



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation in Medieval Studies

of

Divna Manolova

on

**DISCOURSES OF SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY
IN THE LETTERS OF NIKEPHOROS GREGORAS**

will be held on

Monday, 27 October 2014, at 14:00

in the

**Senate Room – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest**

Examination Committee

Chair	István Bodnár (Department of Philosophy – CEU)
Members	Niels Gaul – Supervisor (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Volker Menze (Department of Medieval Studies – CEU) Börje Bydén – external reader and external examiner (present) (University of Gothenburg – Department of Philosophy, Linguistics, Theory of Science) Stratis Papaioannou – external reader and external examiner (present) (Department of Classics – Brown University)
External Readers	Börje Bydén – external reader and external examiner (present) (University of Gothenburg – Department of Philosophy, Linguistics, Theory of Science) Stratis Papaioannou – external reader and external examiner (present) (Department of Classics – Brown University)

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection in the CEU-ELTE Medieval Library,
Budapest, 6-8 Múzeum krt.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

DISCOURSES OF SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

IN THE LETTERS OF NIKEPHOROS GREGORAS

The principal objective of the present dissertation is to reconstruct and analyze the discourses of science and philosophy in the letters of the Constantinopolitan scholar Nikephoros Gregoras (d. *ca.* 1360), a prominent figure on the fourteenth-century Byzantine intellectual scene, well-known to modern scholars as the author of a major work on Byzantine history for the period from 1204 until *ca.* 1359. The inquiry explores Gregoras' views on mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy expressed in his letters and, consequently, it reevaluates the existing scholarly perspectives on Gregoras' intellectual legacy.

By means of contextualization, *Part I: Nikephoros Gregoras' Epistolary Collection* offers a survey of Gregoras' biography and works, as well as a detailed reconstruction of his 'library,' that is, a survey of the manuscripts (in particular, of those codices which transmit scientific and philosophical content) he, in all likelihood, possessed, annotated, compiled, and copied. *Part I* concludes with a discussion of the manuscript tradition of Gregoras' letters and the context of their preservation and circulation accompanied by a critical commentary of their modern editions.

The main analytical body of the dissertation consists of two large sections dedicated respectively to astronomy (*Part II: Justifications of Astronomy*) and to philosophy and letters (*Part III: Letters and Philosophy*). The principal conceptual motivation behind *Parts II* and *III* is the exploration of the dialectical relationship informing Gregoras' intellectual epistolary discourse, namely the relationship between *knowledge* (mathematical sciences and philosophy), on the one hand, and *rhetoric* (letters), on the other. *Part II* examines the status of the astronomical studies in the early Palaiologan period and discusses various strategies Gregoras employed in order to justify the value of this mathematical science. Gregoras' programmatic effort to defend astronomy's worthiness is analyzed in the context of the revival of

Ptolemaic astronomy in Palaiologan Byzantium, a scholarly “project” that involved erudites from the two preceding generations, notably Maximos Planoudes and Gregoras’ mentor Theodore Metochites. Importantly, *Part II: Justifications of Astronomy* discusses for the first time after its edition in 1936 Gregoras’ arithmological treatise *On the Number Seven* which, among other things, is an important evidence for Gregoras’ readership of Philo and Macrobius.

Part III: Letters and Philosophy offers a discussion of philosophical letter-writing in Byzantium as well as an analysis of the philosophical premises of Byzantine epistolography. Importantly, its principal discussion problematizes the question of certainty with respect to the human condition through analysis of three case studies which illustrate Gregoras’ strategies for constructing epistolary friendship. Thus, *Part III* addresses two of the main problems of the dissertation, namely what are, in Gregoras’ view, the possibilities and limitations of human knowledge and, correspondingly, what is the status of science and philosophy as the acquisition of knowledge is at their core *qua* disciplines.

The dissertation concludes that in his letters Gregoras maintains that while there are limits of mankind’s ability to attain knowledge of the perceptible world, due both to the nature of the studied objects and to the faculties of the inquiring intellect, nevertheless, with the help of the divine providence, it is possible to achieve certainty and comprehension. One such example is the study of the heavenly bodies and their movements. Not only are the planets and the stars created by God as signs for mankind to understand, according to Gregoras, but also the regularity of their motion and its mathematical principles facilitate the use of the astronomical science for the attainment of knowledge. Similarly, the ideal friendship, one that manifests itself in the discursive unity of the correspondents, brings certainty and knowledge of oneself and of the other.

