Call for abstracts for the 2020 ISNS Conference in Athens (June 10-14, 2020)
(in conjunction with The American College of Greece, Alba Graduate Business School, Xenias 6, Athina 115 28)

The Divine and the Natural World: Animals, Place, Time, and the Environment in the Platonic Tradition
Crystal Addey <crystal.addey@ucc.ie>, Marilynn Lawrence <pronoia12@gmail.com>, and Rob Berchman <berchmanrob@earthlink.net>
Humanity is facing an extraordinary climate emergency and environmental crisis: global warming continues to worsen and, according to well-respected scientists, we may well be currently facing disastrous climate ‘tipping’ points (see especially Lenton et. al 2019). The air in many cities, and waters (oceans, rivers), are polluted and toxic, and deforestation continues and even increases. Our planet’s wildlife and animals are in crisis, as species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. Does ancient philosophy, and specifically the Platonic tradition, have anything to offer us in the face of this crisis? For our conference in Athens - the city that has often been considered to be the ‘place’ of philosophy par excellence - we welcome abstracts that explore this question from diverse perspectives – including (but not limited to) ethics, political philosophy, ontology, ancient religions, theology and cosmology. How did Platonist philosophers, from Plato through to Proclus and beyond, conceive of and think through the relationship between the divine (gods, goddesses, daimones, angels, heroes), stars, humans, animals, rivers, trees, plants and the land or earth itself? What kind of worldviews did they inhabit and conceptualise in relation to these beings and entities? How and in what ways were the ontological, ethical, and epistemological status of gods, stars, humans, animals and plants conceived? How was the relationship between the divine and the natural world framed by these philosophers, what reflections did they offer on the nature of landscape and place - and human relations with them, and how did the ways of life encouraged, instigated and exemplified by them frame and affect these relationships? Is it possible to characterise their philosophies and worldviews as ‘ecocentric’ or ‘anthropocentric’? What influences and impacts have their philosophical conceptions of the natural world had on later periods and on current times? To what extent was the Platonist philosopher rooted in place, landscape and the natural world? How did she or he relate to stars, animals, trees and plants, alongside relations with the divine and the daimonic? And do these philosophical conceptions and worldviews have any possible relevance or implications for how we might now relate to nature and move through our current environmental crises?

Augustine of Hippo’s Reception of the Neoplatonic Tradition
Donna Altimari Adler <donnaaltimari@comcast.net>
Augustine of Hippo’s relationship to Neoplatonism, particularly in view of his Christian message and Christian conversion is complex and controversial. This panel explores how Augustine appropriated Neoplatonic ideas and concepts to express a distinctly Christian metaphysic. Although a rhetorician by training and practice, rather than a systematic philosopher like
Plotinus, Augustine nonetheless employed rhetoric as a putative vehicle for transforming philosophical categories to express a new world view. This panel concentrates on Augustin’s specific Neoplatonic sources, inasmuch as they can be discerned (and is open to a consideration of sources beyond the most prominent usual suspects, as long as they can be supported by evidence), his specific uses of them, the justification he found for those usages in the Christian scriptures, and the success or lack thereof attending his attempts creatively to appropriate those sources in service of a Christian agenda.

**Proclus and Causes: problems in epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics**

Sara Ahbel-Rappe <rappe@umich.edu>

In this panel, we will address complications arising from Proclus’ commentaries and treatises concerning topics in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Proclus’ system is built on a complex matrix of premises and a bold application of principles to specific contexts. The theory that the cause is greater than the effect and that the Good is a cause of all are themselves premises that receive dialectical challenges from Damascius. Proclus’ epistemology also presents potential problems that arise from the place of the soul vis à vis the intellect and the meaning of reversion to the cause. Finally, Proclus’ theorizing on providence and nature suggest methods of evaluating moral responsibility with regard to human agency and cosmic dispensation that also raise problems.

Papers that treat any of these issues are welcome. You may also include comparative material, as for example, looking at Proclus alongside other theoretical systems, later or earlier philosophers, or even other traditions.

**Plotinus’ Rational Approach to Artistic Beauty and its Impact on Twentieth Century Art and Science.**

Aphrodite Alexandrakis <aalexandrakis@barry.edu>

Plotinus discusses the rational, conscious, human activity that consists of the φανταστικον and the διανοητικον (innate knowledge). I.4.10. While διάνοια can be independent of imagination, (has its own consciousness), imagination works along with διάνοια and the Plotinian διάνοητικον and φανταστικον are found in the human intellect’s experience.

Interestingly, and on the same lines, Albert Einstein said: “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” And Picasso added: “Everything you can imagine is real…”

The above influenced both, 20th century artistic works and some scientific theories, especially in Physics. This panel will study the Plotinian theory of imagination, its meaning and influence on certain 20th century artists and scientists.

