστῆς κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον εἷς ὢν μεταβάλλει εἰς πολλὰ εἶδη κατὰ ποῖαν χειρονομίαν. καὶ τὰ οὐράνια τοίνυν μεταβάλλει καὶ γίνονται σχέσεις αὐτῶν διάφοροι παρὰ τὰς κινήσεις τῶν πλανητῶν πρὸς τὰ ἀπλανῆ κάκεινων πρὸς τὰ πλανητά.

The world is said to be generated with reference to the fact that it is always involved in generation, changing into manifold forms like Proteus. Indeed, among the parts of the world, the Earth and those things which are under the Moon continuously change into each other, while the things which are above the Moon are almost always the same as to their substrate, for there is just a slight change, but change with respect to their configuration, like a mime who, while being one and the same as to his substrate, changes by acquiring many different configurations, depending on specific gestures. So, also the heavenly bodies change, in the sense that they establish different reciprocal relationships on account of the motions of the planets with respect to the fixed stars and of these with respect to the planets.

The idea that the material world always entails γένεσις as becoming is almost ubiquitous in the Platonist tradition and directly stems from the *Timaeus* (27 D 6 – 28 A 1). Also in this case, however, supporters of divine craftsmanship made a case out of it: the world continuously changes depending on its material constitution and the disorderly component of its soul,<sup>31</sup> and God's intervention is necessary at some point in order to transform pre-cosmic motions into the world's orderly change.<sup>32</sup> Also in this case, however, Taurus rethinks the whole matter, starting from the distinction between heavenly and sublunary realms and the ascription of different kinds of change to either. Given that the heavenly bodies, while being material, undergo only spatial change, while the sublunary realm is characterised by substantial change, the fact of being material cannot be the reason why something undergoes substantial change: any co-implication between the world's material status and its temporal generation due to God's intervention is undermined<sup>33</sup>. So, Taurus can outline an alternative account, grounded in sempiternalism: the sublunary realm, with its substantial change, is framed within a dimension of spatial change, and this overall structure entails a sempiternal order. This outline must rely on two implicit assumptions. First, the motions of the heavenly bodies are structured and move according to regular and orderly patterns, namely mathematical (that is, astronomical) ones.<sup>34</sup> Second – and accordingly – if these motions are sempiternal,

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Plut., *QC VIII* 4, 720 B-C; *De An. procr.* 28, 1026 E-1027 A; *De Is.* 49, 371 A 5-B 7.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Plut., *PQ VIII* 1007 D and *De E* 392 E-F; *Num. fr.* 7 and 8.

<sup>33</sup> Significantly, Plutarch finds the status of the heavenly bodies puzzling: in the *De Iside*, for instance, he is compelled to say that Typhon cannot corrupt the heavenly realm, but it is possible for him to strongly affect the sublunary world (59, 375 A 11-B 5).

<sup>34</sup> Besides, this is an idea which also the Peripatetics (Adrast. *apud* Theon, *Exp.*, p. 178.3-186.16 Hiller, and Sosig. *apud* Simplicius, *In De Cael.*, pp. 492.12-510.35 Heiberg) and the Stoics (see e.g. *SVF I* 120, 165; Cic., *Nat. deor.* II 45-60 and 98-119; Posid. A 67-68) would have agreed on.



no divine intervention is necessary in order to make them start, for they have always been active, nor in order to preserve their regularity, for they will always go on according to the same mathematically established paths. To put it briefly, no craftsman-like intervention on the heavenly realm is necessary, for its order is self-preserving. But, in turn, this also rules out any divine intervention in the sublunary realm. First, given that the world is sempiternal, no starting impulse is required in order to give rise to, or maintain, the preservation of species and natural rhythms, which have always subsisted according to natural continuity. Second, if this continuity must be ensured by a superior entity, it is very unlikely that this cause is a craftsman-like God. If this were the case, Taurus would have posited a divine direct intervention in the sublunary world after having made the heavenly realm free of it, with the paradoxical and anti-economical result that the realm which God directly cares for is much less perfect than that which is self-preserving. There is a much more economical and straightforward way to ensure the regularity of the sublunary realm without depriving it of substantial change: the heavenly realm itself, which frames the sublunary realm, may well play a regulating role with respect to it. This idea was, after all, quite widespread also among the Platonist supporters of a temporal cosmogony, the Stoics<sup>35</sup> and the Peripatetics<sup>36</sup>, and was hence available to Taurus. In this application, however, it also has the huge (and specific) pay-off of avoiding any intervention by God in the sublunary realm. So, in Taurus' view the heavenly realm entails no substantial change and encompasses perfect circular motions, but also frames and influences the sublunary realm by ensuring the regularity of its change, while the latter is (consistently) much less perfect than the former, but nonetheless persists thanks to the heavenly bodies' capability of determining natural rhythms. Although individual things undergo generation and destruction, the sublunary realm as a whole maintains a relative stability and proves self-preserving. Divine planning is therefore clearly superfluous as direct cause of the world's preservation.

In the light of these conclusions, we can approach the second meaning of γενητόν (Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, p. 146.13-20 Rabe = T26.8):

λέγεται γενητόν καὶ τὸ ἐπινοία σύνθετον, καὶ εἰ μὴ συντεθῆ. οὕτως σύνθετος ἡ μέση ἐκ νήτης καὶ ὑπάτης· καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὴ συντεθῆ, ἐνορᾶται αὐτῇ δύναμις ἢ τῆς ἐτέρας πρὸς τὴν ἐτέραν. τὸ δ' ὅμοιον ἐπὶ ἀνθῶν καὶ ζώων. καὶ τῷ κόσμῳ τοίνυν ἐνορᾶται σύνθεσις καὶ κρᾶσις, καθὸ καὶ δυνάμεθα ἀφελόντες αὐτοῦ καὶ χωρίσαντες τὰς ποιότητας ἀναλῦσαι αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον.

Also what is notionally composed is said to be generated, even if it has not been composed. In this sense the mese too is composed of the nete and the hypate: for even if the mese has not been composed, the intrinsic function of the one with respect to the other can be observed in it. The same applies to flowers and animals. Thus, composition and mixture are observed also in the world, and in the very same way we can reduce it to its first substrate by setting aside and separating its qualities

Scholars have usually regarded this meaning simply as the rephrasing of an Academic view, according to which Plato's tale is meant to account διδασκαλίας χάριν for the different components constituting the world (Plut., *De An. procr.* 1013 A-B). However, Taurus' often

<sup>35</sup> E.g. Cic., *Nat. Deor.* II 34 and 119-133; *De Divin.* 85-99; Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.* IX 79.

