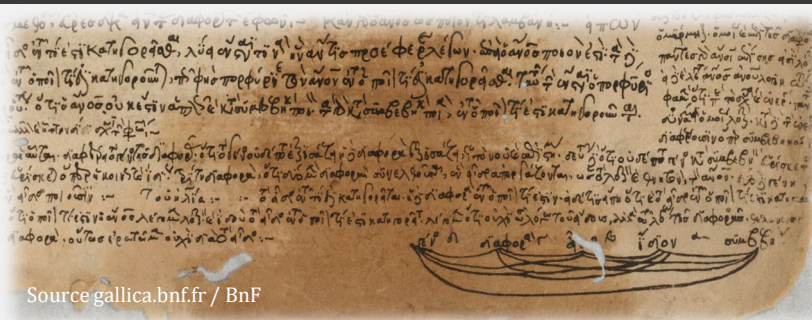


# KEIO-VIENNA JOINT SEMINAR ON ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Room 348, Graduate School Building  
Keio University Mita Campus  
In-person  
Friday, 5 September 2025



- 14:00-14:50     **Yohei Nishimura** (University of Hyogo)  
*Oikonomia* and Political Unity in Neoplatonism:  
Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?
- 14:50-15:40     **Yasuatsu Toyoda** (Waseda University/JSPS)  
Matter and Bodies in Porphyry:  
A Reconsideration in Light of New Evidence
- 16:00-16:50     **Solmeng-Jonas Hirschi** (University of Vienna)  
Epicurus' Human Beings - A Book Presentation
- 16:50-17:40     **George Karamanolis** (University of Vienna)  
Contemplation (*theôria*) as an Aim of Practical and  
Theoretical Philosophy

Language: English  
All welcome

**Dinner:** If you wish to join (at your own expense), please let us know by 29 August.  
**Contact:** Tomohiko Kondo (Keio University) <tomo.kondo [AT] keio.jp>

*This symposium is supported by Keio University Academic Development.*

**Yohei Nishimura (University of Hyogo)**

***Oikonomia* and Political Unity in Neoplatonism: Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?**

In *Politics* III, Aristotle criticizes Plato's proposal in the *Republic* for the sharing of wives and children, arguing that excessive unity would destroy the *polis*. My presentation explores how this classical debate was received by Neoplatonist philosophers. I begin with Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* (Essay 17), which is characteristically Neoplatonic: unity, properly understood, saves the polis rather than destroys it, and the unity of the household or state is explained analogically to the soul's governance of the body or the unity of the cosmos. I then examine how this framework echoes in Plotinus' doctrine of the unity of the soul and in the Neoplatonic theory of divine administration (*διοικήσις*). Through these cases, I trace how Neoplatonists appropriated the tradition of *oikonomia*, reinterpreting it within their metaphysical systems. I also aim to show how this Neoplatonic *oikonomia* surfaces in ethical discussions by Plotinus and Porphyry, as well as in fragments from Iamblichus' letters.

Yohei NISHIMURA is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hyogo. He received his Ph.D. from Keio University (2015) with a dissertation on Plotinus' theory of the soul, focusing on the idea that all souls are one. He has published (in Japanese) on Proclus' psychology and on the influence of Neoplatonism in Arabic philosophy through the *Liber de causis*. His interests span late antique philosophy, and he is currently working on Neoplatonic ethics and its relation to household and political governance.

**Yasuatsu Toyoda (Waseda University/JSPS)**

**Matter and Bodies in Porphyry: A Reconsideration in Light of New Evidence**

This presentation examines the relationship between matter and bodily entities in the thought of Porphyry. In recent years, Porphyry's theory of matter has attracted renewed attention, especially following the critical edition and publication in 2021 of the Syriac translation of his treatise *On Principles and Matter*. In the 2024 edited volume *Porphyry in Syriac*, which reflects the growing scholarly engagement with this text, George Karamanolis discusses not only Porphyry's continuity with the Platonic tradition, including Plotinus, but also certain distinctive features of his doctrine—particularly points of divergence from Plotinus' theory. Perhaps the most significant of these is that Porphyry treats matter as something separable only in thought, in contrast to Plotinus. According to Karamanolis, this represents a deliberate modification of Plotinus' account and is indicative of the fact that Porphyry “brings through the back door Aristotle's hylomorphism”.

Porphyry's attitude toward Aristotelian philosophy has often been described as more conciliatory than that of Plotinus, and it is probable that this tendency is reflected in his account of matter as well. However, it is equally important to observe that when Porphyry discusses matter and the generation of bodily entities, he consistently returns to the interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*, the canonical text of the Platonic cosmological tradition. In fact, the resulting account of embodied substances bears striking similarities to that of Plotinus. In light of this, the following could also be probable: if, as Karamanolis suggests, the two thinkers indeed differ in their ontological conception of matter, then it stands to reason that their explanations of how bodily entities come into being may likewise diverge. No matter how subtly Porphyry introduces Aristotelian ideas, insofar as he must still account for the coming-to-be of the physical world within the framework of the *Timaeus*' demiurgic myth, it becomes necessary to examine the precise status and role of matter within this dynamic process. This presentation aims to reassess Porphyry's account of bodily entities, focusing in particular on points of difference with Plotinus, and drawing on the insights afforded by the materials which recently became available.

