

A Matter of Time
CL 65/Math 5
Winter 2003

Friday Discussion #1

The material below comes from the Connecting Across Borders sections of the textbook, *A Matter of Time*, by Lahr and Pastor.

From section 2.3:

2. Creation myths show us how computational models of time, or time-measuring devices, go well beyond their measurement function. They become cultural time. How is the cultural time encoded in the *Bible* different from that of the *Enuma Elish* and the *Theogony*?
3. What are the implications of choosing a particular model of time as the dominant one—say, the spiral in the *Bible*, the line in the *Theogony* and the *Enuma Elish*—in terms of the relative positions of men and women in the corresponding creation myth?
4. Think about how the choice of a lunar, lunisolar, or solar calendar gives preference to the male or the female principle. In what specific way does the lunisolar calendar represent a compromise between the two?

From section 3.3:

1. Let us sum up Aristotle's mathematical approach to time with the statement that *instants of time are like points on a line*. This leads to a spatial view of time as, for example, a line, a circle, or a spiral. Compare these spatial views of time with the visual representations of time we find in Minoan art and in the Greek kylix.
2. Aristotle's approach to time is an analytical one. It leads to a definition of what we mean by mathematical or physical time. The approach to time exemplified by Minoan art and the Greek kylix is a mythical one. What fundamental differences do you find between the two views of time they represent?

3. How would you characterize Plato's discussion of time? Is it a physical one because it refers to the movement of the planets? Or a metaphysical one because it conceptualizes time as the *image of eternity* created by a divine Being? Does his approach bridge the separations between analytical/physical and mythical/metaphysical conceptions?

5. Based on the material in Units I, II, and III of the textbook, how do you explain and clarify the connections between time and society? What do you make of Sophocles' view of a calendar reform as a major shift in world-view?