

5th London Ancient Science Conference

UCL, March 10th 2010.

Abstracts

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Dr. Barbara Sattler - The conceptual basis for motion and change in Greek atomism.

Parmenides's conception of negation and existence and his criteria for knowledge lead to the expulsion of natural philosophy from the realm of reason. The main point of my paper will be a demonstration of the atomists' very different interpretation of those notions which extends the realm of the logically possible, and thus establishes the basis for a first coherent conception of motion and change.

Dr. Dirk Couprie - The Gnomon, the Merkhyt, and the Qumran Roundel: A Comparative Approach.

In my paper I will compare three instruments that look rather different: a vertical staff or rod called gnomon, a horizontal plank with a head at one end, in ancient Egypt called *merkhyt*, and a saucer found at Qumran. Yet they are all three called 'shadow-clock'. I will argue that this name is somewhat misleading, as these instruments do not tell the time. In the second place I will argue that they are very useful as tools for making appointments. As far as I know, this interpretation is new. And finally I will argue that the gnomon, being by far the simplest apparatus, is actually the most powerful and multi-functional of the three.

Prof. Pet fc

Dr. Jay Kennedy - Plato and Pythagoras, Music and Mathematics.

Walter Burkert and Carl Huffman have substantially advanced our understanding of the early Pythagoreans, but surprisingly argued they had little influence on the core of Plato's philosophy. This paper will examine music theory and mathematics in Plato and find some evidence for stronger Pythagorean connections.

Dr. Fiona Leigh - Changeless Causes? Reflections on Plato's Sophist

'Plato postulates Forms as changeless causes in his dialogues. I show that in the Sophist he directly confronts and rejects the intuition that whatever acts as a cause undergoes change, and I explore potential justifications for Plato's postulation of a causal connection between Forms and their participants.'

Michalis Sialaros - Revisiting Euclid: An investigation of the affinity of the Elements and the Data.

The Data (μ) is one of Euclid's extant treatises and perhaps the most famous after the Elements. Most modern scholars, by associating the two texts, support the idea of the "tool-box";10.0(a)-5.9(ng