Yasuatsu TOYODA is a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) postdoctoral fellow at Waseda University. His primary research interest lies in the philosophy of Late Antiquity. In his doctoral studies, he focused on Plotinus, particularly his criticism of Aristotle's conception of the sensible world and received his PhD from Keio University in 2024. Since then, he has broadened his approach to Late Antiquity to include its philosophical influence not only in Greek and Latin but also in Syriac and Arabic. His current research centers on the Peripatetic tradition in Late Antiquity, with a particular emphasis on the philosophy of Alexander of Aphrodisias and his impact on the later history of philosophy. As some of Alexander's works survive only in Arabic, his ongoing project involves reconstructing his philosophical views through a multilingual engagement with texts in Greek and Arabic.

**Solmeng-Jonas Hirschi (University of Vienna)**

**Epicurus' Human Beings - A Book Presentation**

Epicurus' philosophical project is predicated on its eudaimonistic efficacy. His letters and maxims not only describe a way of life, but also instantiate his practice of care and reform. To memorize and understand them is intended to actually improve on one's capacity to reach and maintain a state of ataraxia – that is, the absence of troubles. They are written and designed to have an impact. Thus, to read Epicurus solely as a theoretical philosopher is to turn a blind eye to his agenda.

Combining philological analyses and philosophical considerations, my forthcoming book advocates a strong reading that takes Epicurus' intentions at face value. It brings the doctrine closer to its application, through an examination of the readers and intended practitioners of Epicurus' philosophy: human beings. This research yields important insights into the pragmatics of Epicurus' writings, especially regarding their use, format, and functioning in one's efforts to become and remain untroubled. How did Epicurus conceive of his teaching as efficacious and therapeutic? And how did he make it operative through text?

Solmeng-Jonas HIRSCHI is a postdoctoral researcher from Switzerland (BA Berne 2015, MSt Oxford 2016), currently at the University of Vienna in Austria, where he is preparing an edition and translation of (Ps.-) Aristotle's *Magna Moralia* together with Prof. George Karamanolis. He received his PhD from the University of Oxford in 2021 - the book he is presenting at this workshop is an extension of his thesis. In addition to some poems and short publications for a non-academic audience, Solmeng co-edited a volume on the Second Sophistic (2017) and he commented and edited a speech by Samuel Engel, a Swiss politician from the 17th century trying to defend a taxation system based on hedonism (2023). He has also just published the edition of a papyrus of Favorinus in the latest volume of the P.Oxy. (2025). Further editions of papyri of Dinarchus and Plato are currently in press. Finally, a paper on the use of rhetorical terms and technical language in Epicurus should also appear shortly.

**George Karamanolis (University of Vienna)**

**Contemplation (*theōria*) as an Aim of Practical and Theoretical Philosophy**

In my talk I would like to focus on the notion of *theōria* primarily in Aristotle, focusing in particular on his famous section of *Nicomachean Ethics* X.6-9, where he suggests that *theōria* constitutes happiness in its perfect form (*teleia eudaimonia*, 1177b24) and makes us similar to God (1177b30-31). As has often been pointed out, this is a Platonic aspect that Aristotle takes over and integrates in his ethics. But the question is what exactly Aristotle means when he speaks of a divine life or of the divine in life, and, further, what kind of life is this. In my talk I plan to revisit the text of Aristotle and situate it in its context, textual, historical, and philosophical. I will argue that Aristotle maintains here the priority of understanding over any kind of action; this is very much in line with Aristotle's and also Plato's thinking. The point apparently is that, unless one understands the world she lives in, neither can she really situate herself in it nor choose the right actions, let alone know why they count as right or virtuous. Aristotle's prioritizing of understanding for Aristotle suggests also, I will argue, the priority of theoretical philosophy. This view must have guided ancient Peripatetics to order his body of extant writings in late antiquity in the way they did, which is also how they were transmitted to us.

George KARAMANOLIS (DPhil. Oxon. 2001) is Professor in Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna, working primarily on ancient philosophy while maintaining research interests in Byzantine and Renaissance philosophy. He has published two monographs, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford 2006 (revised paperback 2013), *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, London/Durham 2013 (revised edition 2021), and the collective volumes *Studies on Porphyry*, London 2007 (with Anne Sheppard), *The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy*, Cambridge 2018 (with Vasilis Politis), an *Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* 2017 (Crete University Press, in Modern Greek), *Pseudo-Aristotle On the Cosmos: A Commentary*, Cambridge 2021 (with Pavel Gregorić), while he has recently co-authored with Doukas Kapantais, *Aristotle's Syllogistic. Prior Analytics I.1-22*, Athens 2025 (in Modern Greek). He is currently working on a new edition of the *Magna Moralia*.