

## **Astronomy Talk 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### **Astronomy and Philosophy**

This talk was given by Martin Griffiths, Director of the Brecon Beacons observatory. He started by asking and answering the question “what is science?”

We then made a tour through history, looking at astronomical knowledge and how that affected culture and philosophy, starting with Pythagoras; then Aristotle and Plato, whose ideas survived for 1500 years because their writings survived, despite a lot of it being complete rubbish.

The murder of Hypatia marked the beginning of the dark ages. Much of the early and mediaeval Christian philosophy was mere sophistry, e.g. St Anselm’s. We then moved on through Thomas Aquinas and Dante to the renaissance and the emphasis on experiments, bringing us to Copernicus and how his heliocentric views turned thinking upside down by the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Looking at developments through Descartes, Kepler, Galileo, Hooke, Halley, Laplace, Newton and Kant, brought us to the modern paradigm, the so-called coherentist approach, e.g. in cosmology and evolution. More recently we looked at naturalism and Bertrand Russel’s and Popper’s definitions of science.

Lastly we looked at the anthropic principle in various forms, and Martin did a good job of destroying the concepts of post-modernism and relativism, with help from Carl Sagan’s quotes.