**Neoplatonism in the late Middle Ages: from Eckhart to Cusanus**

Oscar Federico Bauchwitz <bauchwitz1930@gmail.com> and Claudia D’Amico <claufabidamico@gmail.com>

This panel will explore examples of Christian Neoplatonists of in this period and consider the originality (or lack thereof) of their use of such sources as Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, John Scotus Eriugena, Albert the Great, the Arabic Liber de causis, and the direct reception of the Proclus’ work in Latin version.

Although the panel focuses on Eckhart and Cusanus, we also welcome related papers about other authors who flourished between the beginning of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth
Neoplatonic Procession and the East: Towards a Comparative Analytics
Khashayar Beigi <khbeigi@berkeley.edu>
Procession or the emergence of higher entities into realms beneath them is a distinct Neoplatonist concept from Plotinus to Proclus and beyond. This panel invites comparative approaches to Neoplatonism by way of exploring, comparing, and analyzing figures of Procession with an emphasis on the East. The aim of the panel is to deploy Procession as a philosophical guiding principle to expand the reach of Neoplatonic inquiries into Eastern traditions including those contemporaneous with the Greek Antiquity but also those beyond its recognized historical and discursive purviews. Palamite divine Energy, Suhrawardi’s Illuminationist prayers, and Mani’s theogony of Lights are among few such examples where tropes of Procession hold an explicit or implicit role in the articulation, structure and construction of the overall arguments, descriptions, and schemes. In proposing such a comparative framework, we are particularly interested to ask what are the advantages, challenges, and limits of thinking about Procession philosophically in order to engage with its diverse topoi in devotional, poetic and mythical texts and contexts.

Prophecy, Divination, and Foreknowledge in Neoplatonism: the God(esse)s of Providence
Dylan Burns <dylanburns93@yahoo.com> and Danielle Layne <layne@gonzaga.edu>
Ritual cultures and practices concerned with prophecy, divination, and revelatory activity posed a variety of problems and opportunities for ancient Mediterranean philosophers. What is the status of prophetic knowledge? Which entities are at work in prophecy and divination – gods, daimones, humans, or some combination thereof? What is the relationship of the philosopher to the established divinatory institutions, shrines, or cults, whether Greek, Roman, or Christian? If a deity prophesies something, to what extent can humans be responsible parties in the prophesied event? Notions of divine knowledge tends to presuppose the divine, and so questions of prophecy and divination tend to be bound up with the existence and character of gods and goddesses. This panel calls for papers that explore how Platonizing thinkers considered, theorized, and named the divine actors at work in prophecy and divination, particularly as regards the relationship between female divinities in Neoplatonism, foreknowledge, and fate, as well as the question of the providential character of deities in divinatory contexts.

Neo-Platonic and Gnostic exegeses of late-antique divine revelations: Corpus Hermeticum, Chaldean Oracles, Gnostic revealed texts
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Neo-Platonist philosophers did not only read and comment on Plato’s dialogues but surprisingly paid attention to revelatory texts, up to the point of perceiving them as equally canonical. From the time of Porphyry onwards, Neo-Platonism became more sensitive to and influenced by texts deemed to be of a revealed nature, where either the ‘gods’ or a specific divine figure (as in the case of Hermes Trismegistus) communicate to one or more elects teachings concerning the true nature of the divine realm, the creation of the world and the destiny of man. The importance that several Neo-Platonists gave to these texts led them to either comment on them or to make use of
them to elucidate aspects of: 1) their philosophical positions; 2) their exegeses of Plato, whose thinking was necessarily proved to be in line with what had been taught by the ‘gods’. By doing so the Neo-Platonists subjected these texts to a level of rationalization which was certainly alien to those revelatory writings, but that left its trace on Neo-Platonic thinking as well. In consequence, Neo-Platonism ended up adopting some of the main themes around which those texts revolved (such as the concepts of the divine monad, of the arrangements of the divine dimension into triads, of the divine Intellect and Soul, of the Demiurge, of the fall and redemption of man etc.).

On the other hand, as their Neo-Platonic counterparts, Gnostic thinkers – like Valentinus, Ptolemy or Basilides – also tried to interpret philosophically their own revealed texts, whether the canonical Gospels, the corpus that would later make-up the Nag-Hammadi Library or others still unknown to us. The panel welcomes contributions from scholars on the Neo-Platonic and Gnostic interpretation of late antique revealed texts (*Corpus Hermeticum*, *Chaldean Oracles*, Gnostic revelations), which represents a topic that so far has not attained the attention we believe it deserves from scholars.

**Plotinus’ Metaphysics**

Damian Caluori <dcaluori@ed.ac.uk> and D.M. Hutchinson <dmunoz@stolaf.edu>

Plotinus devotes three treatises to the genera of being, VI.1-3 (42–44) that involve a lengthy examination of the Stoic and Aristotelian genera and a development of his own Platonic theory. Of course, these treatises are not an isolated analysis of the genera of being. They overlap considerably with the discussion of eternity and time in 3.7 (45), sensible substance in 2.6 (17), Ideas of individuals in 5.7 (18), and the ontological status of numbers in 6.6 (34). This panel welcomes papers on VI.1-3 and traditional metaphysical issues that overlap with VI.1-3, such as substance, causality, time, the genera of being, the composition and persistence of sensibles, Ideas of individuals, and so forth.