<sup>36</sup> See pp. 296-8 below.

disregarded example of notes, while obscure, allows us to make better sense of it.<sup>37</sup> According to it, the mese is composed by the nete and the hypate, and for this reason it includes the *δυνάμεις* these notes have with respect to one another. Given that *σύνθετον* means *γενητόν* here, the mese is generated by the nete and the hypate. Such an idea is meaningless if understood in acoustic terms, while it can be explained in harmonic ones. As a matter of fact, given that the nete and the hypate are the opposite extremes of the central octave of the system, and that the mese structurally lies between the two of them, one can take the mese to be the outcome of the composition of the system, in the sense that, once the nete and the hypate are ‘placed’, the nete too automatically finds its place with respect to these boundaries.<sup>38</sup> This implies, in turn, that the mese is generated by the nete and hypate since it occupies a certain intrinsically defined position:<sup>39</sup> the mese enjoys static generation, determined by an automatic reciprocal collocation of the notes in the system. If this analysis is correct, it follows that no external cause, acting intentionally and directly, is required in order to realise the generation at issue, for the mechanism of static generation provides the items involved with the capability of achieving generation spontaneously. Rather, the responsibility for generation lies with the intrinsic nature of the components, whose comprehensive and reciprocal relations are enough to bring about the final result.

Interestingly enough, ‘Taurus’ T30 (Philop., *De Aet. mund.* XIII 15, pp. 51.18-52.25 Rabe), on Plato’s theory of elementary bodies, indicates how to apply this model to the world:

Ὁ δημιουργὸς ἤρχετο τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ κόσμου ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ γῆς, δεῖ δὲ τὸ γενησόμενον σωματοειδὲς ἀντιτυπητικὸν εἶναι καὶ ὁρατόν. [...] ἔλαβεν δύο ἄκρα ἀντικείμενα ἀλλήλοισι, πῦρ καὶ γῆν, καὶ ταῦτα βούλεται συναρμόσαι μεσότησί τισιν ἀνάλογον ἐχούσαις πρὸς ἀλλήλας καὶ πρὸς ἑκάτερον τῶν ἄκρων καὶ τίθησιν ὕδωρ καὶ ἀέρα κατὰ τὰς προειρημένας δυνάμεις τὰ αὐτὰ τε ἀλλήλοισι συνάπτοντα καὶ τὰ ἄκρα αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀλλήλοισι φησὶν τε, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἄκρων τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τῆς γῆς ἔθηκεν ἀέρα καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ συνῆψεν ἀλλήλοισι, ἐφ’ ὅσον ἦν δυνατόν, ἀνάλογον συνδήσας ταῖς μεσότησιν. ἐγένετο οὖν ἐκ τούτων συντεθεὶς ὁ οὐρανὸς ἄπτὸς καὶ ὁρατός· ἐκ τῶν ἄκρων ἔλαβεν τὰ αἰσθητά, ἐξ ὁρατοῦ καὶ ἀπτοῦ καὶ ὁράσεως καὶ ἀφῆς, ὧν ὁρασις μὲν κατὰ τὸ πῦρ, ἀφῆ δὲ κατὰ τὴν γῆν.

The demiurge began the constitution of the world from fire and earth: it was necessary indeed that what was going to be generated as bodily would be capable of resistance and visible. [...] He takes two opposite extremes, namely fire and earth, and wants to harmonise them through certain mean terms having proportional relationships to each other and to

<sup>37</sup> According to K. Verrycken, “Porphyry *In Timaeum* fr. XXXVII (*Philoponus De Aeternitate Mundi Contra Proclum* 148, 9-23)”, *L’Antiquité Classique* 57 (1988), pp. 282-9, at p. 286, Taurus’ notion of τὸ ἐπινοία σύνθετον refers to a synthesis which absorbs its components: this explanation, however, is based on the reference to the seeds, but is absolutely inconsistent with that to the notes.

<sup>38</sup> This would also explain the reference to the notion of *δυνάμεις*, for a note’s *δυνάμεις* can be defined as the *τάξεις φθόγγου ἐν συστήματι* (Cleon., *Isag.* 207, 10): the *mese* reflects the nete’s and the hypate’s *δυνάμεις* because the position of the extreme notes ensures that the *mese* too finds its place, that is its own *δυνάμεις*, for the simple reason that each has its own position within the system. On this technical meaning of the word see e.g. Aristox., *El. Harm.*, 13, 9; 42, 13; 43, 11.

<sup>39</sup> The *nete* and *hypate* are indicated as structural boundaries determining the mese as their middle point also in Aristotle’s *Physics* (V, 224 b 32-35) and in Ps.-Aristot., *Probl.* XIX 20, and later on in Plut., *PQ* 9, 1007 E-1009 B, and *CQ* IX 744 C.

each of the extremes, and places water and air in accordance with the above-mentioned functions by connecting these to each other and the extremes to them and to each other, and affirms that God placed water and air in the midst of the extremes – that is of fire and earth – and connected the extremes to each other as far as it was possible by binding them through the mean terms. In such a way, the heavens were generated as something tangible and visible, being composed out of the elements: he took what is perceivable in them from the extremes, that is from what is visible and tangible and from sight and touch, of which sight is related to fire, touch is related to earth’.

Taurus just seems to be condensing *Timaeus* 31 B 4-34 A 7 into a brief account. However, specific attention is paid to the proportional arrangement of the elements: Taurus insists on Plato’s references to μεσότης and ἀναλογία, and rephrases Plato’s point in technical terms (for instance, by describing fire and earth as the ἄκρα of a proportion). In other words, Taurus especially focuses on the mathematical relationship linking the elements. This is quite consistent with his interpretation of the Platonic doctrine, in which the middle terms of the proportion (that is, air and water) acquire their position in virtue of their δυνάμεις, and the same must apply to the extremes. This has a fundamental implication: the proportional arrangement of the elements is not the outcome of any external intervention, but an automatic reciprocal configuration, depending on each element’s intrinsic δύναμις. In this way, the proportional arrangement of the elementary bodies mirrors the structural pattern described by Taurus’ second meaning of γενητόν, and not by chance at the end of his account Taurus describes the final product of generation (ἐγένετο), that is ὁ οὐρανός, as συντεθείς from the elementary bodies (ἐκ τούτων). So, also the second meaning excludes all craftsman-like intervention: although Taurus apparently hints at God’s βούλησις, in his account there is no room for a conception of it in terms of craftsmanship, for the elements automatically achieve their proportional arrangement, and do it ‘statically’, in the sense that no external intervention being needed for this. So, God must play some role, but this role cannot be that of a craftsman-like cause of the world’s body.

