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# The Small World of Late Antiquity: Exploring Scholarly Cultures and Personal Networks in the Eastern Mediterranean of the Fourth to Sixth Centuries

Programme for 21-22 May 2010

**Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup>**

**10:00** *Introduction to the symposium* Presenter: Denis Searby

Denis Searby is visiting professor of Greek at Uppsala University and the organizer of the conference.

**10:15** *Reconsidering the Social History of the Last Platonists (c. 430-c. 550 AD).*

Presenter: Edward Watts

This paper proposes that we think about late Platonists as members of an intellectual community held together by doctrinal commonalities, a shared history, and defined personal relationships. It uses a set of late-Platonist biographies, commentaries, and material remains to show how personal interactions attracted students to Platonic philosophy, encouraged them to identify with the movement's past leaders, and influenced their ideas and actions once they joined a school.

Edward Watts is Associate Professor of History at Indiana University. His *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (2006) examined how Christian upper class of the late Roman Empire used a combination of strategies to neutralize pagan elements of the traditional educational system. His forthcoming book, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* seeks to reconstruct the progression of a three-day long violent encounter between pagan intellectuals, Christian ascetics, and the bishop of Alexandria.

**11:15** Coffee break

**11:30** *Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia* Presenter: Samuel Rubenson

Monasticism has been a decisive factor in the formation of Christian culture. With an emphasis on literacy and literature monasteries have been centres of education throughout the centuries. In spite of this, the role of early monasticism in the transmission and transformation of classical culture has received little attention. Due to a focus on the West and prejudices about illiteracy and anti-intellectualism in early Eastern monasticism, essential questions about early monastic education and its links to pagan school traditions have not been asked.

Samuel Rubenson is a professor at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, and author and editor of numerous studies of early monasticism, and director of a research programme on early monasticism and classical paideia financed by Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Fdn.

**14:00** *Stephanus the Philosopher and Ps. Elias: a Case of Mistaken Identity*

Presenter: Mossman Roueché

Following the well-known studies of the life and works of Stephanus the Philosopher by Herman Usener and Mme Wanda Wolska-Conus, it is now commonly assumed that (1) the author of the commentary on *De Interpretatione* was summoned by the emperor Heraclius from Alexandria to take up a public teaching post in Constantinople and (2) that the same Stephanus was the Constantinopolitan author of the *Prolegomena Philosophiae* and *Commentary on Porphyry* published by L.G. Westerink under the name of Ps. Elias. The purpose of this paper is to show that neither is correct.

Mossman Roueché is an independent scholar based in London who has published numerous studies on late antique and early Byzantine philosophy and science. He has recently retired from a career in investment banking.

**14:45** *Apuleius and Boethius on Aristotle's theory of the categorical syllogism*

Presenter: Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist

Boethius (c. 480–c. 525) is known as one of the most important transmitters of Aristotelian logic to the Medieval West. It is well known that his Latin commentaries on the *Organon* stand firmly in the tradition of the ancient Greek commentators. Boethius' *De syllogismo categorico*, the main source of Aristotle's syllogistic theory between Late Antiquity and the early 12th century, is no exception. It has, however, also been claimed that the *De syllogismo categorico* was strongly influenced by – and even modelled on – Apuleius' (c. 125–c. 180) *Peri hermeneias*. This paper deals with the interrelation of Apuleius' and Boethius' works on Aristotle's theory of the categorical syllogism.

Christina Thomsen Thörnqvist is senior lecturer in Latin at the University of Gothenburg. She is the editor of Boethius' monographs on the categorical syllogism, *De syllogismo categorico* and *Introductio ad syllogismos categoricos* (2008). Her forthcoming publication is a critical edition and analysis of the earliest known Latin commentary on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* ('Anonymus Aurelianus III').

**15:15** *A Case for Creationism: Christian Cosmology in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

Presenter: Börje Bydén

John Philoponus' monumental effort to refute the pagan philosophers' view that the world has always existed, and to prove the Biblical view that God in the beginning created heaven and earth, provided material and inspiration for cosmological works in Greek, Arabic, Hebrew and Latin throughout the Middle Ages. But Philoponus was not the only Christian in Late Antiquity who thought the Biblical view could be defended by philosophical argument. In this paper I will focus on the debate between pagans and Christians in the two or three generations before Philoponus, especially the fictional debate staged in Zacharias Scholasticus' dialogue *Ammonius*.

Börje Bydén is a research fellow in Greek at Stockholm University. He is the author of several studies of Byzantine and ancient Greek philosophy. His doctoral dissertation was published in 2003 under the title *Theodore Metochites' Stoicheiosis astronomike and the study of natural philosophy and mathematics in early Palaiologan Byzantium*.