**Neoplatonic Aesthetics**

Jean-Michel Charrue <jmcharrue@free.fr>

What is Aesthetics? Is there a Neoplatonic Aesthetics? If there is one, it will be the great Aesthetics that goes from Plotinus to Marsilio Ficino, through history. But are there one or more Neoplatonic Aesthetics?

Neoplatonism is rich in different contributions from its authors, such as Porphyry, Proclus, etc. and beyond, from its various sources, so that it may be interesting to confront the richness of everyone’s views.

Topics that one may consider might include but are not limited to:
- If Aesthetics is the science of Beauty, is there an Aesthetics of the sensible, spiritual, or divine world? Can we speak about one Neoplatonic Aesthetics expressed in the various Neoplatonists (such as Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Ps-Dionysius, Boethius, Ficino).
- Is Beauty more in the things and beings or more in our souls?
- How can we link Music and Poetics to that Neoplatonic Aesthetics?

**Marsilio Ficino as a Commentator**

Anna Corrias <a.corrias@utoronto.ca> and Stephen Gersh <Stephen.E.Gersh.1@nd.edu>

This panel will explore Marsilio Ficino's role as a commentator, both in itself and in relation
to the other roles – especially that of translator and philosopher in his own right– which establish Ficino's intellectual identity. We invite contributions on the following topics: Ficino's choices of sources (Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Dionysius the Areopagite etc.); the gestation of Ficino's commentaries (for example, through an analysis of Ficino's reading practices, scholia in Ficino's manuscripts, and the explicit or implicit presence of an author in works which precede the publication of the commentary on that author); Ficino's methods of commentary (long, short, interpolated, paraphrased translation, etc.); the doctrinal filiation between Ficino's own philosophical positions and those of his sources; the relations between Ficino's translations and his commentaries.

A Text Worthy of Plotinus
Kevin Corrigan <kcorrig@emory.edu> and Suzanne Stern-Gillet <suzannesterngillet@gmail.com>

One of the great scholarly achievements of the 20th Century was the first reliable Greek edition of Plotinus’ Enneads prepared by P. Henry and H-R. Schwyzer, Plotini Opera, editio major, 3 vols. (Brussels, Paris, and Leiden, 1951-1973), followed by the appearance of the editio minor, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1964-1983). In their thirty years of intense collaborative work, the two men also benefited from epistolary exchanges with major scholars, among whom Dodds, Trouillard, Armstrong and Igal. Their edition, which is to be seen as an advance on the editorial work of Harder-Beutler-Theiler and Cilento, formed the basis of translations first into Dutch (Ferwerda), English (Armstrong), Spanish (Igal), and later into Modern Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Hebrew, Portuguese etc. The years from 1952 to ca 1989, therefore, were not only the most exciting period for Plotinian scholarship since the emergence of Ficino’s translation and commentary in 1492, but they also laid the basis for the detailed exegetical and philosophical study of the Enneads that has emerged over the last thirty years.

Since the correspondence has only surfaced recently and is therefore not yet in the public domain, we would like to invite participants of this ISNS meeting to get a preview of our book soon to appear from the University of Leuven Press (edited by Suzanne Stern-Gillet and Kevin Corrigan)—A Text Worthy of Plotinus: The Correspondence of Armstrong, Henry, Schwyzer, Dodds, Igal and Trouillard. The participants in this large editorial project will introduce the correspondence itself, as well as Henry’s memoirs, and sketch the potential contribution that these newly discovered documents can make to the study of Plotinus’ philosophy at the present time. The topics broached will include the codicological researches of Henry, the distinctive methodology of Henry and Schwyzer, the detailed editorial suggestions made by Igal, and Armstrong’s role as the main recipient of the letters and the influence they had on his translation. Anyone interested in participating in this panel discussion about elements of this project or the broader context in which it is situated is welcome.

Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Rivals, alliances, or merely a continuum?
Vladimir Cvetkovic <vlad.cvetkovic@gmail.com> and Panagiotis G. Pavlos <panagiotis.pavlos@ifikk.uio.no>
In Plato’s *Timaeus* man’s capacity for receiving is substantial for advancing in the knowledge of the cosmos and the first principles. In the Gospel of St. John, human receptivity is proclaimed as the paramount virtue that allows the Logos to transform human beings into sons of God. Yet, the discussion on similarities, differences, and the multifaceted, complex relation, between Platonism and Christianity remains most challenging; has Platonism bequeathed Christian thought with anything more than its language and philosophical tools, anything new to the Christian ecclesiastical experience and teaching? Is there any influence of Christianity on Platonism, and, if yes, of what sort? Are there any grounds to speak about a genuine unification of, or even a continuum between, the two movements? Is there such a thing as Christian Platonism at all? The aim of this panel is to dive—systematically, historically and with a view to modern relevant debates—into fundamental notions and accounts central to the Platonic and the Christian tradition, such as: autexouion, consubstantiality, essence (*ousia*), hierarchy, hypostasis (substance), logos, person, freedom and necessity, time and eternity; shedding new light on aspects of anthropology, Christology, cosmology, metaphysics, and trinitarian theology. Special attention, not exclusive though, will be paid to Plotinus, the Cappadocians, Proclus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor. The panel is open to papers that expand the above research questions and focus on transmissions, receptions, rejections, appropriations, transformations, continuities, discontinuities, bifurcations and novelties occurred in Platonism and Christian Thought during their development and encounter in Late Antique and early Byzantine times.