At this point, let us draw some provisional conclusions. The world’s body is automatically and statically structured by the elementary bodies, which have the intrinsic capability of proportionally – that is, mathematically – arranging each other. At the same time, a strictly mathematical structure dictates the heavenly motions, whose regular revolutions determine the fact that changes in the sublunary realm – that is, natural rhythms – are orderly and sempiternal, albeit entailing the generation and perishing of particulars. Thus, although the world is populated by temporally generated things, and shares some of their characteristics – such as being corporal, or being submitted to time – as a whole it is not destined to perish. But if this is the case, Taurus’ first meaning of γενητόν also comes into play (Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, p. 146.8-13 Rabe = T26.7):

λέγεται τοίνυν τὸ γενητόν καὶ τὸ μὴ γενόμενον μὲν, ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ ὄν γένει τοῖς γενητοῖς. οὕτως λέγομεν ὄρατόν τὸ μὴ ὄραθὲν μήτε ὀρώμενον μήτε ὀραθησόμενον, ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ γένει ὄν τοῖς ὀρατοῖς, ὡς εἴ τι εἴη σῶμα περὶ τὸ κέντρον τῆς γῆς.

So, ‘generated’ is said also of something which was not generated, but belongs to the same kind as generated things: in this sense we call visible what has not been, is not, and will not be seen, but belongs to the same kind as visible things – as if there were some body at the centre of the earth.

This meaning is traditionally regarded as stressing a linguistic aspect of Greek verbal adjectives which can express either potentiality or actuality: the world is γενητόν only inasmuch as it is potentially generated.<sup>40</sup> There is, however, a more suitable way of reading it, namely as hinting at the fact that the world shares some features of actually generated things, but has not been actually generated (as the example of visible things implies). In this sense, the world's being γενητόν amounts to the fact that it could have been generated, and this tallies well with the conclusions based on the other meanings.

All this fits also very well with the fourth meaning. Indeed, the third and the second meanings make completely superfluous what the fourth excludes, that is divine craftsmanship. At the same time, according to the same meaning, God is the cause of the world's qualified existence. But this is exactly what the other meanings too entail as a philosophical exigency. Indeed, the proportional arrangement of the world's body ensures the fact that the order of the elements autonomously persists, but does not justify why the elements have this arrangement, that is the best possible arrangement; similarly, the fact that the world as a whole entails an intrinsic and self-preserving order does not explain why it is so, that is why the world is influenced in this way by this order. What is theoretically needed is thus a guarantee that the world's order, in all its aspects, is the best possible one, that is a cause which does not directly determine the world's features as facts, but ensures their being good.

All these crucial puzzles are addressed by Taurus thanks to a new conception of a Platonist divine causation. More specifically, Taurus' T27 proves fundamental for understanding the real function which Taurus may have ascribed to his non-craftsman-like God. Taurus quotes *Timaeus* 27c5 in an emended version, according to which Plato depicted the world as having been generated, εἰ καὶ ἀγενές ἐστίν<sup>41</sup>: this is a τεκμήριον of the fact that in Plato's view the world is sempiternal. However, Taurus must at this point indicate the reasons why Plato decided to leave room for a (wrong) temporal understanding of his cosmogony, namely the temporal one. The first philosophical reason for this is that (Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, p. 187.6-15 Rabe = T27.6):

εἰδῶς γάρ, ὅτι οἱ πολλοὶ μόνον ὑπειλήφασιν αἴτιον τὸ προτεροῦν χρόνῳ, ἄλλως δὲ οὐκ οἴονται εἶναι αἴτιον, ἐκ δὲ τούτου κίνδυνος ἐπιστῆσαι αὐτοὺς περὶ προνοίας, ὅτι ἐστίν, βουλόμενος δὲ τοῦτο τὸ δόγμα ἐμποιῆσαι, ὅτι προνοία ὁ κόσμος διοικεῖται, τοῖς μὲν δυναμένοις καὶ ἄλλως κατανοῆσαι τοῦτο ἡρέμα ὑποδηλοῦ, ὅτι ἀγένητος ὁ κόσμος κατὰ χρόνον, τοῖς δὲ μὴ χωροῦσιν ἐμφαίνει, ὅτι γενητός, καὶ εὐχεταί γε πιστεῦσαι αὐτούς, ἵνα ἅμα πεισθῶσιν καὶ περὶ τῆς προνοίας.

For he is aware that most people have always conceived a cause only as what is temporally prior and do not think a cause to be given otherwise, and that there is the risk that they think of what providence is by taking this reasoning as a starting point. So, since he wishes to establish the doctrine that the world is ruled by providence, he only slightly hints at the fact that the world is not generated temporally to those who are able to grasp this point also otherwise, while he explicitly says that the world is generated for those who are not skilled in such issues, and hopes they believe it, so that they will be persuaded also of the existence of providence at once.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Baltes, *Weltentstehung* (above, n. 1), p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> On the exegetical nature of this passage see the reading I provided in F.M. Petrucci, "What Is an 'Ideological Emendation' (Really)? Taurus F26 and Middle Platonist 'Philologia Philosophica'", *Méthexis* 30 (2018), pp. 128-53.

The cause Taurus is referring to here is obviously God: people wrongly think that, if no temporal intervention is ascribed to God, then neither can he be regarded as exerting providence. Taurus does not object that it is unwarranted to expect God to exert providence: on the contrary, his point is that God's causation does entail providence, even if God is coeternal with the world. In such a way, Taurus also makes a more radical philosophical case, for he demolishes any alleged mutual implication between providence and temporal craftsmanship: in Taurus' view his sempiternalistic cosmological model implies that the God is credited with a providential action even though he is made free of any direct commitment to the generation and preservation of the world. The same point is implied in the last lines of the text (p. 189.6-8), according to which God plays the role of a craftsman-like cause, directly caring for the world's preservation, only in the (wrong) framework of a temporal cosmogony, while a sempiternal world is in a position of being independent of this direct care, for its preservation is ensured by its own nature (διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν).

