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# Late Antique Philosophy and the Poetry of George of Pisidia

George of Pisidia,[1] a deacon of the church of Hagia Sophia during the reign of Heraclius (610 – 641),[2] is either considered the last of the classical poets,[3] or the first of the Byzantine ones.[4] These two parties focus on his style, mainly his metre. He is one of the last to compose 'Nonnian' verse correctly[5] and yet one of the first to employ the twelve-syllable verse systematically.[6] It is unhelpful to judge a poet entirely on the form of his verse, rather than his content. Historians have squeezed information out of his texts, since they constitute some of the most important evidence about seventh century Byzantium.[7] Here lies the problem: his verse form is interesting when compared to earlier writers and his texts are sources when compared to contemporary historians. The purpose of his poetry is left aside. Hermogenes claims that poetry and history are part of the same writing method, the elaborate or elegant.[8] He also claims that their distinction is subordinate to the purpose of a work.[9] The aim of this paper is to discuss the objective of George of Pisidia's poetry, which is neither poetic nor historical but philosophical.

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[1] The edition employed is that of Tartaglia 1998.

[2] Γεώργιος, διάκονος τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας καὶ χαρτοφύλαξ, τὸ ἐπίκλην Πισίδης. Ἑξαήμερον δι' ἰάμβων εἰς ἔπη τρισχίλια, Εἰς Ἡράκλειον τὸν βασιλέα καὶ Εἰς τὸν κατὰ Περσῶν πόλεμον, ἔτι τε Ἀβαρικὰ καὶ καταλογάδην Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν μάρτυρα Ἀναστάσιον, Sudae Lexikon Γ 170 Adler.

[3] George of Pisidia as last classicizing poet in Agosti 2012, 363.

[4] For George of Pisidia as first Byzantine poet see Lauxtermann 2003.

[5] On the hexameters of George of Pisidia see Sternbach 1893, Gonnelli 1991, Whitby 2014, and De Stefani 2014, 377 – 380.

[6] See Romano 1985.

[7] See Whitby 2013.

[8] Ἃ δὴ καὶ οὐχ ἡ ποίησις μόνη οὐδὲ μὴν ἡ λογογραφία, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἱστορία ἔχει πλεονάζοντα πάντα, πάντως δεῖ καὶ τοὺς ἱστοριογράφους ἐν τοῖς πανηγυρικοῖς τετάχθαι, Hermogenes, *Peri ideon logou* 2.12.2.5 – 8 Patillon.

[9] Ἅπας τοίνυν λόγος ἔννοιάν τε ἔχει πάντως τινὰ ἢ ἐννοίας καὶ μέθοδον περὶ τὴν ἔννοιαν καὶ λέξιν, ἢ τούτοις ἐφήρμοσται, Hermogenes, *Peri ideon logou* 1.1.19.1 – 3 Patillon.

The philosophical nature of George of Pisidia's verse is apparent. He refers to philosophers by name (*Hexaemeron* 583 – 588):

> Ἀλλ᾽ εἰπὲ λοιπὸν τῷ Σταγειρίτῃ, Πλάτων,
> καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν πεῖσον, εἰ πείσεις λέγων·
> 'Ἐκ τῶν ἄνω κάτελθε, καὶ λάλει κάτω,
> μήπως ἐπαρθεὶς τῷ μεταρσίῳ θράσει,
> ὥσπερ νεοττὸς ἀετοῦ, καὶ μή θέλων
> αὖθις κατέλθῃς, μὴ φέρων τὸν ἥλιον.'

> "Plato, speak to Aristotle!
> Convince your student, provided your words will persuade him:
> 'descend from above, and speak below.
> Do not raise yourself with high arrogance,
> lest you, raising like the chick of an eagle,
> fall down again even if you do not wish, since you cannot bear the sun.'"

