



BRITISH
ACADEMY

for the humanities and social sciences

Faces of the Infinite: Neoplatonism and Poetics at the Confluence of Africa, Asia and Europe

**Venues: The British Academy, 10-11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH
9 & 10 November 2017
SOAS, University of London
11 November 2017**

Convenors:

**Professor Stefan Sperl, SOAS, University of London
Professor Trevor Dadson FBA, Queen Mary University of London
Dr Yorgos Dedes, SOAS, University of London**

Thursday, 9 November 2017

09.00 *Registration and refreshments*

Session One: From Greek Beginnings to Arabic and Hebrew

To introduce the Greek origins of Neoplatonism and its emergence in Arabic and Hebrew

Chairs: Stefan Sperl, SOAS, University of London and Trevor Dadson, Queen Mary, University of London

09.15 Introduction: Background, Scope and Aim of Conference

09.40 Keynote Address: The One and the Self in Neoplatonism
Richard Taylor, Marquette University

10.30 *Refreshments*

11.00 Are Neoplatonists Neoplatonic in their Poetics?
Alexander Matthew Key, Stanford University

- 11.45 Andalusian Hebrew Poems on the Soul and their Afterlife
Adena Tanenbaum, Ohio State University
- 12.30 *Lunch*
- Session Two: The Ascent of the Soul**
To compare and contrast the portrayal of the soul's ascent in texts of different linguistic and religious provenance
Chair: Ziad Elmarsafy, King's College London
- 13.30 Facing the Infinite: Ibn 'Arabī's Doves of the Arāk Tree and its Arabian, Qur'ānic and Plotinian Antecedents
Stefan Sperl, SOAS, University of London
- 14.15 « Let us fly from the forms of beauty to the Creator of all beauty » : Neo-Platonic themes in the poetic works of 'Abderrhamān Jāmī
Leili Anvar, INALCO, Paris
- 15.00 *Refreshments*
- 15.30 *Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto*. Paradiso, l 8 and its Philosophical Background
Cristina D'Ancona, University of Pisa
- 16.15 The Ascent of the Soul: Neo-Platonic Themes in the Literature of the Golden Age of Spain
Colin Thompson, University of Oxford
- 17.00 *Close of first day*

Friday, 10 November 2017

- Session Three: from Late Antiquity to Byzantium and the Ottoman World**
To illustrate continuity and change in the poetic reception of Platonist concepts in the Eastern Mediterranean from Late Antiquity to Ottoman times
Chair: James Binns, University of York
- 09.00 Hymn of the Pearl and Chaldaean Oracles: Platonism on the Border between Monism and Dualism, Imperial Centuries and Late Antiquity, Greek and Syriac
Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, Freie Universität Berlin
- 09.45 Neoplatonism and Poetics in Late Antique and Byzantine Literature
David Hernández de la Fuente, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid
- 10.30 *Refreshments*

- 11.00 Karaites Poems about the Nature of the Soul from the Muslim East, Byzantium and Eastern Europe
Joachim Yeshaya, University of Leuven
- 11.45 Ottoman Poetry: Where the Neoplatonic Dissolves into an Emotional Script for Life.
Walter Andrews, University of Washington - Paper to be presented by Mehmet Kalpaklı, Bilkent University, Ankara
- 12.30 *Lunch*
- Session Four: Neoplatonism and Gender Identity in Early Modern Love Lyric**
To illustrate and compare relevant examples of 16th century Turkish, Italian, English and Spanish verse
Chair: Peter Robinson, University of Reading
- 13.30 Neoplatonic Discourse and Ottoman Women Poets: Negotiation, Legitimation and Subversion
Didem Havlioğlu, Duke University
- 14.15 Beyond the Courts: Neoplatonism in Sixteenth-Century Italian Poetic Culture
Abigail Brundin, University of Cambridge
- 15.00 *Refreshments*
- 15.30 Kissing and the Senses in Elizabethan Poetry
John Roe, University of York
- 16.15 Negotiating Difference: Neoplatonism and the Discourse of Desire in the Early Modern Spanish Love Lyric
Julian Weiss, King's College, University of London
- 17.00 *Close of second day*
- 19.30 'Songs of Songs'*
Poetic triptych with voices, songs and music based on texts in Hebrew, Castilian and Persian, performed by Leili Anvar, Frédéric Ferney, Renaud Garcia-Fons and Solea Garcia-Fons.
Venue: Brunei Gallery, SOAS. Free entrance for conference delegates.
- *Sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation and the AHRC Project *Language Acts and Worldmaking*

Saturday, 11 November 2017

(Please note that this third day is being held at SOAS and that separate registration is required)*

- 9.30 *Registration*
- Session Five: Neoplatonist Poetics and Mysticism in Spain and the Indo-Persian world**
To examine mystical concepts of possible Neoplatonist provenance in the works of major poets writing in Persian and Spanish
Chair: Alessandro Cancian, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London
- 10.00 Poetry and Ishraqi Illuminationism among the Esoteric Zoroastrians of Mughal India
Carl W Ernst, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- 10.45 Neoplatonic and Sufi Approaches to Beauty: The Cases of Plotinus and Rūzbihān Baqlī
Kazuyo Murata, King's College, University of London
- 11.30 *Refreshments*
- 12.00 The Christian Neoplatonism of Francisco de Aldana in the *Carta para Arias Montano*
Terence O'Reilly, University College, Cork
- 12.45 La erótica del infinito: Neoplatonismo, Cábala y Sufismo en la obra de José Ángel Valente
Claudio Rodríguez Fer, University of Santiago de Compostela
- 13.30 *Lunch*
- Session Six: Modern Echoes in Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Greek**
To illustrate the persistence of Neoplatonic themes in selected examples of modern poetry
Chair: Yorgos Dedes, SOAS, University of London
- 14.30 Neoplatonist Relics in Modern Persian Poetry
Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, University of Maryland
- 15.15 The New Image of the Beloved in the Old Mirror: Reflections of Neoplatonic Tradition in Modern Turkish Poetry
Mehmet Kalpaklı & Neslihan Demirkol, Bilkent University, Ankara and Ankara Social Sciences University
- 16.00 *Refreshments*
- 16.30 Neoplatonist Echoes in Modern Arabic Poetry: The Case of Muhammad Afifi Matar
Ferial Ghazoul, The American University in Cairo

17.15 Neo-Platonists in Modern Greek Poetry
David Ricks, King's College, University of London

18.00 Conclusion and Summing Up
Stefan Sperl, SOAS, University of London, Trevor Dadson FBA, Queen Mary
University of London and Yorgos Dedes, SOAS, University of London

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