So, the causation which God will exert in this case will be confined to something else, namely providence. But what can such non craftsman-like providence amount to? As we have seen, Taurus' model 'just' needs a cause ensuring that all those features determining the world's order and preservation as facts, or states of affairs, are the best possible ones, or, more generally, that the world is good-oriented: this is the providence Taurus' system needs, and the one a non craftsman-like God can exert. Indeed, Taurus' God is the first cause not of the objects and mechanisms shaping the world, but of the fact that the world, as it is, is perfect, orderly, and hence ruled by providence as a whole. This representation of God's causation is not only perfectly consistent with Taurus' fourth meaning of γενητόν, but ultimately it is also economical, for it just requires that God be either good, or the Good. Given that either or both these descriptions are recurrent in the Platonist tradition, and especially among Middle Platonists,<sup>42</sup> it is far from unwarranted to assume that also Taurus would have endorsed such a view – or, to put it in a different way: in the absence of any explicit evidence on matter, the onus probandi is on those who would be prepared to ascribe to a Middle Platonist the idea that God is not (the) good. Therefore, Taurus' God is – and, from a philosophical point of view, cannot be anything but – a non-craftsman-like beneficent cause.<sup>43</sup>

A very important question now emerges, related to the actual effectiveness of Taurus' account: can such a God really exert providence? For it could seem that providence is only given provided that God exerts at least some kind of planning, which would bring us back to

<sup>42</sup> The association of God with goodness, or beauty – i.e., an axiological characterisation of God – is indeed a shared theological point: see e.g. Alcin., *Didask.* X 164, 36-37, and Attic. fr. 12-13, with Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n. 1), pp. 129-131.

<sup>43</sup> At this point one might wish to trace this model back to traditional classifications of cause, but to do so one would be compelled to produce a too schematic account. In some sense, God can still be taken to be an efficient cause, if one adheres to the very broad account provided by Aristotle in *Physics* II 3, 194 b 29-32: after all, God does determine effects on the world, without properly intervening in it. But to some extent God is also a sui generis paradigmatic cause, in the sense that the world mirrors God's goodness, or a final cause, in the sense that the world naturally tends towards God' goodness. What one can exclude is, rather, that Taurus' conception of cause follows the Stoic account according to which a cause must directly act in order to be such (see Stob. I 139, 3, and Sen., *Ep.*, 65.4-6 and 11, and the references provided above, n. 2), and in this sense Taurus' cause, given its transcendent subsistence and status, could be regarded as a sui generis 'reason'. Be this as it may, beyond such partial (and to some extent a posteriori) classifications, the point is that all schematic designations would just artificially reduce the philosophical economy of Taurus' conception.

craftsmanship. From a general point of view, however, such a deduction is unwarranted: this is the way in which the Stoics, or the Platonist partisans of temporal cosmogony, imagined God's providential action, a perspective that Taurus encourages us to rule out (as we have seen in T27). On the other hand, given that the world as a whole is able to preserve its order, divine planning would be completely superfluous, since the world's order is already de facto ensured by its own nature. In other words, given that God's providential function just consists in ensuring the goodness of the world's life as a whole, a Platonist God can be providential simply by being (the) good and exerting a beneficent causation. This has, however, an important implication concerning the extension of God's providence, for it will be in a condition to act only at those levels where orderly self-preservation is possible. Accordingly, it will reach the heavens, extend to the rhythms of the sublunary world, and guarantee that the internal structure and determinations of the world's body are the best possible ones. Nonetheless, it will be necessary for this providence to stop there, for there is no way in which a craftsman-like God could care for particulars, and especially for humans, without some kind of planning. It is not by chance that Taurus seems to refer to the relationship between God and the world as a whole also when emphasising God's providential role (namely, in T27): Taurus always adopts a universal and general perspective.<sup>44</sup>

Now, Taurus' conception of God's causation and of the self-preservation of the world, albeit consistent with a Platonist perspective, represents a substantial shift with respect to the Platonism of his day. This enhances its philosophical import, but at the same time might lead one to wonder whether Taurus was really in a position to develop such conceptions. Such a deep re-thinking rests on a very specific meta-doctrinal move, that is a wise alliance with Peripatetic cosmology.<sup>45</sup>

The principle underlying Theophrastus' rejection of Aristotle' theory of the unmoved mover(s) and its replacement with the idea that the heavens move in an orderly fashion

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<sup>44</sup> On the possible role played by soul and matter in this framework see Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut* (above, n.3), pp. 84-88. An issue which remains obscure, and which cannot be solved, is whether Taurus' God is an intellect. It is highly probable that Taurus, just as almost all other Middle Platonists, did regard God as an intellect, which does not entail any commitment to craftsmanship. In this case, the most obvious object of his thinking would be the forms (see Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy* (above, n. 1), pp. 109-62, for an exhaustive survey on all related issues). However, just as the forms can ensure neither all aspects of the world's structure and order nor its qualitative status, so God cannot be just the divine intellect thinking the forms. And it is not by chance that in Taurus' extant cosmological texts the focus is on the beneficent causation exerted by the non-craftsman-like God.

<sup>45</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the only attempt to really take into account the possibility of an appropriation of cosmological Peripatetic claims by Middle Platonist supporters of sempiternalism is that of M. Bonazzi, "Middle Platonists on the Eternity of the Universe", in G. Roskam – J. Verheyden (eds), *Lights on Creation. Ancient Commentators in Dialogue and Debate on the Origin of the World*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2017, pp. 3-16, at p. 10, who however discards this possibility (with a special reference to Critolaus) as unlikely. As a matter of fact, Taurus was particularly interested in Peripatetic philosophy. For instance, Taurus' references to Theophrastus, and especially to his cosmological arguments, are frequent and very precise (this is not astonishing at all, for it is widely known that before Plotinus Theophrastus was not less an authority than Aristotle): not only did Taurus refer to him during his lectures and school conversations (T16), but he also quoted him together with Aristotle in relation to Plato's cosmogony and attacked his arguments – and not Aristotle's – on the fifth essence in T30 (= fr. 161 A; see R.W. Sharples, *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence. Commentary vol. III.1, Sources on Physics (Texts 137-223)*, Brill, Leiden 1998 [Philosophia Antiqua 79], pp. 101-3). But Taurus' acquaintance with the Peripatetic tradition must have been even deeper, for in T14, on pleasure, Taurus quotes Critolaus' account as representative of the Peripatos.

