

# **Metaphysics of Conversion from Late Antiquity to Early Modernity**

**A Summer Research Seminar**

**for early-career professors, postdoctoral scholars, and advanced doctoral candidates**

**under the auspices of the**

**Cambridge Centre for the Study of Platonism and**

**The Early Modern Conversions Research Partnership,**

**Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada,**

**led by Torrance Kirby, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, McGill University**

**and Douglas Hedley, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion, Cambridge University,**

**and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge.**

**Pavillon Birks, McGill University**

**3520 University Street, Montreal, PQ, Canada**

**July and August 2018**



**Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada**

**Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada**

**Canada**



early modern  
**CONVERSIONS**

**Metaphysics of Conversion from Late Antiquity to Early Modernity: anagogy of soul and cosmos**

**SEMINAR SYLLABUS**

**WEEK I**

**Saturday 28 July**

Vin d'Honneur, Birks Foyer (17h30—19h30)

**Monday 30 July**

**Seminar:** Plato, *Phaedrus*

**Tuesday 31 July**

**Seminar:** Plotinus, *Enneads* (270), V.1.10; IV.8.6

**Wednesday 1 August**

**Daniel Tolan**, Conversion and the Iterative Renewal of the Self in Origen

Reading: Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*: Books 6-10 (esp. 9)

**Derek Michaud**, John Smith and the influence of Plotinus and Proclus

Reading: Simplicius, *On Epictetus' Handbook* (ca. 550); Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (ca. 480);

John Smith, *Select Discourses* (1660)

**Thursday 2 August**

**Seminar:** Proclus, *Elements of Theology* (480), propositions 25 to 39

**WEEK II**

**Monday 6 August**

**Seminar:** Augustine, *De Trinitate* (417), Bks. IX & X

**Tuesday 7 August**

**Alessandra Ignesti**, Beauty as Proportion and Splendour

Reading: John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon* (867), Book III

**Matthew Nini**, Thomas Aquinas's Commentary of the *Liber de Causis* (ca. 1272)

Reading: Selections from the Commentary

**Wednesday 8 August**

**Denis Robichaud**, Ficino and Iamblichus: protreptic writing

Reading: Marsilio Ficino, *De Amore, Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (1469), Speeches I & II

**Rebecca Coughlin**, Converting Dionysius: Ficino's recasting of Dionysian themes in *De Vita* and the *Platonic Theology*

Reading: Marsilio Ficino, *On the Divine Names of Dionysius the Areopagite* (1495)

**Thursday 9 August**

**Seminar:** Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *The Most Elegant Oration (De hominis dignitate)* (1486)

## WEEK III

### Monday 13 August

**Seminar:** Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1503), chap. 5; *Paraclesis* (1516);

### Tuesday 14 August

**David Manning**, Rational Mysticism: The Senses and Divine Illumination

Readings: Jean Gerson, *De Mystica Theologia Speculativa* (ca. 1400); John Calvin, *Institutio* (1559), Book III; Gospel of Luke

**AnnMarie Bridges**, John Calvin's Hall of Mirrors

Reading: John Calvin, *Institutio* (1559), Books I & IV

### Wednesday 15 August

**Catherine Evans**, John Donne and Conversion

Reading: John Donne, *Prebend Sermon* (1625)

**Yael Wender**, The motions of early-modern melancholy as potential confines to the motions of ascent and conversion

Reading: Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (1580), III.2 'Du repentir'

### Thursday 16 August

**Seminar:** René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1639)

## WEEK IV

### Monday 21 August

**Seminar:** Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1671)

### Tuesday 22 August

**Mark Burden**, Editing Cambridge Platonists

Reading: Ralph Cudworth, Selections from MS on the Freedom of the Will (BL Add. MS 4978)

**Remus Manoila**, Ralph Cudworth and Isaac Newton

Readings: Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1671), chap. 4  
Isaac Newton, 'Proemium and first chapter of a treatise on church history,' Yahuda MS

**Bogdan Deznan**, The Concept of Deification in the Thought of Henry More

Reading: Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660)

### Wednesday 23 August

**Seminar:** Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659)

## Early Modern Conversions Team Meeting, McGill University, 23-25 August

### Bibliography

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Turnholt : Brepols, 1968.

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- and Janel M. Mueller. *Donne's Prebend Sermons*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *A Booke Called in Latyn Enchiridion Militis Christiani, and in Englysshe the Manuell of the Christen Knyght Replenysshed with Moste Holsome Preceptes, Made by the Famous Clerke Erasmus of Roterdame, to the Whiche Is Added a Newe and Meruaylous Profytable Preface*. Imprynted at London: By Wynkyn de Worde, for Iohan Byddell, otherwyse Salisbury, the. xv. daye of Nouembre. And be for to sell at the sygne of our Lady of pytie next to Flete bridge, 1533.
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- Eriugena, Johannes Scotus. *Periphyseon = The Division of Nature*. Montréal: Bellarmin, 1987.
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- Gerson, Jean, and Steven E. Ozment. *Selections from a Deo Exiuit, Contra Curiositatem Studentium and De Mystica Theologia Speculativa*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969.
- Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della. *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*. By Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Montaigne, Michel, Delphine Reguig-Naya, and Alexandre Tarrête. *Essais De Michel De Montaigne*. Paris: Gallimard, 2009.
- , John Florio, and William Hole. *Essays Written in French by Michael Lord of Montaigne, Knight of the Order of S. Michael, Gentleman of the French Kings Chamber: Done into English, According to the Last French Edition, by Iohn Florio Reader of the Italian Tongue Vnto the Soueraigne Maiestie of Anna, Queene of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, &c. and One of the Gentlemen of Hir Royall Priuie Chamber*. London: Printed by Melch. Bradwood for Edward Blount and William Barret, 1613.
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- . *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness, Or, a True and Faithfull Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Onely Begotten Son of God and Sovereign Over Men and Angels*. London: J. Flesher for W. Morden, 1660.
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- Simplicius. *On Epictetus' Handbook 1-26*. English trans. by Tad Brennan and Charles Brittain. Ancient Commentators on Aristotle. Edited by Richard Sorabji. London: Duckworth, 2002.