CURRICULUM VITAE

DIVNA MANOLOVA

EDUCATION:

- 2008 – 2014** PhD Candidate, Department of Medieval Studies
Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
Dissertation Title: *Discourses of Science and Philosophy in the Letters of Nikephoros Gregoras*
- 2007 – 2008** Master of Arts in Medieval Studies
Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies
MA Thesis: *Sophonias the Philosopher. A Preface of an Aristotelian Commentary: Structure, Intention, and Audience*
- 2003 – 2007** Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski,” Department of Philosophy, Sofia, Bulgaria
BA Thesis: *The Essence of the Soul in Aristotle’s De anima: the Commentaries of Two Philosophical Traditions (Sophonias the Philosopher and Avicenna)*

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS:

- October 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015** Black Sea Link Research Fellow, New Europe College, Bucharest, Romania
- October 1, 2013 – December 1, 2013** Visiting Research Fellow, Brown University, Department of Classics

- October 1, 2013 – December 1, 2013** Doctoral Research Support Grant, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
- 2012** Medieval Academy of America *Etienne Gilson Dissertation Grant*
- September 15, 2012 – June 15, 2013** Junior Fellow, Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey
- September 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013** Fellow, American Research Center in Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria
Fellowship declined
- September 2011 – May 2012** Junior Fellow in Byzantine Studies
Dumbarton Oaks, Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

-
- April 2014** *The Problem of Individuality in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*, Doctoral level optional course, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski,” co-taught with Prof. Oleg Georgiev and Dr. Gergana Dineva
- October 2010 – July 2011** Teaching assistant, Department of Philosophy, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski,” Sofia, Bulgaria
- February 2010 – May 2010** Academic coordinator of the Center for Hellenic Traditions (now Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies), CEU, Budapest

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS:

-
- “Epistolography and Philosophy.” In *Companion to Byzantine Epistolography*, edited by Alexander Riehle. Leiden: Brill, forthcoming (2015).

“Measuring the World: Sciences and Technologies in Byzantine Constantinople.” In *History of Istanbul: Educational Science and Technology*, edited by Salim Ayduz. Istanbul: ISAM Publications, Kültür AS, forthcoming.

“Homeric Quotations in Nikephoros Gregoras’ Correspondence: Patterns of Employment.” In *MediterraneoS: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Cultures of the Mediterranean Sea*, edited by Sergio Carro Martin, Arturo Echavarren, Esther Fernandez Medina, Daniel Riano Rofilanchas, Katja Smid, Jesus Tellez Rubio, and David Torollo Sanchez, 77–87. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

“Една византийска дискуссия относно приятелството в писмата на Никифор Григора.” [A Byzantine Discussion of Friendship: The Case of Nikephoros Gregoras’ Letters] *Архив за средновековна философия и култура/Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur* 18 (2012): 125–146.

“Astronomy as Battlefield? Nikephoros Gregoras, Barlaam of Calabria and the Calculation of the Sun Eclipse.” *Архив за средновековна философия и култура/Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur* 16 (2010): 118–131.

“Innovation and Self-reflection in Sophonias’ Paraphrasis of *De Anima*.” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* (Central European University) 15 (2009): 23–41.

Prochoros Kydones. “За същността и действието – шестта книга (превод Д. Манолова).” [On The Essence and The Energy. Book VI. Tr. Divna Manolova] *Архив за средновековна философия и култура/Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur* 14 (2008): 243–264.

SELECTED PAPERS AND TALKS:

Self-exegetical Reflections on Authority and Innovation in Nikephoros Gregoras’ Historia Rhōmaikē, delivered at the international conference *The Medieval Self-Commentary: A Transnational Perspective* at Fondation Hardt, Vandœuvres, Geneva, July 22–23, 2014.

Nikephoros Gregoras’ Phlorentios and Philomathēs, delivered at the international workshop ‘... *But How Shall We Converse?*’ *Dialogues and Debates from Late Antiquity to Late Byzantium* at Keble College, Oxford, July 4–5, 2014.

Astronomers in Agreement: Platonic and Ptolemaic Planetary Models in Nikephoros Gregoras’ On the Number Seven and Letter 22, delivered at the thirty-ninth annual

Byzantine Studies Conference at Yale University, New Haven, CT, October 31–November 3, 2013.

'If It Looks Like a Letter, Reads Like a Letter, and Talks Like a Letter:' *The Case of Nikephoros Gregoras' Letter-Collection*, delivered at the international conference *Medieval Letters between Fiction and Document*, Siena, September 9–11, 2013.

Knowing the Past, Knowing the Future: Nikephoros Gregoras' Paraklētikē peri astronomias, delivered at the international workshop *Historiographie der Paläologenzeit zwischen Philologie und historischer Soziolinguistik (Approaches to Late Byzantine Historiography: Between Philology and Sociolinguistics)*, Austrian Academy of Sciences (Division of Byzantine Research), Vienna, June 20, 2013.

Nikephoros Gregoras' On the Number Seven: Mathematics, Music, and Astronomy in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople, delivered as part of the Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations' mini-symposium series, Istanbul, March 29, 2013.

Translating Science to Literature: The Case of Nikephoros Gregoras' Letter-Collection, informal talk, presented in Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul, December 5, 2012.

Paradigms of Knowledge in Nikephoros Gregoras' Epistolary Collection, research report, presented in Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC, January 23, 2012.

Elements of Pythagorean Mathematics in the Letters of Nikephoros Gregoras, delivered at the thirty-seventh annual Byzantine Studies Conference at DePaul University, Chicago, IL, October 20–23, 2011.

Connecting Philosophers: Joseph the Philosopher, Sophonias and Nikephoros Gregoras, delivered at the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria, August 20–27, 2011.