The subordination of Aristotle to Plato is typical of late antique and Byzantine thought.[10] George of Pisidia criticizes Aristotle for his use of syllogisms.[11] He focuses more on Platonism and specifically: Plato, Porphyry and Proclus. The omission of Plotinus and Damascius is important, striking for us, but once more rather typical of Byzantine thought. This may be due to the limited interest of Plotinus in physiology, or nature in general. Damascius had sought shelter by the Shah of Persia.[12] Of those referred to by name, Porphyry is singled out for his allegorical reading of the scarab

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[10] Ἐν ἔτεσι γοῦν οὔτε δύο ὅλοις πάσας αὐτῷ τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους συνανέγνω πραγματείας, λογικάς, ἠθικάς, πολιτικάς, φυσικάς, καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ ταύτας θεολογικὴν ἐπιστήμην. ἀχθέντα δὲ διὰ τούτων ἱκανῶς, ὥσπερ διὰ τινῶν προτελείων καὶ μικρῶν μυστηρίων, εἰς τὴν Πλάτωνος ἦγε μυσταγωγίαν ἐν τάξει καὶ οὐχ 'ὑπερβάθμιον πόδα', κατὰ τὸ λόγιον, τείνοντα, Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 13.318 – 323 Masullo; Βραχεῖς γὰρ ὁ τηνικαῦτα χρόνος λογίους παρέτρεφε, καὶ τούτους μέχρι τῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν ἑστηκότας προθύρων, καὶ τὰ Πλατωνικὰ μόνον ἀποστοματίζοντας σύμβολα, μηδὲν δὲ τῶν κεκρυμμένων εἰδότας, μηδ᾽ ὅσα οἱ ἄνδρες περὶ τὴν διαλεκτικὴν ἢ τὴν ἀποδεικτικὴν ἐσπουδάκασιν, Psellos, *Chronographia* 3.3.1 – 6 Reinsch.

[11] *Hexaemeron* 559 – 566.

[12] Πρέσβεις· ὅτι οὗτοι ἦσαν οἱ φιλόσοφοι οἱ ἐς Περσίδα διαπρεσβευσάμενοι σὺν Ἀρεοβίνδῳ· Δαμάσκιος ὁ Σύρος, Σιμπλίκιος ὁ Κίλιξ Εὐλάλιός τε ὁ Φρύξ, Πρισκιανὸς ὁ Λυδός, Ἑρμείας τε καὶ Διογένης οἱ ἐκ Φοινίκης, Ἰσίδωρος ὁ Γαζαῖος. οὗτοι πάντες οἴκαδε ἀπενόστησαν, χαίρειν εἰπόντες τῇ τοῦ βαρβάρου φιλοξενίᾳ· καὶ ἀπώναντο δὲ ὅμως τῆς ἐκδημίας οὐκ ἐν βραχεῖ τινι καὶ ἠμελημένῳ, ἀλλ᾽ ὅθεν αὐτοῖς ὁ ἐφεξῆς βίος ἐς τὸ θυμῆρές τε καὶ ἥδιστον ἀπετελεύτησεν. ὡς γὰρ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ Πέρσαι σπονδὰς ἔθεντο καὶ συνθήκας, μέρος ὑπῆρχε τῶν κατ᾽ αὐτὰς ἀναγραμμένων τὸ δεῖν ἐκείνους τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐς τὰ σφέτερα ἤθη κατιόντας βιοτεύειν ἀδεῶς τολοιπὸν ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς, οὐδὲν ὁτιοῦν πέρα τῶν δοκούντων φρονεῖν ἢ μεταβάλλειν τὴν πατρῴαν δόξαν ἀναγκαζομένους, Sudae Lexikon P 2251 Adler.

(1061).[13] Allegory is not simply dismissed since such reading of the golden chain of Homer *Iliad* 8[14] is used at the beginning of poem 8 *In Severum* (1 – 12). Moreover, at the end of poem 10 *De vanitate vitae* the image of the charioteer from Plato's Phaedrus[15] is also employed (252 – 261). Therefore allegory is not dismissed as such, only Porphyry's interpretation of the scarab. The Neoplatonist Proclus is referred to more directly, as a physiologist (61 – 80). The expressions recall his commentary on the Timaeus of Plato.[16] He is singled out for his interest in syllables (65) which may recall the commentary on the Cratylus.[17] There may be a reference to the Chaldean Oracles in Proclus (77).[18] There is a discussion on the one and the many typical of Plato's Parmenides (1648 – 1657) which may recall Proclus' commentary on the dialogue.[19] Thus George of Pisidia is engaged in philosophy, specifically Platonic thought.

