



Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon (Cambridge Classical Studies)

Niketas Siniossoglou

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Byzantium has recently attracted much attention, but principally among cultural, social and economic historians. This book shifts the focus to intellectual history, exploring the thoughts of visionary reformer Gemistos Plethon (c.1355-1452). It argues that Plethon brought to their fulfilment latent tendencies among Byzantine humanists towards a distinctive anti-Christian and pagan outlook. His magnum opus, the pagan *Nomoi*, was meant to provide an alternative to and escape-route from the polarity of the Orthodoxy of Gregory Palamas and Thomism. It was also a groundbreaking reaction to the bankruptcy of a pre-existing humanist agenda and to aborted attempts at the secularisation of the State, whose cause Plethon had himself championed in his two utopian Memoranda. Inspired by Plato, Plethon's secular utopianism and paganism emerge as the two sides of a single coin. On another level, the book challenges anti-essentialist scholarship that views paganism and Christianity as social and cultural constructions.

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