because they are ensouled<sup>46</sup> is that the heavens' circular motions depend on their own essence, being for them a kind of life (*Metaph.* 10a12-21).<sup>47</sup> The heavenly motions, in turn, exert an influence over sublunary dynamics through the condition of sympathy existing between the different realms of the world.<sup>48</sup> So, Theophrastus insisted on the continuity of the world, in which the heavenly bodies ensure the sublunary world's organisation at the level of nature as a whole.<sup>49</sup> This is the reason why Theophrastus was apparently prepared to regard the world's order as good<sup>50</sup> and to admit providence over the heavenly realm (esp. fr. 162). This view already establishes some fundamental trends of Peripatetic cosmology. According to Hellenistic and Imperial Peripatetics, the world cannot be affected by any generation or perishing as a whole, and a special role is ascribed to the heavens, for the heavenly motions are submitted to change only in terms of spatial motion.<sup>51</sup> In this wider framework different nuances can be detected, but it seems that the Peripatetics shared after Theophrastus also the related view that providence does affect the heavens, although it does not penetrate through the whole world and does not involve the sublunary realm;<sup>52</sup> this realm is still regulated, at a general level, by the heavenly motions.<sup>53</sup> All divergences aside, then, this survey highlights some shared trends.<sup>54</sup> First – and most importantly for us – there is no need for any external and/or craftsman-like cause establishing the world's order and preservation, for the world is structured in such a way as to be a self-preserving mechanism. Accordingly, the world encompasses a heavenly realm, which entails providence and enjoys sempiternal identical motions, and a sublunary one, which is deprived of providence and subject to substantial change, although its natural order is preserved thanks to the influence of the heavenly bodies.

Now, strong affinities emerge between this outline and Taurus' cosmology. In Taurus' view, the world is self-preserving, for it entails all mechanisms and factors enabling it to keep existing in the way it exists. In this sense, the heavenly bodies play a crucial role, for their sempiternal motion is perfect in itself and determines the dynamics of the sublunary realm. Moreover, *mutatis mutandis*, it is the structure of the heavens which allows them to always move the orderly way they move. And all this is framed, of course, within a sempiternalistic

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<sup>46</sup> See esp. *Metaph.* 6a6-b9, and fr. 158 (with Sharples, *Theophrastus* [above, n. 45], pp. 86-8) and 254, and the next footnote.

<sup>47</sup> This passage is usually taken to suggest that Theophrastus abandoned the idea of an unmoved mover: see Sharples, *Theophrastus* (above, n. 45), p. 87 n. 226; M. van Raalte, *Theophrastus, Metaphysics*, Brill, Leiden 1993 (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 12), *ad loc.*, D. Gutas, *Theophrastus on First Principles (known as his Metaphysics)*, Brill, Leiden 2010 (*Philosophia Antiqua* 119), *ad loc.*; see however M. Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d' Aphrodise entre logique, physique et cosmologie*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2007 (*CAGB* 2), pp. 261-8.

<sup>48</sup> See van Raalte, *Theophrastus* (above, n.47), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> See esp. M. van Raalte, "The Idea of the Cosmos as an Organic Whole in Theophrastus", in W.W. Fortenbaugh – R. Sharples (eds.), *Theophrastan Studies*, New Brunswick - Oxford 1988, pp. 189-215 (for an organicist interpretation), and Sharples, *Theophrastus* (above, n. 45), pp. 228-9 (for a teleological one).

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. *Metaph.* 6 b 24-27 and fr. 257 A, whose reliability is however dubious.

<sup>51</sup> See esp. Critol. fr. 12, and 16-18; later on, this idea is present both in Peripatetic commentaries (e.g. Aspas., *In Arist. Eth.*, p. 71.16-31 Heylbut [CAG XIX.1]) and doxographical sources (e.g. Hippol., *Ref.* 7, 19, 7). Even those orthodox Peripatetics who maintained a role for the unmoved mover(s) accepted that the everlastingness of the heavens' motions implies the eternity of the world: see e.g. Eudemus, fr. 121-123b.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Critol. fr. 37a; Aët. II 2, 4; Diog. Laert. V 32.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Xenarch. T13, and Adrast. *apud* Theon., pp. 148.13-150.18 Hiller.

<sup>54</sup> I am leaving aside Alexander for chronological reasons.

cosmogonic theory. There are also some substantial and telling differences, however, and the most important one in the present context concerns God's role in the system. From a general point of view, it is noteworthy that this is a puzzling issue even for the Peripatetics: if God is seen to operate within a system encompassing the spheres of the fifth body and a soul, his presence could be regarded as redundant;<sup>55</sup> but in turn the elimination of God from the scenario was in any case puzzling for Peripatetics<sup>56</sup> – and in a Platonist perspective such elimination would be absolutely impossible. But there is more to it, for from a Platonist point of view no formulation of the Peripatetic model could in principle really account for the idea that the heavenly motions, and through them all dynamics encompassed by the world, and the overall orderly arrangement of the world, are good. As we have seen, from Theophrastus onwards the Peripatetics would appear to have admitted that the heavens are ruled by providence and that the world, being orderly and sempiternal, is to some extent good-oriented.<sup>57</sup> However, they had no philosophical 'tool' to really ensure this, and such an idea had been formulated by the pre-Alexander Peripatetics in terms of natural necessity.<sup>58</sup> But in a Platonist perspective a philosophical tool of this sort was both strictly necessary and available: it lay in the idea of a God who must be transcendent and good, and hence able to really ensure the orientation of the whole world towards the good. Taurus' strategy is a subtle one. The Peripatetics provided him with a cosmological system entailing a self-preserving world. He had already strengthened this system through the introduction of the forms and a Platonist doctrine of the world soul, and therefore the notion of craftsman-like causation was superfluous. But at this point Taurus could supplement the system by introducing a transcendent God who, being free of any craftsmanship, is himself good and beneficent and accordingly can ensure that the world's structure and all its motions, which are de facto self-preserving, also be the best possible ones and always good. In such a way, Taurus' world, at the level of its overall structure, really entails providence.