The Argumentative Structure and Method of Presentation of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*

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Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* is the first known text in the history of philosophy to offer a presentation of a metaphysical system by means of an ordered list of theorems, each of which is followed by one or more proofs. This way of setting out philosophical doctrines is based on, and reminiscent of, the method of presentation found in manuals of geometry (Euclid, Archimedes, Pappus and many others). These proofs usually invoke earlier theorems (sometimes also definitions and axioms) and are not supposed to introduce any external assumptions. Later philosophers who were familiar with the *Elements of Theology* admired the way it is set up and some of the most famous works follow its stylistic and argumentative model. Already in the Middle Ages this work was translated in several languages: Georgian, Arabic, Hebrew, Armenian, and Latin. The *Liber de causis*, pseudepigraphically attributed to Aristotle, is to a large extent a translation of a substantial part of the *Elements of Theology*. This manner of writing *more geometrico* became an influential model in the history of philosophy. Famous examples can be found among the works of Descartes and Spinoza; Blaise Pascal discusses the method extensively and Michel de Montaigne’s criticism of the genre (*Ess. II 12 VS 540a*) is testimony to its prominence.

For this panel, we invite contributions that discuss the argumentative structure and method of presentation of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, as well as the medieval and early modern responses to it. Possible topics may include but are not limited to: the question as to what extent Proclus’ presentation in the *Elements of Theology* can be considered to proceed *more geometrico*; comparisons between the methods of presentation applied in the *Elements of Theology* and the *Elements of Physics*; analysis of the argumentative structure of specific
propositions or groups of propositions in the *Elements of Theology*; discussions on the (geometrical or other) sources of Proclus’ method of presentation; positive appraisals of or critical responses to Proclus’ method of presentation in medieval and early modern thought.

**Soul, Intellect, and Afterlife**
John F. Finamore <john-finamore@uiowa.edu> and Ilaria Ramelli <i.l.e.ramelli@durham.ac.uk>
Plato described the nature and function of the human soul in his dialogues. Later Platonists adopted and adapted his doctrines. This panel explores the ways that Platonists conceived the human soul as an Intelligible being housed in an earthly body, how they articulated the means of its salvation, and the manner in which they imagined its afterlife once freed from the body. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) the relationship between soul and body, the ascent ritual and salvation of the soul, the soul’s union with Intellect, the function of intermediary divinities in the soul’s salvation.

**Delphic Philosophy**
Michael Griffin <michael.griffin@ubc.ca>
Description: This panel invites contributions on the influence of the Delphic Oracle, and the person of the Pythia in particular, on ancient Mediterranean thought, with a focus on the Neoplatonic tradition. Topics may include philosophies of self-cultivation and personal transformation in Neoplatonism, including exegesis of the Delphic maxims (e.g., Proclus, *in Alc. 1*); the possibility of a recognizably “Delphic” influence on political and social policy (and the question whether strands of Delphic “policy” can be detected in the Platonic tradition); the broader intersection between Delphic and Platonic intellectual traditions; and the role of the Pythia as a teacher and woman intellectual in antiquity, represented by biographical reports of her activity as a teacher and collaborator of philosophers like Pythagoras and Plutarch of Chaeronea.

**Sex, Drugs, and Rock n’ Roll: Means of Ascent in the Platonic Tradition**
Elizabeth Hill <eahill@mun.ca>, Lisa Holdsworth <lholdsworth@mun.ca>, Benedikt Rottenecker <benedikt.rottenecker@mun.ca>
The ascent of the soul is a central theme in the Platonic tradition; the soul’s ability to ascend is rooted in its erotic nature, through which it is perpetually attracted to, and drawn upward toward the Good. Plato frequently describes the soul’s journey toward the Good as initiated through sexual desire, and he explains that our engagement in dialogue with others can be a *pharmakon* that “treats” the soul’s ailments. Finally, Plato names the Beautiful as the proper object of the soul’s desire. In doing so, Plato transforms everyday human experiences which, on the surface, appear base, and he shows us how these experiences are actually part of the divine element in our nature when they are properly understood and exercised. These means of ascent are not only explicated in Plato, but they have a continuing tradition within Neoplatonism, as thinkers such as Proclus and Plotinus also address eros, beauty, and language in relation to the soul’s ascent. Such themes deserve our attention not only because of their importance for Plato and Neoplatonism, but also because of their continued relevance to our lives: we seek to transcend our everyday, culturally informed activities and attain a better vision of who we are within the cosmos and how we should act. Whether we realize it or not, we are constantly seeking to have erotic, linguistic, and aesthetic experiences that bring us up out of the mundane and transform how we think and act. The means we use to get there are not so different than those proposed by
Plato. The affinity becomes clear when we talk in the familiar terms of “sex, drugs, and rock n’ roll,” a phrase that traditionally indicates a kind of hedonism, but which strikes at the core of human experience in a way that might not be altogether amiss. No one can deny that there is a danger to each of these things, and yet it appears that, in some way, that they can play a vital role in our ascent. What, then, is the precise role that our erotic, interpersonal relationships (i.e. “sex”) play in the ascent? How do we engage with language so that, like a kind of medicine (i.e. “drugs”), words cure us and usher us upward? And, while Plato is clear that we desire the Beautiful, how do experiences of beautiful or compelling art and music (i.e. “rock n’ roll”) propel us to rise toward the Good? Our hope is that explorations into these themes will sharpen our view of the dynamics of the soul’s ascent in the Platonic tradition and bring into focus how these means of ascent are perennial ethical tools in our lived experience, despite their seeming baseness.

