



Series of Talks 2022-2023 : Principles (*archai*)

The intellectual life of late antiquity is characterized by a strong concern with principles (*archai*): principles of reality, principles of the world, principles of knowledge. Regardless of how one groups intellectuals in late antiquity—into pagans and Christians, philosophers and theologians—they all speak about principles explicitly or implicitly and some of them actively seek to establish what the principles are (e.g., Plotinus, Porphyry, Origen, Damascius, Gnostics, Hermeticists, theurgists). They clearly deem the project of principles to be crucial for establishing how reality is structured, what the place of humans in the world is, what powers affect our lives, how free are we, how we can attain knowledge, and how we can attain happiness or salvation. The search for principles (understood as metaphysical or theological) is then an important issue both of itself and also for shaping ethics. The series of talks in the academic year 2022-2023 of the research project *The Platonisms of the Late Antiquity* will explore this topic of “principles” (*archai*) in its broad application in the intellectual world of late antiquity and will examine questions such as how principles account for reality, how principles explain the interaction between the divine and the human world, and how human happiness and salvation is possible given the structure of reality.

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