



Between Athens & Alexandria

PLATONISM, 3rd - 7th c. CE

METAPHYSICS IN EARLY NEOPLATONISM I: PORPHYRY ON SOUL



Head of a male statue (Porphyry?),
c. 270-290 CE, EAM 581
© Acropolis Museum, 2022
photo: Socratis Mavrommatis

Theodoros Stamos (1922-1997), *Egypti* (1949)
Oil on canvas, 25 x 107 cm
Athens, National Gallery, inv. Number Π.4777
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MUSEUM – EVRIPIDIS KOUTLIDIS FOUNDATION

Alexandria, Bibliotheca Alexandrina
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ABSTRACTS

Tiziano Dorandi (CNRS, Centre J. Pépin)

The New Edition of Porphyry's *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων*

My talk will consist in a brief presentation of my new edition of the fragments of the treatise *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων* by Porphyry (251F-255F Smith). These fragments have been transmitted exclusively through the first book of the *Anthology* of John of Stobi (5th century AD). I will present my edition of the Greek text and the critical apparatus and I will give some information concerning the criteria I followed in the edition of these fragments. This edition will be distributed to the participants of the workshop.

[FR] La nouvelle édition du *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων* de Porphyre

Cet exposé se centrera sur ma nouvelle édition des fragments du traité *Περὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων* de Porphyre (251F–255F Smith). Ces fragments ont été transmis exclusivement à travers le premier livre de l'*Anthologie* de Jean de Stobi (V s. n.è.). Je présenterai mon édition du texte grec et de l'apparat critique et je donnerai quelques renseignements concernant les critères que j'ai suivis dans l'édition de ces fragments. Cette édition sera distribuée aux personnes qui participent aux deux journées d'étude.

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Mark Edwards (University of Oxford, Christ Church)

Porphyry and the Fortunate Fall of Souls

According to Augustine, Porphyry argued that the descent of souls into bodies was beneficial to souls because it enabled them to learn virtue through adversity. The object of this paper is to ascertain how far this claim is verified in the surviving Greek works of Porphyry (e.g. *Cave of the Nymphs*, *On Abstinence*, *Sententiae*, *Letter to Marcella*, *On the Styx*) and to consider what its antecedents might be in the Platonic, Gnostic and Christian traditions. The relevance of this doctrine to Porphyry's (alleged) denial of transmigration will be considered, along with the question whether any part of the soul remains unfallen. The doctrine will be compared with the Christian concept of a fortunate fall in paradise, which is frequently ascribed to Irenaeus and might also be present in Origen.

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Constantinos Macris (CNRS, LEM)

Some Porphyrian Doctrines on the Soul Discussed in Iamblichus' *De anima*

In the doxographical portions of the fragmentarily preserved treatise of Iamblichus *On the Soul*, Porphyry's teachings on various rather technical aspects of Neoplatonic psychology are discussed a dozen of times. The purpose of this paper is to review and contextualize the doctrines attributed to Porphyry by Iamblichus, and to try to answer a set of relevant questions:

- Is it possible to identify, by comparison, the treatises from which the Porphyrian doctrines are drawn?
- Are these doctrines summarized by Iamblichus accurately and in a fair way? Or do they suffer from doxographical raccourcis and distortions?
- What about the unattested doctrines attributed to Porphyry?
- To what extent is Porphyry differentiated from other Platonist thinkers, especially Plotinus and some members of his school like Amelios, with whom Porphyry is often grouped together, or from Middle Platonists like Numenius? And how often does Iamblichus present his own original positions in opposition to those of his master?

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Federico Maria Petrucci (Università di Torino)

The Fragments on Soul in Porphyry's *In Timaeum* and Porphyry's Role in the History of Platonist Exegesis

Since M. Zambon's 2002 seminal study on Porphyry and the Middle Platonists, research on Post-Hellenistic Platonism has made huge progress, and our understanding of the forms and contents of Middle Platonist philosophy radically changed. This especially applies to some theories of important thinkers (e.g., Numenius and Atticus) on the soul. Something similar can be said of Porphyry, especially as to his role in the renewal of Platonist philosophical methods. The aim of my contribution will be to reassess Porphyry's exegetical methods through the fragments of his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, with respect to both the structure of the *Commentary* and his treatment of the Middle Platonists as authorities and polemical targets. In order to reach this goal, I will use as a test case some Porphyrian fragments dealing with Platonist theory of soul.

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Hussein Soliman (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Manuscript Center, Cultural Outreach Sector)

Porphyry's Soul Intellection in the Arabic Tradition

Porphyry's claim that soul intelligizes as a result of the unity of the intellect with the intelligibles has a long history in the Islamic tradition. The Arabs attributed to Porphyry a book on the intellect and the intelligibles, which has a section on the unification of the intellect with its object of intellection. Although Porphyry's ideas on soul's intellection were rejected by Avicenna, who dubbed them the "bad ideas", his intellection theory appears to have played a major role in bringing the unification argument to the centre of the philosophical stage.

This paper points to the development of the theory of soul's intellection from Aristotle to Porphyry. It refers to the transmission of Porphyry's ideas on intellection from Greek into Arabic. It tackles the proponents and opponents of Porphyry's soul intellection in the Muslim world. Finally, it discusses the influence of Porphyry's unification theory on the Arabs' understanding of intellection.

