

Between Athens & Alexandria  
PLATONISM, 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c. CE



International Workshop  
**Form and Matter**  
**in Porphyry and Iamblichus**



**INSTITUTE FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES**

Nikos Svoronos Room (Kalos Ontas)

**Monday, November 6, 2023**

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## Programme

### 10.15 Welcome

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

**Mark Kyriakos** (Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies, Bibliotheca Alexandrina)

### *Session I Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus*

10.30-11.45 **Anne Sheppard** (Royal Holloway, University of London)

*The Iamblichean Soul and the Problem of Evil*

Chair: **Konstantinos Spanoudakis** (Vice Rector, University of Crete)

11.45-13.00 **Irmgard Männlein-Robert** (Universität Tübingen)

*Zeus as Nous: From Matter to Form via Symbols (Porph. Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων 354F Smith)*

Chair: **Georgia Tsouni** (University of Crete)

13.00-15.00 Lunch Break



## Session II *Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Beyond*

**15.30-16.45 Yury Arzhanov** (Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg)  
*Porphyry's Notion of Matter in Light of Recent Discoveries:  
The Treatise On Principles and Matter Preserved in Syriac*

Chair: **Akindynos Kaniamos** (EPHE-LEM, Paris)

**16.45-17.15** Coffee Break

**17.15-18.30 Michael Griffin** (University of British Columbia)  
*Attention and Inspiration: Porphyry and Iamblichus  
on Living in Intelligible and Material Worlds*

Chair: **Hussien Soliman** (Bibliotheca Alexandrina)

**18.30-19.00 Concluding Remarks**

**20.00** Dinner



Plotinus bequeathed to his disciples two great problems along with his seminal insights. The first was, how can the multiplicity of Forms, which constitutes true being, emanate from the Unity that surpasses all being? The second is, how can matter, conceived as “metaphysical evil” (O’Meara 1991) and as complete absence of form, derive from the One? To resolve this paradox is to explain how evil can be generated by the Good, and how the immaterial can be present in the material. The workshop “Form and Matter in Porphyry and Iamblichus” investigates the solutions proposed by two of Plotinus’ earliest disciples, whose metaphysics and physics have been less studied in comparison to other aspects of their thought.

How is Aristotelian hylomorphism harmonised with Plato’s theory of Forms? What is Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’ role in the transition from Plotinus’ understanding of matter as “metaphysical evil” to the later Neoplatonist doctrine of evil as *παρρηπόστασις*? How do their views on matter and immaterial presence relate to their understanding of sensible beauty or to their respective attitudes towards theurgy? How do they endeavour to solve the problem of the “gap” between the One and Intellect? Does Porphyry posit triads at the higher levels of his ontological hierarchy? Does Proclus’ doctrine of the divine Henads go back to Iamblichus? How do the Gods, whom Plotinus situated at the level of Intellect, become the controversial supra-essential principles of the Forms?

Investigating these and other relevant questions, we intend to jointly examine some aspects of Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’ metaphysics and physics with a view to (a) identifying not only what divides Porphyry’s and Iamblichus’ approaches but also what unites them against both their common Plotinian background and later Neoplatonic developments, and (b) arguing for the strong connection between physics and metaphysics in late third-early fourth century Neoplatonism.

**Venue:**

Institute for Mediterranean Studies  
Ioannou Melissinou & Nikiforou Foka 130  
74100 Rethymno

For virtual attendance, please scan the QR code to register:



Picture: Bust of a woman, Chania (Kydonia), c. 410 CE, Archaeological Museum of Chania n° Α 3176  
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