Late Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Thought

on-line course with Michail Theodosiadis

# SIS code: **AGLV00129**

## **Every Monday from 17:30 – 19:00, the first session October 3rd**

Τhe series of lectures will focus on philosophical currents in the Greek world of late Byzantium and after the fall of Constantinople to the Greek Revolution of 1821. *Prima facie*, it will examine the influences of certain Byzantine scholars, eminent humanists and political philosophers in Italy and, more importantly, their contribution to the movement of the Renaissance. The lectures will reflect on the case of Emmanuel Chrysoloras, a student of the Byzantine scholar Dimitrios Cydones, who taught Greek in Florence and disseminated influential classical Greek philosophical and literary works, for which the Latin world had acquired very little knowledge since then. Such works include Homer’s *Odyssey*, Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*.

## **Main topics**

• Byzantine philosophy and reception of antiquity in the Byzantine culture

• Early sources of Byzantine philosophical-theological thought (Nemesios of Emesa, Maximos the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, John of Damascus).

• Byzantine humanism of the 9th – 10th century (Fotios, Arethas)

• 11th – 12th century (Psellos, Italos, Komnene). The influences of Byzantine thinkers from Arab and Latin philosophers will be also examined at this stage.

• 13th century: (Blemmydes, Lascaris, Planudes, and Pachymeres)

• Mysticism (Symeon New Theologian, Niketas Stethates, Palamas).

• 14th – 15th century (Metochites, Chumnos, Pletho)

• Translations of Latin philosophy and Byzantine philosophy in the West (Italy, France, England).

• The influences of Greek humanism in Ukraine and its contribution to the Greek Revolution of 1821.

• Greek philosophy from the fall of Byzantium to the revolution of 1821: basic problems and figures, philosophical trends (neo-Hellenism, enlightenment).

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The aim of the course is to identify changes in Greek thought from Later Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century, as well as from the post-Byzantine Hellenic world to the Age of the Enlightenment, and to highlight the dialogue and the interactions between the Byzantine world with its Western and Eastern neighbours.

**The goal of the course is to understand the special features of Greek philosophy in the context of European intellectual history.** Upon completing this course, the students will be able to familiarize themselves with the Greek origins of the Renaissance, as well as with the classical Greek philosophical and literary tradition that characterized aspects of the Byzantine culture. A common misconception in the Western imagination is the assumption that Byzantium was an absolutist world, plagued autocracy, bureaucracy, deviousness, and religious fanaticism.

Special attention will be paid in the political and social culture of Byzantium, which is echoed in the mindset of these scholars. This presupposes analysis on historical developments that took place during the transfer of the Christian religion from the Middle East to the Hellenic world, with special emphasis on the connections between ancient/classical Greek thought with that of Christian Byzantine philosophers, such as Niketas Stethatos. On the other hand, the Late Byzantine authors had received influences by Latin and Arab thinkers, who had disseminated in the West works of Aristotle that had been disappeared from Europe for centuries. Furthermore, the highly influential works of Anna Komnene, Michael Psellos, Ioannis Zonaras, Theodoros Methochites, Pletho Gemistus, Theophilos Korydaleus, Evgenios Voulgaris, Athanasios Psalidas et al., will be also examined from a cross-cultural perspective.

This course looks at Byzantium and Byzantine philosophy from a different angle: not only Byzantine scholars have contributed to the dissemination of classical Greek literature that led to a shift of perceptions and attitudes in Western Europe, but at the same time, as Steven Runciman, Anthony Kaldellis and other Byzantinists have argued, and as it will be also supported by rigorous examination of primary sources (mainly philosophical texts), Byzantium was an open, vibrant, and rich in culture society. Finally, their engagement with philosophy and political history will enhance their critical thinking; it will invite students to re-approach the history of Europe, broadening their horizons.

### **Literature**

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