In this panel, we welcome papers exploring the means of the soul’s ascent in Plato and Neoplatonic thinkers; we especially encourage papers which address the roles that eros, language as a pharmakon, and aesthetic experience (particularly of art and music) play in the soul’s ascent.

Neoplatonic thought in a contemporary perspective: metaphysics, morals and the environmental crisis
Francis Lacroix <francis.lacroix.2@ulaval.ca> and Louis-Étienne Pigeon <louis-etienne.pigeon@fp.ulaval.ca>

The environmental crisis is at the core of contemporary issues, as well as it questions the fundamental philosophical assumptions defining them. In regards to this, many environmental philosophers are searching for ways to reverse anthropocentrism, an ethical position considered responsible for the said crisis. But ancient thinkers had given us examples, for already in Plotinus’ philosophy we find the basis for a non-anthropocentric conception of the world in which humans and non-humans beings coexist.

Following this, is it possible to refresh Plotinus' neoplatonic philosophy in order to build a better world in the present and for the future? In the line drawn by Pierre Hadot, this panel aims to rethink our way of life from a neoplatonic perspective, considering contemporary issues and more precisely the environmental crisis. In regards to this, Plotinian thought is highly inspiring as it focuses on phusis more than it does on humanity proper say. Indeed, the philosopher affirms in his treatise 30 (III 9) that all living beings contemplate, even plants, thus granting an entitled status to every living form and therefore drawing away somehow from the anthropocentric character of classical Greek philosophy.

More recently, the environmental philosopher and founder of deep ecology, Arne Naess, rightly criticized modern thought as incapable of grasping the holistic nature of our environment: the biosphere. This would, according to him, largely explain modernity's anthropocentric ethical perspective. Following this diagnostic, it seems justified to explore premodern (or non-modern) holistic worldviews in order build an updated representation of our world in which human and non-human beings participate in a common and greater good. Plotinus' thought is a fertile avenue for the contemporary thinker who desires to go beyond modernity and searches for a non-anthropocentric worldview.

This panel will focus on two main themes: 1) Can a philosophy of phusis help us to rethink nature in a contemporary setting? And 2) How can the ancient conception of virtues help us orient environmental ethics today? The organizers welcome communication propositions that will explore these questions precisely, or broaden the spectrum here defined.
**Theandrites: Byzantine Philosophy and Christian Platonism**
Frederick Laurtizen <frederick.lauritzen@new.oxon.org> and Sarah Klitenic Wear <swear@franciscan.edu>

This panel focuses on the reception of Platonism in the Christian philosophy of the Byzantine era (4th-15th centuries), an era marking the creation of a unique dialogue between Hellenic Platonism and the theology of the Church Fathers and Byzantine Christians. The panel is open to all issues relating to Byzantine Platonism. This includes: Christians in the Greek-speaking East and their relationship to the Latin tradition in the West, as well as the Christian Platonism found in contemporary church fathers, the Greek-speaking Christians in late antique Gaza, Athens, and Alexandria; the philosophical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus, and John Damascene; the later reception of Platonic theories on the soul, time, and eternity, and metaphysics, as well as ritual among Greek Christians and Hellenes. We welcome papers that trace Platonic ideas, terminology, and methodology as they move throughout the Eastern Roman Empire and the Byzantine Orthodox world.

**Non-Anachronistic Neoplatonic Readings of Plato**
D. Gregory MacIsaac <gregory.macisaac@carleton.ca>

This panel seeks to establish accurate readings of the Platonic dialogues by making use of the particular hermeneutical strengths of Neoplatonic scholars. To a great extent, Neoplatonism is a commentary tradition whose aim is to present the genuine thought of Plato. While often guilty of wild anachronism in attributing its own metaphysical positions to Plato, the practice itself of finding their own doctrines in the dialogues forced Neoplatonists to become very sophisticated readers, with an attention to Plato’s own words rarely matched by contemporary readers. This puts scholars of Neoplatonism in the advantageous position of benefitting from the close observations of the texts made by Neoplatonists, while also being able to detect and avoid their anachronisms in our own readings of Plato. Because Neoplatonic scholars are familiar with the later tradition, they are well-placed to avoid ‘solving’ problems in Platonic dialogues by naïvely attributing to him positions that only became thinkable with Aristotle, the Stoics, or Middle or Neoplatonists, to say nothing of the mis-characterisations that come from using Cartesian dualism or contemporary symbolic logic as one’s touchstones of interpretation.