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Irini-Fotini Viltanioti (University of Crete & IMS-FORTH)

Porphyry on Soul's Parts

This talk attempts to shed light on Porphyry's analogy of the seed in *On the Powers of the Soul* 253F, 117-122 Smith. Reading the analogy in light of *Sent.* 42 and *Sent.* 44, Andrew Smith (1994 = 2011, XXII) suggests that the parts of the soul may exist alongside (παρυφίσταται) either the body or the whole soul, observing that "the latter seems a more plausible interpretation" (p. 38). I would like to propose that the analogy should be read in parallel with *Sent.* 37. With respect to soul itself (καθ' αὐτήν), soul's so-called division (τομή) is really otherness (ἑτερότης), so that soul's so-called "parts" point to specific variations (εἰδητικαὶ παραλλαγαί). Any and every part of soul has the powers of the whole soul, just as any and every part (μέρος) of a seed has the power of the whole seed. But when soul is associated with body, its powers are manifested through specific bodily parts so that the soul's parts can be thought of (ἐπινοούμενα) as immanent incorporeals subsisting (παρυφίσταται) alongside the corresponding parts of the body. Thus, soul as such is comparable to a seed (or to a wheat plant taken as an indivisible whole that is already there in the seed potentially), whereas soul "in" body is comparable to a plant considered as the sum of its parts. The plant's parts exist when the seed that has been sown in the earth grows to be a plant, just as the soul's parts subsist in our thought when soul is associated with body.



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SPEAKERS

Tiziano Dorandi is Director of Research Emeritus at the French National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS), Centre J. Pépin. His interests include Papyrology, Textual Criticism, and Ancient Philosophy. Having worked for a long time on the Herculaneum papyri and edited the ten books of the *Lives of the Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertius, he has started a new edition of the four books of the *Anthology* of John of Stobi. The edition of book 1-2 is forthcoming. Selected publications: *Filodemo. Storia dei filosofi. Platone e l'Accademia* (Bibliopolis, 1991); *Ricerche sulla cronologia dei filosofi ellenistici* (De Gruyter, 1991); *Filodemo. Storia dei filosofi. La Stoà da Zenone a Panezio* (Brill, 1994); *Antigone de Caryste. Fragments* (Les Belles Lettres, 1999); *Nell'officina dei classici* (Caroci editore, 2007); *Laertiana* (De Gruyter, 2009); *Diogenes Laertius' Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Mark J. Edwards has been Tutor in Theology at Christ Church, Oxford, and University Lecturer/Associate Professor in Patristics in the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford since 1993. Since 2014, he has held the title of Professor of Early Christian Studies. His books include: *Origen against Plato* (Routledge, 2002); *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Routledge, 2009); *Image, Word and God in the Early Christian Centuries* (Routledge, 2012); *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (Oxford University of Press, 2015); *Aristotle and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

Constantinos Macris (PhD École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2004) is Research Fellow at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) since 2007, specializing in ancient Greek philosophy and religion. He is the author of a commentary on Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* (Athens, 2001), and of a book-length entry on Pythagoras, Pythagoreanism and its reception for the *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (ed. R. Goulet, vol. VII, 2018). He is the editor of: *On Pythagoreanism*, with G. Cornelli and R. McKirahan (de Gruyter, 2013); *Pythagoras redivivus* (2021) and *From the Pseudopythagorica to the Neopythagoreans* (2023, forthcoming), both with T. Dorandi and L. Brisson (Academia Verlag); *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, with I. Caiazza and A. Robert (Brill 2022).

Federico M. Petrucci (PhD Pisa, 2012) was Humboldt Research Fellow in Würzburg and then Research Fellow at the Scuola Normale Superiore and at the Faculty of Classics of the Durham University, and he is now Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the University of Turin. His main research interests are Plato, the Platonist tradition and the relation between exact sciences and philosophy in antiquity. Among his publications there are an Italian translation with commentary of Theon of Smyrna's *Expositio* (Academia Verlag, 2012), a monograph on Taurus of Beirut (Routledge, 2018) and, most recently, a new critical edition with Italian translation and commentary of Plato's *Timaeus*.

Hussein Soliman (PhD University of Cairo, 2012) is Head of the Academic Studies and Events Section of the Manuscript Center of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. His core subject is the history of Arabic philosophy. He has lectured and written on all aspects of the Islamic rational disciplines, i.e. *philosophy, theology and mysticism*. Besides, he has supervised a number of academic dissertations in the field of Islamic studies, and he is in charge of an annual peer-reviewed journal entitled *The Manuscripts Sciences*, published by the Library of Alexandria and concerning the history of the Islamic



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heritage. Among others, Dr Soliman has published *The Late School of Alexandria and its Influence on the Islamic Heritage* (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2015-2022; in Arabic), a four-volume work on the Late School of Alexandria (Ammonius, Simplicius, Olympiodorus, Sergius of Reshaina) and its influence on Islamic Philosophy (al-Farabi, Avicenna) as well as a number of papers on related topics.

Irini-Fotini Viltanioti (PhD Université libre de Bruxelles, 2010) is an Associate Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the University of Crete and a Research Fellow at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (IMS-FORTH). Her research focuses on Neoplatonism, Early Greek Philosophy, and the Pythagorean Tradition. She is the author of *L'harmonie des Sirènes du pythagorisme ancien à Platon* (De Gruyter, 2015) as well as co-editor of *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and of *Logic and Exegesis: The Logical Reconstruction of Arguments in the Greek Commentary Tradition* (special issue of *History of Philosophy & Logical Analysis* 24, 2021).