#### 4. From Velleius to Taurus, from Taurus to Atticus

Taurus adopts Peripatetic cosmological tenets in a strategic way: the Peripatetics provided him with solutions to problems which he must have felt to be pressing ones, but which at the same time needed a Platonist integration in terms of divine causation. At this point, however, a fundamental question arises: why did Taurus opt for this doctrine of a non-craftsman-like God, and search for suitable tools in the Peripatetic tradition? Here we must go back to Plutarch's replies to Velleius' criticisms, in terms of both doctrines and philosophical alliances with other philosophical trends. Indeed, the alliance between Plato and the Stoics on craftsmanship, which was at the core of Velleius' criticism, was strengthened even further by Plutarch: Plutarch's model did correct some crucial aspects of

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<sup>55</sup> This could lie at the basis of Xenarchus' naturalistic explanation of the eternity and self-preservation of the universe, and of Alexander's criticism of his master Herminus (*apud* Simpl., *In De Cael.*, p. 380.5 ff. Heiberg [CAG VII]); see esp. R.W. Sharples, "Aristotelian Theology after Aristotle", in Frede – Laks (eds.), *Traditions in Theology* (above, n. 6), pp. 1-40.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Alex. *apud* Simpl., *In Phys.*, p. 1261.33-37 Diels (CAG IX).

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. Theophr., *Metaph.* 6 b 26-27 and 11 a 5-12.

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. Asp., *In. Eth. Nic.*, p. 71.16-31 Heylbut (CAG XIX.1).



Stoic cosmology, but in this way it ended up confirming a fundamental Stoic tenet, that is the necessity of craftsmanship. Even in a complex reshaping of this model, such as that of Numenius, craftsmanship remained a ‘necessary problem’. What Platonism needed, then, was both a strategic and philosophical break, allowing it to rule craftsmanship out and, at the same time, to tear down all bridges with Stoicism: and this is precisely what Taurus attempted to achieve.<sup>59</sup>

Now, at the beginning of the paper I pointed out that Velleius’ criticism highlights two substantial philosophical puzzles in Plato’s cosmology: within the framework of a temporal model, both the communication between a craftsman-like transcendent God and the world, and his very craftsman-like activity, are problematic. Taurus’ first and most radical move is to abolish the temporal framework. In turn, this has the fundamental pay-off of allowing him, at least in principle, to avoid any recourse not only to the pre-cosmic soul, but also – and above all – to any craftsman-like intervention on the part of God, for at no moment is any external intervention required to give the world its structure and order. On the other hand, this raises the problem of explaining how the world as a whole can in principle autonomously enjoy sempiternal life. But Taurus meets this exigency through a further strategic move, namely the appropriation of key tenets of Peripatetic cosmology: on the opposite side of the Stoic craftsman-like model, the Peripatetics had produced, with various nuances, a sempiternalistic cosmological model whose main feature was to ascribe to the world as a whole the capability of orderly enduring without any divine intervention. This was far from being a mere borrowing on Taurus’ part, for his Platonist re-thinking of Peripatetic cosmology implied its subordination<sup>60</sup> to fundamental Platonist tenets. These integrations, as we have seen, consisted in the introduction of the forms, in the re-thinking of the heavenly motions based on a stronger doctrine of the world soul, and above all in the ascription to the world of an axiological orientation, that is true providence, thanks to a transcendent, good, and non-craftsman-like God. Moreover, this put Taurus in a position to ensure communication between God and the world: God’s influence does not consist in any direct intervention on a heterogeneous – i.e., material – object; rather, God, being purely good, simply acts as the transcendent cause by virtue of which the self-preserving world’s order is good-oriented. All in all, far from merely applying an exegesis of key Platonic passages allowing his interpretation,<sup>61</sup> Taurus is re-thinking the internal economy of Plato’s cosmology from its very foundations in order to meet specific philosophical exigencies.

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<sup>59</sup> Although this is not crucial in itself, Taurus was certainly acquainted at least with Plutarch’s writings (see e.g. T20, where Plutarch is explicitly mentioned as *Plutarchus noster*).

<sup>60</sup> The importance of the mechanism of appropriate subordination in the Platonist tradition has been emphasised, in recent years, e.g. by Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy* (above, n. 4), M. Bonazzi, “Eudoro di Alessandria alle Origini del Platonismo Imperiale”, in M. Bonazzi – V. Celluprica (eds.), *L’eredità Platonica. Studi sul Platonismo da Arcesilao a Proclo*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2005, pp. 115-60, M. Bonazzi, “Antiochus’ Ethics and the Subordination of Stoicism”, in M. Bonazzi – J. Opsomer (eds.), *The Origins of the Platonic System. Platonisms of the Early Empire and their Philosophical Contexts*, Leuven U.P., Leuven 2009, pp. 33-52, and R. Chiaradonna, “Autour D’Eudore: Les débuts de l’exégèse des *Catégoriques* dans le Moyen Platonisme”, in M. Bonazzi – J. Opsomer (eds.), *At the Origins of the Platonic System. Platonisms of the Early Empire and their Philosophical Contexts*, Leuven U.P., Louvain 2009, pp. 89-112.

<sup>61</sup> According to extant testimonies, Taurus must have insisted especially on *Timaeus* 27 C and 28 B, which are the objects of T26-27; see also Alex. Aphr. *apud* Philop., *De Aet. mund.*, pp. 213.10-216.23 Rabe = Taur. T28.2-10, encompassing a criticism of Taurus’ exegetical strategy.

If my account is sound, Taurus' dismissal of craftsmanship and the strategy it underlies must have been somewhat revolutionary, and one can well expect it also attracted criticisms and polemics. Now, Scholars have often assumed that Atticus' polemic against those who invoke Aristotle when interpreting Plato is implicitly directed against Taurus simply because the latter was the most important former supporter of this interpretation.<sup>62</sup> This is not enough evidence to make such a case, but given that Atticus was younger than Taurus,<sup>63</sup> the hypothesis ought not be dismissed, provided that good philosophical reasons are discovered: I will now stress that Atticus' conception of divine craftsmanship is outlined as a reply against Taurus.