Even late antique commentaries on Aristotle are striking for the fundamentally Platonic approach to Aristotelian texts. The relation between God and Nature is rather central to the commentaries of Aristotle's works on Physics, as it is a central concern for George of Pisidia. If one thinks specifically of the *Hexaemeron* it is clear that the philosophical interpretation of Nature is central to that poem. Indeed, the poem focuses on one specific verse of the Psalms (*Septuaginta Psalm* 103.24) which he paraphrases thus:

> ὡς ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἔργα σου, κύριε·
> πάντα ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησας,
> ἐπληρώθη ἡ γῆ τῆς κτήσεώς σου.

> "O Lord, how have thy works been magnified!
> In wisdom hast thou made them all:
> the earth is full of thy riches." (KJV Psalm 104.24)

George of Pisidia, *Hexaemeron* 55f. = 1863f. Gonnelli:

> ὡς ἐμεγαλύνθη τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν κτισμάτων
> ἡ δημιουργὸς καὶ σοφὴ παντουργία.

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[13] Section on the Scarab: *Hexaemeron* 1052 – 1076.

[14] The allegory of the golden chain of Homer is found in Psellos, *Philosophica Minora* 1.46. It is also found in Proclus' commentary on the Parmenides and Timaeus.

[15] The allegory of the charioteer of Plato's Phaedrus is found in Psellos, *Philosophica Minora* 2.7. It is also found in Hermias' scholia to the Phaedrus.

[16] See Diehl 1903 – 1906.

[17] See Pasquali 1908.

[18] See des Places 1971, 206 – 212.

[19] See Steel 2007 – 2009.

              "how the creative and wise creation
              of all creatures of God is magnified."

The central notion in the original verse and in the paraphrase in George of Pisidia is that creation is connected with wisdom: the wise creation is the key to this poem. Thus an intellectual reading of Nature, such as that of commentaries on Aristotle's works, seems appropriate. It also gives a better idea of the cultural atmosphere to which George of Pisidia belonged. A central matter in the relation between God and Nature is medicine, the art of healing what is in Nature. This explains why George of Pisidia also names two doctors: Hippocrates[20] and Galen.[21] The fact that creation is wise leads George of Pisidia to define God as a Universal Galen (1345). The question of wisdom within nature, and correct medical approach is clear in the poet's attack on the Persian Mani (1351 – 1398). The idea is that it is not possible to have opposing principles governing the same process.[22] The attack on Mani, not only indicates that George of Pisidia was not in favour of Persia, the declared enemy of Byzantium, but is striking because of the quotation from Hippocrates. George of Pisidia, *Hexaemeron* 1369 Gonnelli:

        σύμπνοια και σύρροια τῶν ὅλων μία

        "one is the spirit and flux of all."

This is a paraphrase of the original of Hippocrates (*De Alimento* 23 Littré):

        Ξύρροια μία, ξύμπνοια μία, ξυμπαθέα πάντα

        "One flux, one breathing, all connected."

This very principle allows one to understand better the cultural and philosophical background of George of Pisidia. The line is quoted in Galen,[23] who had been singled out in the *Hexaemeron*. It is also quoted by Stephanos in his commentary on Galen[24] and by Stephanos and Theophilos in their commentary.[25] It also appears a few times in John Philoponus, in his commentary

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[20] Hippocrates in George of Pisidia: *Hexaemeron* 931.

[21] Galen in George of Pisidia: *Heraclias* 2.41; *De res.* 28; *Hexaemeron* 934, 1118, 1345, 1501.

[22] Law of non-contradiction in Plato, *Republic* 436b and in Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1005b19f.; 1005b23f.; 1011b13f. Neoplatonists accept it, see Lloyd 1990, 126.

[23] Galen, *De causis pulsuum libri iv,* 9.88 Kühn.

[24] Stephanos, *Commentarii in priorem Galeni librum therapeuticum ad Glauconem*, 1.321.35 Dietz.