**16:00** Coffee break

**16:15** *Graduate student presentations:* Niklas Haga (SU), *Stephanus Alexandrinus at the crossroads of culture*; Sami Aydin (UU), *Sergius from Reshayna and the commentary on the Categories*; Ambjörn Sjörs (UU), *Arabic Aristotle translations*

**17:00** Resumé and response by Prof. Katerina Ierodiakonou, Athens University



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**Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**10:00** *The Grammar of Monasticism*

Presenter: Lillian Larsen

This paper situates proto-monastic collections of gnomic sayings and sentences within a broader pedagogical and rhetorical frame. Highlighting the integral role accorded gnomic content in elementary grammatical instruction, it argues the particular merits of reading compilations of monastic *sententiae* as schooltexts. In exploring these ideas, the technical parameters that govern structure and content serve as tools of analysis; the trajectories that link monastic teachers and students provide a preliminary locus of inquiry. Lillian Larsen is an Assistant Professor of Early Christianity in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Redlands (California). She also holds a Research Appointment in Church History at Lund University in Sweden. Her recent dissertation offers a re-reading of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* in light of ancient models of pedagogy. Her broader research focuses on the place of literate education in early monastic formation.

**10:30** *Alive and Kicking. Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Politics in the Fourth Century A.D.*

Presenter: Lieve Van Hoof

This paper sheds new light on the political promotion of men of letters in Late Antiquity by confronting texts on the subject by Themistius, Constantius II, Julian, and Libanius. Reading these texts as dynamic, rhetorical statements, it shows that Greek rhetoric, far from being moribund or severely menaced by new values such as Christianity, legal studies, or shorthand, as often suggested, was, in the fourth century, alive and kicking: If – but only if – used cleverly, rhetoric could still attract imperial attention, lead to the assignment of a political office, or allow one to promote one's friends.

Lieve Van Hoof is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Flemish Research Foundation (KULeuven). Her book *Plutarch's Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy* is scheduled for publication by OUP in June of this year.

**11:15** Coffee break

**11:30** *Torture and Identity: Paganism, Christianity and Beyond*

Presenter: David Konstan

Torture can be used to punish, extract information, display the power of the torturer: but can torture change who we are? Was it employed to this end in antiquity? This talk will examine the relationship between torture and identity, and suggest that this relationship may help distinguish between ancient and modern conceptions of the self.

David Konstan is Professor of Classics at Brown University and the author of, among numerous other works, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (2006), and the forthcoming (this summer) *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea*.

**14:00** *Libanius. Old Athens and the New.*

Presenter: Mikael Johansson

Libanius had a love-hate relationship with Athens. On one hand he was disgusted with what it had become, on the other he was a connoisseur and a careful explorer of Athenian history.

Mikael Johansson is research fellow in Greek at the University of Gothenburg. His doctoral thesis was published in 2006 under the title *Libanius' Declamations 9 and 10*.

**14:30** *In the Middle of Paradigms: Strategies of Rhetorical Adaptation in Choricus*

Presenter: David Westberg

Choricus of Gaza was head of the rhetorical school of Gaza, which flourished around 500 AD. Most of his extant work consists of encomia to local dignitaries and fictitious declamations in a highly classicising style. Yet, Choricus' world was no longer that of the Second Sophistic, not even that of Libanius, let alone that of Demosthenes, his favoured model. A sophist in a Christian empire on the verge of the Middle Ages, Choricus had the delicate task of adjusting and adopting the inherited rhetorical genres to new contexts without deviating too much from established models. Some of the rhetorical strategies employed to achieve this will be addressed.

David Westberg defended his ph.d.-thesis on the Gaza school in January 2010. He is now active as a Greek and Byzantine scholar at Uppsala University and connected to the project "Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia", based at Lund University.

**15:00** *The Schools of the Syrians*

Presenter: Witold Witakowski

This paper discusses the documented existence of three important centres of higher learning schools among the Syrians, Edessa, Nisibis and, to a lesser extent, Gondishapur. The influence of the exegetical school of Antioch first on Edessa then, when the school of Edessa moved to Nisibis under Narsai as its first head, and its relationship to Nestorius and so-called Nestorianism are explored. Edessa and Nisibis were, of course, known for theology. The school of Gondishapur was, in contrast, associated with medicine. Witold Witakowski is Associate Professor in Semitic languages at Uppsala University. He is the author and editor of numerous works in the field of Semitic studies. He is especially noted for his contributions to the study of historiography, e.g. his book *The Syriac chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: a study in the history of historiography*.

**15:30** Coffee break

**16:00** Graduate student presentations: Andreas Thor (UU), *The language and style of Juvencus*; Sigrid Schottenius (GU), *Proba and the Cento tradition*; Eric Cullhed (UU), *Eustathius and Homeric scholia to the Odyssey*.

**16:45** Concluding discussion led by Prof. Sten Ebbesen, Copenhagen University

For more information contact Denis Searby ([denis.searby@lingfil.uu.se](mailto:denis.searby@lingfil.uu.se))