Contributors are invited to submit paper proposals that would fall roughly into one of two groups:

A) Neoplatonic Interpretive Content: Readings of the dialogues by ancient Neoplatonists that are plausible, i.e. non-anachronistic, but are not commonly found in contemporary scholarship on Plato.

B) Neoplatonic Interpretive Principles: New readings of the dialogues that consciously avoid anachronism and that make use of those Neoplatonic interpretive principles that can plausibly be attributed to Plato, e.g. reading each dialogue as a whole argument, close attention to language and dramatic elements, an awareness that Plato’s work is in conversation with other thinkers and with his culture, and perhaps the assumption of Unitarianism.

**Neoplatonism in Comparative Light: Individuality and how it expands through Ascent**
Deepa Majumdar <dmajumda@pnw.edu>

In this panel we welcome papers that compare conceptions of individuality in Neoplatonism with those in other traditions, whether western or not. We address issues such as whether soul, self or
mind best describe the individual. We explore other questions as well. What is the role of the ego? Is it the ultimate locus of individuality? Or is it something to flee from in our quest for self-actualization? Is soul a bearer of the self? How do we characterize transformations in the individual – especially the expansion of the self, through empathy, from literally the individual ego – to the collective consciousness and more? What is the role of the First Principle in this expansion? How do we characterize more mundane transformations – through the rounds of reincarnation?

The Plato-Homer Question in Antiquity: Philosophers and Scholars
Christina-Panagiota Manolea <christinamaneola@hotmail.gr> and François Renaud <francois.renaud@umoncton.ca>
Plato’s famous and infamous criticism of Homer constitutes the climax of a long series of attacks on the first and greatest Greek poet Homer (Xenophanes, Heraclitus, etc.). It triggers in turn an even longer series of responses attempting to reconcile the two great authors or, in some cases, to perpetuate and justify further “the old quarrel between philosophy and poetry” (Rep. 607b-c).
The so-called Plato-Homer problem is roughly twofold, with numberless ramifications and sub-issues: Why does Plato repeatedly attack and even exile the greatest cultural authority of the Greek world? And why does he do so while showing intimate familiarity with his two epic poems (he quotes Homer more often than any other poet or prose writer) and even incorporating many features of Homeric poetry in his dialogues? The panel welcomes a wide range of approaches: not only direct responses to the Plato-Homer controversy on the part of Platonically minded writers, but also interpretations and testimonies on Homer and/or Plato, from philosophers, poets and scholars who do not necessarily respond to the Plato-Homer question directly, but nonetheless shed light on it. Possible topics comprise: reconciliation through allegory (the dominant trend), non-allegoric reconciliation, disapproval of various sorts, “neutral” literary criticism with pertinent implications, etc., on myth, the divine, mimesis, inspiration, soul, ethics, etc. We welcome original treatments on major interpreters (Heraclitus the grammarian, Pseudo-Plutarch, Porphyry, Proclus, etc.), but especially lesser-known or somewhat lesser researched figures, including grammarians and rhetoricians, as well as neglected aspects of major texts, from the time of Plato to the 6th century AD.

Nature and Soul in the Greek Neoplatonic Tradition
Melina G. Mouzala <mmouzala@upatras.gr> and Elias Tempelis <chrisdar@otenet.gr>
Nature and soul are two key-themes which have been intensively examined in the context of the Greek Neo-Platonic philosophy. Issues that deal with both the soul and nature separately and the relationship that links them or the differences that define their limits when they function in parallel are welcome in this panel.
It would be helpful and useful to have a discussion on the following topics (without the list being exhaustive):
• What is the essence or the nature of the soul and how is it conceived of in relation to the body (considered in a broad sense, i.e. regarding any ensouled being) with which it coexists?
• What is the position of the individual soul in cosmos, and what is its relation to the senses and the sensible things surrounding it?
• What is the relation of the cosmic soul/soul of the universe to nature and matter?
• What is nature as a principle (archê) and what is its relation to soul? How is this relationship understood in the Greek Neo-Platonic philosophy?
• Neoplatonic interpretations of the Platonic and Aristotelian approaches to nature and soul, as well as their interrelations.

