

# The Fascinating World of Neoplatonism: Unveiling Ancient Philosophies with Pauliina Remes

Neoplatonism, a philosophical movement that emerged during the late ancient period, continues to captivate scholars and enthusiasts alike with its profound theories about the nature of reality, knowledge, and the human soul. In this article, we delve into the intricate concepts of Neoplatonism and explore the invaluable contributions of Pauliina Remes in unraveling its mysteries.

## The Origins of Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism originated in the 3rd century AD, evolving from the teachings of the renowned ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. The movement flourished during the Hellenistic period and reached its peak in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

Neoplatonists sought to reconcile Plato's philosophical framework with elements from other philosophical traditions, such as Aristotelianism and Stoicism.

At the heart of Neoplatonism lies the belief that there is an ultimate reality, or "the One," that serves as the source of all existence. This transcendent entity is believed to be the perfect embodiment of goodness, beauty, and truth. From the One, a hierarchy of beings emanate, each exhibiting varying degrees of reality, with the physical world representing the lowest level.

## Neoplatonism (Ancient Philosophies)

by Pauliina Remes(1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

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## The Central Tenets of Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism delves into a wide array of philosophical themes, ranging from metaphysics and epistemology to ethics and theology. Among the central tenets are:

### 1. The Theory of Forms

Neoplatonism builds upon Plato's notion that the physical world is merely a reflection or copy of a higher realm of ideal forms. These forms represent the pure and eternal archetypes from which all things in the physical world derive their existence. Neoplatonists believed that the only way to attain true knowledge and understanding is to ascend beyond the material realm and contemplate these forms.

### 2. The Divided Soul

Neoplatonism introduces the concept of the divided soul, which is comprised of the rational, irrational, and appetitive aspects. According to this philosophy, the soul's ultimate goal is to free itself from the bonds of the material world and reunite with the divine essence. This liberation can be achieved through philosophical contemplation, moral virtues, and various spiritual exercises.

### **3. The Principle of Emanation**

Neoplatonists propose that all beings, including the physical world, emanate from the One through a series of successive emanations. These emanations represent a descending hierarchy of reality, starting from the pure intelligible realm to the material realm. Each level of emanation is progressively less perfect and less connected to the divine.

#### **Pauliina Remes: Shedding Light on Neoplatonism**

Pauliina Remes, a distinguished scholar in the field of ancient philosophy, has made significant contributions to our understanding of Neoplatonism. Her in-depth research and insightful analyses have shed light on the intricate nuances of this philosophical tradition.

In her groundbreaking work, "Neoplatonism" (2008), Remes explores the history, key doctrines, and major figures of Neoplatonism. She examines the writings of influential Neoplatonic philosophers, such as Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus, unraveling their ideas on the nature of reality, the ascent of the soul, and the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Remes' meticulous scholarship has further contributed to our comprehension of Neoplatonic theories on cosmology, knowledge, and ethics. Her ability to navigate the complexities of ancient texts and her keen interpretation skills have garnered immense acclaim within the academic community.

#### **The Enduring Relevance of Neoplatonism**

Despite being rooted in a bygone era, Neoplatonism continues to hold immense significance in contemporary philosophical thought and various academic disciplines. Its influence can be observed across theology, metaphysics, psychology, and even literary theory.

Neoplatonic concepts, such as the existence of a higher reality, the pursuit of virtues, and the transcendence of the material world, have found resonance in mystical and spiritual traditions throughout history. Moreover, the emphasis on contemplation and self-actualization in Neoplatonism has provided a rich philosophical framework for personal growth and introspection.

## **The Legacy of Neoplatonism**

The legacy of Neoplatonism extends far beyond its own time, continuing to shape the intellectual landscape of the modern world. Its influence can be seen in philosophical movements like Renaissance Platonism, the 17th-century Cambridge Platonists, and German idealism.

The profound impact of Neoplatonism on subsequent philosophical developments can be attributed to its unique blend of metaphysical exploration, religious mysticism, and ethical aspirations. By integrating diverse philosophical traditions and offering a comprehensive account of reality and human nature, Neoplatonism offers timeless insights into the fundamental questions that have puzzled humanity for centuries.

Neoplatonism, with its complex metaphysical theories and profound contemplations on the nature of reality and the human soul, continues to intrigue scholars and philosophers around the world. Thanks to the meticulous research and expertise of scholars like Pauliina Remes, we are able to unravel the enigmatic secrets of this ancient philosophical movement. Exploring the fascinating world of Neoplatonism allows us to gain a deeper understanding of our own existence and the eternal questions that have transcended throughout the ages.



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Although Neoplatonism has long been studied by classicists, until recently most philosophers saw the ideas of Plotinus et al as a lot of religious/magical mumbo-jumbo. Recent work however has provided a new perspective on the philosophical issues in Neoplatonism and Pauliina Remes new to the subject is the first to take account of this fresh research and provides a reassessment of Neoplatonism's philosophical credentials. Covering the Neoplatonic movement from its founder, Plotinus (AD 204-70) to the closure of Plato's Academy in AD 529 Remes explores the ideas of leading Neoplatonists such as Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Simplicius and Damascius as well as less well-known thinkers. Situating their ideas alongside classical Platonism, Stoicism, and the neo-Pythagoreans as well as other intellectual movements of the time such as Gnosticism, Judaism and Christianity, Remes provides a valuable survey for the beginning student and non-specialist.



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