[25] Theophilus Protospatharius et Stephanus Atheniensis Med., *De febrium differentia* 17.16 Sicurus.

on Aristotle's *On generation and corruption*,[26] and his work on the eternity of the world which he wrote against Proclus.[27] John Philoponus has the distinction of being condemned at the council of 680f. as a heretic. These are the anathemas of 681 (Council of Constantinople 680f. *acts* 11.480.14f. Riedinger, 20th March 681):

Ἰωάννης ὁ γραμματικός, ὁ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν Φιλόπονος, μᾶλλον δὲ ματαιό-πονος,

"John the Grammarian, named Philoponus, or rather wasted talent."

(Council of Constantinople 680f. *acts* 16.702.18 – 22 Riedinger; 9th August 681):

Σεργίῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·
Κύρῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·
Ὁνωρίῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·
Πύρρῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·
Παύλῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·
Πέτρῳ αἱρετικῷ ἀνάθεμα·

"Anathema to the heretic Sergius (Patr. Cpl. 610 – 638),
Anathema to the heretic Honorius (Pope 625 – 638),
Anathema to the heretic Pyrrhos (Patr. Cpl. 638 – 641, 654),
Anathema to the heretic Paul (Patr. Cpl. 642 – 653),
Anathema to the heretic Peter (Patr. Cpl. 654 – 666)"

The condemnation is relevant since it concerns ideas expressed in 634[28] and then 638.[29] Moreover, they were not just doctrines contemporary with George of Pisidia but affected also the poet's patrons, most notably the Patriarch Sergius, recipient the *Hexaemeron* as well as some epigrams (13.88, 90, 106, 107 Tartaglia). Patriarch Sergius was also posthumously condemned at the synod of 680f. together with all other patriarchs in the period (610 – 666). The emperor at the time of these new doctrines was Heraclius who was the recipient of George of Pisidia's poems 1, 2, 5 as well as epigrams (13.105, 109, 110 Tartaglia). The reason for the condemnation was their opinions on the question of Nature.

The most radical of them, John Philoponus, had argued that since God was constituted of three hypostases (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), each one

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[26] J. Philoponus *In Aristotelis libros de generatione et corruptione commentaria* 106.33/34 Vitelli.
[27] J. Philoponus *De aeternitate mundi*, 283.20 Rabe.
[28] Monoergism, the belief that Christ had only one energy (activity).
[29] Monothelitism, the belief that Christ had only one will.

had its own nature (*physis*).[30] His position was known as tritheism.[31] In 680f., the synod defines three hypostases for God and two natures for Christ. The question is the relation between the activity of an entity in relation to its nature. Leaving aside technical explanations, this is the topic of the *Hexa-emeron*. However, the question of a correct nature in relation to God, explains the topic of poem 8 which attacks Severus of Antioch (512 – 518). Severus had been condemned for his doctrine concerning the natures of Christ in 536.[32] Before the question of energies and wills emerges in the 630s, both parties condemned Severus and had done so for more than a century. Thus poem 8 needs to be seen with more relevant questions. The definition of nature and natures is central. However, in the poem there is an echo of the *ecthesis* of Heraclius dated to 638.[33] The decree forbade all to speak about energies. The poem against Severus seems to refer to the suspension of judgement (George of Pisidia, *In Severum* 9 – 12 Querci in Tartaglia):

> Οὐκ ἦν γὰρ εἰκὸς, οὐδὲ τῇ φύσει πρέπον
> Ζυγοστατεῖσθαι τὴν ὑπεραίρουσαν φύσιν,
> ἀλλ’ἐμμένοντας τοῖς πεπηγμένοις ὅροις
> σιγῇ τὰ πολλὰ μυστικῇ περισκέπτειν.

> "For it was not good, nor naturally convenient
> To weigh the superior nature
> But standing by established definitions
> To consider much with mystic silence."