Plato’s Reception in Modern (Historiography of) Philosophy (from the 18th century until now)
Tomasz Mróz <tmroz1@gmail.com>
The aim of this panel is to explore philosophical assumptions and/or ideological positions of the authors who devoted significant parts of their production to Plato; we would like to discuss their personal or ideological motivations, constraints, conditions and results achieved by them. Simply, to address the question of who, where, why, and to what purpose they took their time to investigate Plato’s dialogues during the last three centuries. Research on historiography of philosophy frequently reveals philosophical essence that is, deliberately or not, hidden under the robe of historical narrative. It is often difficult, if at all possible, to draw the line between historical presentations, interpretations or deliberations in which Plato served only as a mirror to reflect the modern author’s own views. Past historical research on authenticity or chronology of the dialogues, or on greater significance of some dialogues over the others frequently served philosophical or ideological purposes and revealed the philosophical or political position of the historian, of the philosopher who addressed the problem of discussing Plato’s philosophy. West European and American interpretations and renderings of Plato constitute a natural resource for such deliberations, but prospective participants who research less obvious philosophical traditions, less frequently presented in English (non-European, East or Central European thought) are especially encouraged to submit their proposals. The above description does not, certainly, exhaust the list of problems resulting from investigating of numerous works and chapters on Plato in the given period.

NEOPLATONISM AND DEMOCRATIC THINKING
Jean-Marc Narbonne <Jean-Marc.Narbonne@fp.ulaval.ca> and José Zamora <jm.zamora@uam.es>
The aim of the panel is to bring together studies concerning the reception of democratic thought within the Greek or later Neoplatonic tradition. If we take into account the Platonic heritage and also the political context of the imperial era and of the end of antiquity, it is obvious that democracy is not often discussed in detail and when it is at all mentioned, is generally made subject to criticism. But are there not exceptions to this rule? Is its rejection everywhere identical and based on the same reasons, or do we find here and there arguments that counterbalance this common opinion? Doesn't the way in which authors privilege other political regimes (monarchy, aristocracy or mixed regime) inform us negatively about the reasons for the disaffection with popular governments? And what about the Aristotelian political heritage within Neoplatonic exegesis itself? These are some of the questions we would like to see addressed in this panel.

NÉOPLATONISME ET PENSÉE DÉMOCRATIQUE
Jean-Marc Narbonne <Jean-Marc.Narbonne@fp.ulaval.ca> et José Zamora <jm.zamora@uam.es>

Le panel a pour de but rassembler des études touchant la réception de la pensée démocratique au sein de la tradition néoplatonicienne grecque ou postérieure. Compte tenu de l’héritage platonicien, mais aussi du contexte politique de l’époque impériale et de la fin de l’antiquité, il est bien évident que la démocratie se trouve peu souvent abordée directement et quand elle l’est, fait généralement l’objet de critiques. Mais y a-t-il des exceptions à cette règle, le rejet est-il partout identique et fondé sur les mêmes raisons, ou trouve-t-on ici et là des arguments faisant contrepoids au sentiment général? La manière dont les auteurs privilégient d’autres régimes politiques (monarchie, aristocratie ou régime mixte) ne nous renseigne-t-elle pas a contrario sur les raisons du désamour à l’égard des gouvernements populaires ? Et qu’en est-il aussi de l’héritage politique aristotélicien au sein de l’exégèse néoplatonicienne elle-même ? Telles sont quelques-unes des questions que nous souhaiterions voir abordées au sein de ce panel.

Plotinus and the Gnostics
Rasimus, Tuomas J <tuomas.rasimus@helsinki.fi> and Svetoslava Slaveva-Griffin <sslavevagriffin@fsu.edu>

This panel honors the memory and scholarship of John D. Turner. We discuss papers that deal with Plotinus and the Gnostics, specifically addressing the question of possible mutual influence. John’s scholarship moved effortlessly between the Enneads and the Nag Hammadi treatises and continues to inspire scholars from each field to come together and engage in fruitful discussion.

Blurring the boundaries: Ficino’s Philosophy after Ficino?
Valery Rees <valery.rees@ficino.org>

After the Renaissance rediscovery of Plato, not everyone accepted Ficino’s Christian Platonism in all its detail. This panel will consider some of the ways in which the boundaries between the Platonic inheritance and other traditions became blurred in the generations that followed Ficino. One topic proposed for discussion is Leone Ebreo’s Dialoghi d’amore, which combined Platonic concepts of love and beauty derived from Ficino with alternative approaches from elsewhere; another proposal questions the influences moulding Shakespeare’s Tempest. Poets who combined their readings of Ficino with influences from elsewhere may also offer fruitful comparisons (Spenser, Milton, Traherne). Further contributions are invited that show a nuanced or ambivalent engagement with Ficino or Plato during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Neoplatonists on method, style and epistemic advancement
Pauliina Remes <pauliina.remes@filosofi.uu.se>

Neoplatonists are famous for reflecting upon the interpretative principles they use in commenting their predecessors, and for sophisticated theories of knowledge and intellection. What we find less of are explicit statements, not to mention treatises, that would explicate the methodology used and the way in which it serves the purpose of knowledge-acquisition and philosophical advancement. In Plotinus, the treatise on dialectic (I.3) is among the shortest ones, and the reader is left wondering both how dialectic operates as well as whether the suggested method is put to practice in his other treatises. Both Plotinus and other Neoplatonists do, however, make passing comments on their methodology in the act of philosophising, as part of their writings even when the main focus would be on some other thematic.
This panel welcomes papers on dialectic and other philosophical methods used by Neoplatonists. The presentations can concentrate on distinctly Neoplatonic methods or the earlier methodologies that the Neoplatonists followed. The focus will be on the role of method and writing style in epistemic advancement. For example: how do methods guide philosophising and make us better at it? Does a method sharpen our concepts? Does it lead from particular to general, and if so, how? Does it create systematicity, and how would that happen? Can philosophical methods help grounding our everyday philosophising in real beings? What are the possibilities, operations, limits, and problems of these methods?

