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 ʿArabiʾs Doves of the Arāk Tree and its Arabian, Qurʾānic 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 ʿAbderrhamān Jāmī
Leili Anvar, INALCO, Paris

15.00 Refreshments

15.30 Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto. Paradiso, I 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  Karaite 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 Kalpakli, 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

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: Brunel 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 Kalpakli & 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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