The theological desire to speak on the topic while the political will was against, appears to show George of Pisidia's interest in religious and philo-sophical questions. One should remember that the *ecthesis* was issued in 638 to stop previous disputes on the relation between nature and energies which had developed mainly in 634 – 638. Thus George of Pisidia has ties with Patriarch Sergius (poem 8, 9 et alia). He also quotes passages employed by authors associated with monothelitite positions. His cultural milieu is that of those condemned at the synod of Constantinople in 680f.

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[30] Ἀριθμεῖται γοῦν ἡ μακαρία τριὰς οὐκ οὐσίαις καὶ φύσεσι καὶ διαφόροις θεότησιν ἢ τρισσαῖς κυριότησιν, ἄπαγε, ὡς Ἄρειοι μαίνονται καὶ οἱ τῆς νέας τριθεΐας λυττῶσιν ἡγού-μενοι, οὐσίας τρεῖς καὶ φύσεις τρεῖς καὶ τρεῖς κυριότητας καὶ τρεῖς ὁμοίως κενολογοῦντες θεότητας, ἀλλ’ὑποστάσεσι καὶ ἰδιότησι νοεραῖς τελείαις καθ’ ἑαυτὰς ὑφεστώσαις, ἀριθμῷ διαιρεταῖς καὶ οὐ διαιρεταῖς τῇ θεότητι, Synod 680, Session 11.424 Riedinger.

[31] See Van Roey 1980.

[32] Justinianus, *Constitutio contra Anthimum, Severum, Petrum et Zooram* Amelotti - Zingale.

[33] *Ecthesis* of Heraclius, Concilium Lateranum 649 act 3.156.20 – 162.13 Riedinger.

That said, the cultural milieu of George of Pisidia was also the imperial court. While the religious authorities found fertile ground for controversy, the emperor seemed interested in keeping this debate quiet, while he was dealing with military matters. This is visible in George of Pisidia's poems. The poems concerning Heraclius are useful for historians, while the poems related to patriarch Sergius are useful for theologians. This brings us back to the main question: why does he focus on the Neoplatonist Proclus? It has been argued that Maximus the Confessor between 634 and 638 employed the Neoplatonist Proclus' texts to define his interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite. The matter hinges on the term αὐθυπόστατος δύναμις which is not present in Dionysius but is found in Proclus.[34] Briefly an energy is defined by one nature, not by a hypostasis. George of Pisidia without tackling this question directly is acutely aware that the crux of the matter is being discussed on the basis of Proclus. This is why he refers to Proclus, without condemning him directly. Suspending judgement on these matters seems important in the court of Heraclius.

The relation between God and Nature in Neoplatonism is expressed also by the term theurgy, which means acting or operating on the divine or from the divine. Indeed it is a technical term employed extensively by Neoplatonists. Damascius distinguishes between two types of thinkers: he claims that Plotinus and Porphyry are philosophers, while Iamblichus and Proclus were experts of hieratic art.[35] George of Pisidia seems to consider theurgy as negative (*Heraclias* 1.6 – 8 Pertusi in Tartaglia):

> νῦν πανσέληνος ἡ σελήνη λαμπέτω
> τοῦ Χοσρόου λήγοντος ἐγγυωμένη
> Πέρσας τὸ λοιπὸν μὴ θεουργεῖν τὴν κτίσιν.

> "May the full moon shine,
> Assured that with Chosroes' defeat,
> The Persians will not apply theurgy to creation."

It is not only negative, it is Persian. Two other references in the *Heraclias* also associate it with Persia.[36] A modern reader would simply recall the condemnation of theurgy by Augustine of Hippo in the *De Civitate Dei*.[37] The

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[34] See Lauritzen 2012.

[35] Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι· οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικήν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες, Damascius, *In Phaedonem* 172.1 – 3 Westerink. Hieratic art is connected with theurgy in Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 5.18, 20, 8.4, 9.6, 10.5.

[36] *Heraclias* 1.23, 1.25.