Now, the economy of Atticus' criticism against sempiternalism rests on a specific conception of providence. Indeed, Atticus' attack in fragment 4 is introduced by arguing that, given that only what is generated and depends on a superior creator stands in need of providence, if the world is not generated it cannot enjoy true providence (fr. 4, 2).<sup>64</sup> This notion of providence is a very qualified one: indeed, providence must be featured in such a way as to ensure happiness, and in Atticus' view one of the key advantages of Platonism was that it had the potential of admitting and justifying this kind of providence (fr. 3, 1). Atticus does not exclude that a weaker providence is conceivable, namely the one which Peripatetics posit (fr. 3, 9): this real providence fits within a sempiternalistic cosmogony and ensures the correct arrangement of the heavens and – presumably – the world's natural rhythms. The point is, however, that this providence is feeble and ineffective (3, 14), for true providence must also ensure that humans can reach happiness given that εἰς θεὸν καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ πάντ' ἀναπτει. And here the key implication lies, for in Atticus' view such a providence can be admitted only provided that the cause exerting it, namely God, is directly responsible for the world's dynamics along with the world's generation, because this would also lead men to think that God directly cares for them (fr. 3, 4). This is what a sempiternalistic cosmogony cannot ensure, for within it God, good though he might be, has no real commitment to the world and mankind (fr. 3, 4), and has no actual impact on human existence (fr. 3, 13). But what could certify that God has such a deep and direct commitment? The crucial point here is that even in the case that God only guarded nature there would be no assurance of his beneficent commitment. Also in this case, however, the framework of a temporal cosmogony is crucial: if the world is temporally generated, the standard course of nature would imply the world's perishing. The reason why this will not happen is that God, willing to directly commit himself for the preservation of what he has produced, goes even beyond natural mechanisms and prevents the world from perishing: something generated can eternally persist provided that God providentially cares for it with his βούλησις (fr. 4, *passim*). And all this, of course, implies that God directly acts within the world by exerting his planning – that is, craftsman – like causation.

In order to build up a suitable system entailing this kind of causation, Atticus' strategy consists not in dismissing possible criticisms against craftsmanship (such as those highlighted by Velleius), but rather in making a full and even sharper commitment to divine craftsmanship.

<sup>62</sup> See Karamanolis, *Agreement* (above, n. 26), pp. 179-84.

<sup>63</sup> Who was born around AD 105: see note 22 above.

<sup>64</sup> Atticus' fragments are quoted according to des Places' edition. On the importance of this specific notion of providence in Atticus' model see F.M. Petrucci, "Il temporalismo radicale di Attico", *Antiquorum philosophia* 15 (2021), pp. 105-20.

In this sense, Atticus follows Plutarch's path, but develops some of his tenets in a more radical direction. The pre-cosmic soul becomes explicitly maleficent (*κακεργήτις*),<sup>65</sup> and this requires the intervention of a good God. No matter if craftsmanship apparently implies a redefinition of God's perfection and the idea of pre-cosmic time (which in fact Atticus seems to have admitted):<sup>66</sup> the point is that craftsmanship is the sole condition ensuring providence, whose presence is regarded as an absolute requirement.<sup>67</sup> Finally, God's action can influence the world without any limits because its intervention on the pre-cosmic soul allows him to penetrate it at all levels: all good aspects of the world depend on God (fr. 4, *passim*), but this is possible because the world soul *διακοσμεῖ τὰ πάντα*, is *διήκουσα διὰ πάντων*, and can *διοικεῖσθαι ἕκαστα*, for nature is nothing else than the soul provided with reason (*οὐκ ἄλογον*), and thanks to it everything happens *κατὰ πρόνοιαν* (fr. 8, 1).<sup>68</sup> Atticus insists precisely on God's direct and strictly voluntary intervention in the world, an intervention that the soul continuously makes possible. To put it briefly, the more God acts as a craftsman, the more providence is ensured: in this sense, God acts in the world with his will and is committed to the preservation of the world and to the best possible condition of everything within it.

If my reading of Taurus' model is correct, Atticus' attack is directed against it, as a model developed by someone belonging to the same *ἑστία* (Att. fr. 4, 3). Taurus' effort to preserve providence even with a sempiternalistic model is not effective, for this providence is too weak, rests on fragile cosmological bases, and cannot really govern the world at all levels.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See esp. fr. 23 and 26, with J. Opsomer, "Neoplatonist Criticism of Plutarch", in A. Pérez Jiménez – F. Casadesús Bordoy (eds.), *Estudios Sobre Plutarco. Misticismo y Reliogiones Místicas en la Obra de Plutarco*, Actas del VII Simposio Español sobre Plutarco, (Palma de Mallorca, 2-4 de noviembre de 2000), Ediciones Clásicas, Madrid-Málaga 2001, pp. 187-99, at pp. 191-3.

<sup>66</sup> See e.g. fr. 19, with W. Deuse, *Untersuchungen zur mittelplatonischen und neuplatonischen Seelenlehre*, Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden 1982, pp. 51-2, Opsomer, "Neoplatonist Criticism" (above, n. 65), pp. 188-90, and Ferrari, "Materia" (above, n. 9).

<sup>67</sup> Of course, a concern for providence is already perfectly detectable in Plutarch: see esp. *Adv. Col.* 1108 C-D; *Def. or.* 423 C-E; *De Ser.* 560 F-561 B; *De Fac.* 926 F; *Foc.* 2; fr. 195.

<sup>68</sup> This point holds independently of how one chooses to interpret the relationship between Atticus' God and the soul: see M. Baltes, "Zur Philosophie des platonikers Attikos", in H.-D. Blume – F. Mann (Hgg.), *Platonismus und Christentum, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband* 10 (1983), pp. 38-57, at pp. 42-43, and Dörrie-Baltes, *Platonismus* (above, n. 24), p. 397 n. 7 (God is the intellect of a divine soul); Deuse, *Untersuchungen* (above, n. 66), pp. 57-61, and Opsomer, "Demiurges" (above, n. 1), pp. 74-76 (God is a separate intellect). A very effective discussion of this and other aspects on Atticus' account can be found in A. Michalewski, "Atticus et le nombre des principes. Nouvel examen de quelques problèmes textuels du fragment DP 26 (Proclus, *In Tim.* I 391.6-12)", in M.-A. Gavray – A. Michalewski (eds), *Les principes cosmologiques du platonisme. Origines, influences et systématisation*, Brepols, Turnhout, pp. 119-41.

