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The Ethical Relationship to the Gods in the *Encheiridion* Commentary of Simplicius

This paper concerns the proper spirit in which to make offerings to the Gods. Simplicius writes at a time when most pagan temples had been closed and the responsibility for making offerings to the Gods had therefore fallen exclusively upon the individual worshiper or upon small private circles of worshipers instead of a dedicated priestly establishment. As such, there was a new dimension to the making of offerings which Simplicius subtly articulates in a novel contribution to late pagan thought. The paper focuses particularly on the ontic duality of the offering, which is at once an instance of a species and also an absolutely unique individual. By virtue of this duality, the offering expresses the duality of the Gods — who are at once prior to Being and implicated within Being, unique individuals with proper names as well as representative of the generically divine — and the duality of the human worshiper, at once an irreducibly unique individual and an instantiation of the human species. Human individuality falls beneath the level of Being *qua* Form, as embodied in the *infima species*, and yet in the act of making offerings the human individual establishes his/her correspondence with the uniquely individual deity who receives the offering, forging a vitalizing connection between the domain of individuals *superior* to Being (the Gods) and that of individuals *inferior* to Being (factual beings). The Simplician vision also incorporates two Aristotelian echoes. Simplicius stresses the importance of a universal, "scientific" understanding of the Gods which, by abstracting from the particularity of one's position and achieving the viewpoint of Aristotelian *epistêmê*, which is always of the universal, purges the action of making offerings from misconceptions that would dispose the worshiper unethically in relation to the Gods. The essential particularity of the domain of the ethical in Aristotle's thought is, however, also embodied in the act of making the offering, in which a particular human offers a particular item to a particular deity. A merely "scientific" or universalizing viewpoint on the Gods is not sufficient: the practical dimension which involves the actual cult of particular deities is its necessary complement. Simplicius thus contributes to the project of late pagan Platonism of arguing for the inseparability of philosophy from pagan religiosity. The affirmation of the unique individual which takes place in the scene of the offering completes the cosmogonic opus of the Gods by fulfilling the potentiality embodied in the corresponding positions of the Gods prior to Form and the humans and other entities posterior to Form.