[37] Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* 10.9.

term theurgy however is a good Byzantine word and it is a positive concept employed officially in the documents of the Lateran Council of 649, to which participated Maximus the Confessor, and in the Ecumenical council of 680f. (session 4 [15th november 680]) and 8 [7th March 681]; Council of Constantinople 680f. *acts* 8.252.1 – 11 Riedinger):

Ἔτι ἀνεγνώσθη ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κωδικίου ἑτέρα χρῆσις τοῦ ἁγίου Διονυ-σίου ἐπισκόπου Ἀθηνῶν καὶ μάρτυρος ἐκ τοῦ περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων λόγου, καὶ ἀντεβλήθη ὁμοίως τὸ κείμενον τῆς χρήσεως ἔχον οὕτως· "Διακέκριται δὲ τῆς ἀγαθοπρεποῦς εἰς ἡμᾶς θεουργίας τὸ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐξ ἡμῶν ὁλικῶς καὶ ἀληθῶς οὐσιωθῆναι τὸν ὑπερούσιον λόγον· καὶ δρᾶσαι καὶ παθεῖν, ὅσα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης αὐτοῦ θεουργίας ἐστὶν ἔκκριτα καὶ ἐξαίρετα. τούτοις γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα κατ᾽ οὐδένα κεκοινώνηκε λόγον, εἰ μήπου τις φαίη κατὰ τὴν ἀγαθοπρεπῆ καὶ φιλάνθρωπον βούλησιν." Τὰ ἀποκοπέντα ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς χρήσεως παρὰ τῶν αὐτῶν· "Καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν ὑπερκειμένην καὶ ἄρρητον θεουργίαν, ἣν ἔδρα καὶ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς γεγονὼς ὁ ἀναλλοίωτος, ᾗ θεὸς καὶ θεοῦ λόγος."

"Once more was read from the same manuscript another opinion of Saint Dionysius, bishop of Athens and martyr from his treatise on divine names. Similarly, the text of the opinion was opposed in this way: 'Again, it is by a differentiated act of God's benevolence that the Super-Essential Word should wholly and completely take Human Substance of human flesh and do and suffer all those things which, in a special and particular manner, belong to the action of His Divine Humanity. In these acts the Father and the Spirit have no share, except of course that they all share in the loving generosity of the Divine counsels.' The removed passages from this opinion except these: 'and in all that transcendent Divine working of unutterable mysteries which were performed in Human Nature by Him Who as God and as the Word of God is Immutable.'" (transl. Rolt 1920).

This is the council which condemned the patron of George of Pisidia, patriarch Sergius, as well as authors such as John Philoponus. Thus, the term theurgy creates a divide between two sets of authors in the seventh century: those who view it as a negative concept and those who accept and endorse it. The latter group was confirmed as orthodox by the Council of 680f., while the former were condemned as monoergists and monothelitites. George of Pisidia represents the culture of the faction at court under Heraclius which was posthumously condemned at the ecumenical council of 681. Thus George of Pisidia is not the last classical poet or the first Byzantine one, but an expression of late antique philosophy and theology of the court of Heraclius.

One must draw one important consequence. George of Pisidia knows Porphyry's allegorical readings, he is aware of Proclus' commentaries on the Cratylus, Timaeus and Parmenides. His culture seems connected with the

physiology studied by doctors like Hippocrates and Galen and by thinkers such as John Philoponus. Given that George of Pisidia reflects the culture of Patriarch Sergius at the court of Heraclius, he read these books in Constantinople and his readership was in the same city. These texts may have been transmitted directly from Alexandria in Late Antiquity to Damascus and then Baghdad from the 7th to the 10th century, but they were known, studied and referred to in Constantinople of the early seventh century, unlike the West and most of the Middle East. Therefore George of Pisidia's poetry is essential for the study of late antique philosophy and represents proof that the texts were known in Constantinople. It is the main official evidence of direct knowledge and reading of Neoplatonic thinkers (Porphyry and Proclus) and of the Alexandrian commentators on Aristotle (John Philoponus) as well as medical writers (Stephanos). His philosophical and religious concerns, which mix both pagan and Christian principles, are the aim of his writing in verse and therefore of being a poet. George of Pisidia, for his contemporaries, may not have been the last of the classicizing poets or the first of the Byzantine ones, but was rather a philosopher and friend of monothelite heretics. This may be a further explanation for the sudden demise of the Nonnian hexameter verse with which he was now associated and which had been the fashion since the fifth century.

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