Reconsidering the Middle-/Neo-Platonic Divide
Aron Reppmann <aron.reppmann@trnty.edu> and Jonathan Young <jonathan.young313@gmail.com>

The historical categories of “Middle Platonism” and “Neoplatonism” are modern constructions that would not have been recognized by the authors whom we typically assign to them – they considered themselves merely Platonists, trying to be faithful in their own contexts to the intellectual and spiritual traditions represented in Plato’s writings. Although many recent scholars have acknowledged this – in some cases pledging to retain the “middle-” and “neo-” categories only as chronological conveniences rather than as signifying different doctrinal commitments – the existence of the terminological distinction continues to encourage segregated treatments of these various philosophers. This panel seeks to reconsider those customary divisions through specific case studies: we invite contributions that will consider interpretations of a single text or specific theme from the Platonic corpus by interpreters (roughly 1st – 3rd century CE) on both sides of the modern divide (for example, Origen’s and Plotinus’ interpretations of the digression on knowledge from the Seventh Letter). While the panel organizers are particularly interested in philosophers in the Alexandrian tradition (e.g., Philo, Clement, Ammonius Saccas, Origen, Plotinus, Porphyry), we also welcome submissions focusing on other authors and traditions within the proposed time frame.

Emotions in Early Modern Platonic Philosophy
Natalia Strok <natiska@gmail.com> and Valentina Zaffino <zaffino@pul.it>

Platonism has always been associated with Rationalism. But over the last few decades there have been studies on the relationship between this trend and the emotions and passions present in the human soul. This topic has its difficult as emotions have been regarded by philosophers with suspicion. Nevertheless, their existence cannot be denied. Do passions have importance for metaphysics? Do they resemblance something about reality? What is their importance concerning human understanding and human practical affairs? As organizers we are interested, in particular, in two different manifestations of this: the conception of pain and of enthusiasm. Pain and suffering can have important roles in the unfolding of creation in philosophical thought, such as in Anne Conway’s philosophy, because she understands that it spiritualizes the created world and also serves as an important tool for knowledge. In The Principle of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy (1692) Lady Conway writes that through suffering the world becomes more perfect because: “all pain and torment stimulates the life or spirit existing in everything that suffers” (Principles VII, 1 (43).

Moreover, according to the Cambridge Platonists, in some cases enthusiasm was identified with fanaticism and the social upheaval caused by religion. In particular, this is Henry More’s point of view in Enthusiasmus Triumphatus (1656; 1679). Therefore, deviant imagination is opposed to
reason: while the former pushes someone to agree upon false phenomena which seem deceiving, the latter assesses the truthfulness of logical propositions and natural phenomena. For, according to More, religious enthusiasm is a serious illness that can be cured with three medicines: temperance, humility, and reason. In any case, we must also remember that Shaftesbury, in his *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708), would later distinguish between enthusiasm and fanaticism.

Additionally, Spinoza’s conception of emotions and its relationship to Early Modern Platonism is of interest to our panel. He developed a complex theory of affects that had a huge impact on Modern thought.

In this regard, our aim is to reconstruct the debate about rejecting or not rejecting emotions, considering that the different thesis flourished in the Neoplatonic cultural milieu.

We invite papers on these and other emotions or passions in authors of the Renaissance and Early Modern period.

**(Re-)Considering Platonic Dubia**

William Wians <wiansw@merrimack.edu>

Modern scholarship has cast doubt on the authorship of several dialogues included in the Thrasyllan catalogue of Plato’s works. This panel seeks proposals for current assessments of arguments for and against these Platonic dubia. Proposals may address the question of authenticity either collectively or with regard to individual dialogues that have been doubted and defended in recent scholarship: Cleitophon, Theages, Alcibiades I and II, Erastai, Hippias Major, Hipparchus, Minos, Epinomos, and the Letters. Close readings of particular dialogues that draw on both philosophical and “literary” dimensions of Plato’s philosophical technique are particularly encouraged. A study of how one or more of the doubted dialogues is treated by later ancient Platonists would also be of interest, as would a “reception” paper devoted to the 19th-century debate on authenticity (e.g., to the arguments initiated by Schleiermacher or Grote). Both doubters and defenders are welcome to submit proposals. Proposals that respond primarily to some other recent commentator are not likely to be selected.