<sup>69</sup> It might seem curious that in Atticus' treatment of providence no hint at the role of demons is to be found. Indeed, demons are the entities ensuring the so-called tertiary providence (that is, the one concerning mankind: see Ps.-Plut., *De fat.* 572 F-573 A, and Cels. *apud* Orig., *Contr. Cels.* IV 79, VII 68, with G. Boys-Stones, "Providence and Religion in Middle Platonism", in E. Eidenow – J. Kindt – R. Osborne (eds), *Theologies in Ancient Greek Religion*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2016, pp. 317-38, at pp. 331-2), and are granted a providential role by Apuleius (*De Plat.* I 206), whose model was probably very close to that of Taurus (see Petrucci, *Taurus of Beirut* (above, n. 3), pp. 91-6). Moreover, it cannot be excluded that also Taurus envisaged some providential role for demons (see e.g. T31), and in general the tripartite model of providence has been regarded as fitting quite well with a Peripatetic perspective (see R.W. Sharples, "Threefold Providence: the History and Background of a Doctrine", in R.W. Sharples – A. Sheppard (eds), *Ancient Approaches to Plato's Timaeus*, Institute of Classical Studies-School of Advanced Study-University of London London 2003 [Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 78], pp. 107-27). and is – to

Indeed, only a strong conception of God's βούλησις, relying on a temporal cosmogony, can really provide the foundations for a suitable Platonist doctrine of the effectiveness of providence. In Atticus' view, in the attempt of saving Platonism from the alleged puzzle of craftsmanship, Taurus had lost Platonism itself as the only philosophy capable of ensuring happiness through an effective theory of providence. But there is more to it, for at a meta-doctrinal level (i.e., not at the level of doctrines, but with respect to argumentative and historiographic strategies) Atticus also resorts to fundamental claims of the ancient allies of Platonism, those whom Taurus had replaced with the Peripatetics, that is the Stoics. He explicitly declares this move when depicting the features of his world soul, which is said to διοικεῖσθαι ἕκαστα in accordance with οἱ λοιποί: given that Atticus is here criticising (at face value, at least) Aristotle and the Epicureans, οἱ λοιποί must be the Stoics.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the very idea of divine craftsmanship and its connection with a human-centred cosmology were regarded as typically Stoic. By recovering these aspects, what Atticus had to do was just to insert them in a Platonist system, one entailing God's transcendence, the paradigmatic role of the forms, and the evil nature of the pre-cosmic soul. This positive move, however, also had the crucial pay-off of revealing Taurus' appeal to the Peripatos<sup>71</sup> and of highlighting its shortcomings: Taurus' appropriation of Peripatetic cosmology led him to accept – whether consciously or not – the worst implications of his allies' system, and hence to potentially undermine the very identity and key advantages of Platonism.

## 6. Some conclusions

The idea that Middle Platonism can positively be defined as a philosophical movement based on the shared doctrine of craftsman-like causation is to be rejected. Craftsman-like causation is rather the distinguishing mark of the Hellenistic Plato, the Plato whose profile non-Platonists built up, while the development of Middle Platonism revolves around craftsmanship as its central issue: Middle Platonists shaped their cosmological models with the goal of either justifying craftsmanship or of consistently dismissing it. Now, given the chronological relations between the thinkers I have focused on, and given that their arguments indeed help us to reconstruct a debate, it is highly plausible that this narrative is historically effective. Plutarch was the first Middle Platonist who, aware of the fact that it was necessary to solve to the puzzles highlighted by Cicero through Velleius, constructed a cosmological

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some extent - ascribed to Aristotle by Atticus himself (fr. 8, 9-17, with J. Mansfeld, *Heresiography in Context. Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Cologne 1992 [Philosophia Antiqua 56], pp. 137-138). However, even admitting that the non-craftsman-like model which was Atticus' target ascribed some role to demons, no arguments against this level of providence were necessary: given that only God himself can ensure true providence through his will, if he does not deal with humans directly, no system of demons is really able to replace him. Accordingly, the only doctrine deserving criticism is that of the providence exerted by God.

<sup>70</sup> See Opsomer, "Demiurges" (above, n. 1), p. 77. Of course, Atticus' wording is reminiscent of Plato (esp. *Phaedr.* 246 C; *Phaed.* 78 C and 99 C; *Tim.* 32 B and 43 A), and this ensures from his point of view good exegetical bases to his doctrine; nonetheless, a similar vocabulary had already been widely adopted by the Stoics: see e.g. SVF II 913-914, 934, 937, 945, 1021, 1027, 1029, but also Posid. A96-97 and 102.

<sup>71</sup> It is not by chance that Atticus' fr. 4 has been seen to bear witness to both Peripatetic cosmology (Mansfeld, *Heresiography* (above, n. 69), pp. 136 and 146-7) and to Taurus' (by Gioè, *Filosofi Medioplatonici* [above, n. 22] who inserts passages of the text as Taurus' ?27T - sic).

model justifying craftsmanship within the framework of a temporal cosmogony and by referring to the notion of a pre-cosmic, disorderly soul. Taurus responded to Plutarch by shaping a sempiternalistic cosmogony entailing a non-craftsman-like God who only exerts a beneficent causation on a self-preserving world, and by adopting certain Peripatetic tenets. Atticus detected the limited effectiveness of the providence entailed by this system as its weak-point, and leveraged on it in order to re-affirm the necessity of craftsmanship and to renovate the alliance between Platonism and Stoicism.

Nevertheless, the deep meaning of the narrative I have been presenting does not consist in its historical profile. This is only one way of reading the story, which can better be appreciated if the thinkers involved are taken to be the bearers of philosophical exigencies and strategies; accordingly, it is crucial to consider them within the framework of the attempt to shape Plato's system in a more effective way not only in exegetical terms, but also – and above all – in argumentative ones. What we have, then, are two opposite models of divine causation, which are meant to solve specific philosophical problems, such as the possibility of communication between God and the world, the imperturbability of God, and the effectiveness of the providence he exerts. On the one hand, there is a craftsman-like model which can be framed within a temporal cosmological system, allowing communication between God and the world and emphasising the role of providence at the cost of – or, rather, by stressing the necessity of – regarding God as a craftsman. On the other hand, there is a non-craftsman-like model which can be framed within a sempiternalistic cosmological system, allowing communication between God and the world but ensuring God's imperturbability and perfection by abolishing craftsmanship, at the cost of limiting his providential action. From a meta-doctrinal point of view, moreover, each model implies a specific strategy of alliance: the former regards Stoic cosmology as a promising interlocutor, for once certain integrations are made, it insists on the strict need for craftsmanship in order to ensure an effective providence; the latter model, on the contrary, rejects any alliance with the Stoics and finds a support in the Peripatos, whose cosmology ensures the possibility of a self-preserving world, which is in turn the requirement allowing God to be just a beneficent and non-craftsman-like cause.