

30th November

Angelique Vagapolou: Symbol and Music: pathways to the sacred in the Eleusinian myth and mysteries



For almost two thousand years, the Eleusinian Mysteries provided an institutionally powerful, physical as well as esoteric ritualistic space within which humans and the Sacred met and interacted. With the Eleusinian drama as our compass, we look at how symbol, music and dance orchestrate a structured, intense, collective as well as individual encounter leaving humans and gods dramatically transformed.

Angelique Vagapolou is an existential psychotherapist integrating aspects of Jungian analytical psychology and dreamwork in her work. She is a member of UKCP and runs a small private practice in the south of England. After her first degree in education, she studied biology as well as French language. She holds a Masters in Applied Neuropsychology and an MSc in Existential/Phenomenological Psychology and Psychotherapy. Her research is focused on the Eleusinian myth and Mysteries and their relevance in today's world. She is a cello student.

12 October

David Elkington: Investigating the mysteries of the Jordan lead codices



In 2005 DE was contacted by a mysterious bedouin Arab and asked to look at some objects found in caves in Northern Jordan. Expecting to dismiss them as ‘more leather or parchment fakes’, David, much to his surprise found that the artefacts were made entirely of lead - and realised immediately that they were unique: they were codices: early books and if they were fakes what were they fakes of? Twelve years and many laboratory tests later, the Jordan Lead Codices have been authenticated and identified, by eminent scholars, as the only Hebrew-Christian documents in existence, documents belonging to the earliest years of the nascent Christian movement - and what they have to reveal is an entirely new approach to an understanding of history. At once revelatory and revealing this talk will be accompanied by images and promises an exclusive look into images not yet seen or discussed beyond the scholarly team at present engaged on analyses of these remarkable objects. Who was Jesus? What really was his role in the foundation of what would become Christianity? Was Christianity really created by the controversial figure of Paul, or does it all go back to a time and a period a thousand years before Christ? David will talk about the process of analysing the books and about the latest scholarly research into the Lead Codices - and about what happens next.

David Elkington trained as a painter at the Bath Academy of Art in the early 80's and went on to study Egyptology under Julia Samson at the Egypt Exploration Society. Decidedly independent in outlook and training David's first book was a thesis on the theme of acoustics and the rise of cursive script. The thesis outlined a new look at an old chestnut - that written script is not a human invention but an environmental response mechanism at the time when Humankind was emerging from its troglodytic existence. David has produced three books on the codices with Jennifer Solignac his partner in the adventure, but he has yet to tell the full story.

26 October

Simao Cortes: Proclus and the Problem of Evil



Neoplatonism is an optimistic monist tradition, meaning that it defends that everything has a common divine cause that is fundamentally good. While this theory was quite attractive for many late pagans and early Christians, it poses an apparently insurmountable dilemma: the experience of evil. Plato himself was ambivalent on the problem of evil, sometimes presenting explanations that border on dualism and sometimes doing away with its ontological status. This allowed later (neo)Platonists to be quite creative in their answers to the problem of evil. While it is common to find Neoplatonic answers claiming that evil is not a thing in itself but the absence of Good, this does not solve the dilemma at all, it simply does away with it. Even admitting that evil is the lack of Good, there is still no clear answer to why such a lack should be permitted, or to why evil seems to spread so easily in the world. Proclus, one of the last great pagan Neoplatonists tackles the problem of evil in his *On the Existence of Evils* and attempts to find answers not only to its ontological status (or lack thereof) but also to its origin and *modus operandi*.

Simão Cortês is a PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University researching spiritual discourses in contemporary transformative learning. His original studies were in linguistics, at the University of Lisbon, and he graduated from the MA in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred in 2018, becoming an assistant tutor in that program. He is interested in Neoplatonism, divinatory traditions and embodied symbolism.

OPEN LECTURES SPRING 2020

11 January

Geoffrey Cornelius: Emergent Wisdom: rhetoric and the birthing of the tacit



Rhetoric has diminished in our culture in the same measure as Soul. Rhetoric's triple persuasion-to-truth as ethos, pathos, and logos was mystically initiated by Plato, carried into a powerful and enduring philosophical analysis by Aristotle, and revived in its integrity by the renaissance humanists, culminating in the work of Giambattista Vico. In this talk, I suggest that rhetoric's contemporary incarnation draws strength from an imagination that is deeply scientific as much as it is poetic, in the revolutionary reconceptualisation of elementary cognition and consciousness developed by Michael Polanyi in his framing of the 'Tacit Dimension' of mind. This dimension brings forth something more than knowledge; to know it is the wisdom of soul.

Geoffrey Cornelius is a tutor on the MA Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred programme, and previously for the MA Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination for the University of Kent, where he took his PhD in Theology and Religious Studies. He is well known in the field of astrology; his main academic focus is the hermeneutics of divination, and the interplay of the imaginal, symbol and spirituality.

29 February

Lindsay Gladstone: The Wisdom of the Serpent



In world cultures, through the commonality of human experience, the serpent is both revered and reviled. In this lecture on Ophiolatry, the worship of snakes, their mythic expression of being both apotropaic and malevolent creatures is explored through anguine iconography and symbology.

Lindsay Gladstone D.F.Astrol.S. is fascinated by the encapsulation of the divine encoded within the symbolism of astrology, and her particular interests focus on the creation myths, sacred landscapes and heart-centred philosophy. She holds the M.A. in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred from Canterbury Christ Church University. Lindsay has her astrology practice in West Sussex.