

“Franz Cumont, the Oriental Religions and Christianity in the Roman Empire:

a Hegelian view on the evolution of religion, politics and science”

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The Belgian historian of religions, Franz Cumont (1868-1947), coined the term Oriental Religions for the cults of Attis and Cybele, Isis and Osiris, the Syrian Baals and Mithras. Cumont was the founder of modern Mithraic studies but he wrote extensively on all these cults (*Les Religions Orientales dans le paganisme romain*, 1906, fifth edition 2006). This paper will try to show that Cumont combined an impressive command of all the available sources with a grand Hegelian view on the religious development of mankind. He presented these cults in a symbolic sequence as an ascension through the four sub-lunar elements. In the fifth chapter he discussed the final stage of

pagan spirituality: astral religion, thus including the fifth element.

Danny Praet is Professor of Ancient Philosophy & Early Christianity at the University of Ghent in Belgium. He is director of the Centre for the Study of Christian Traditions (CSCT) and member of the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research specialist panel for Theology, Philosophy and Religious Sciences. Among his research interests are the interaction between ancient paganism and Christianity, and the reception of ancient religion and philosophy in modern philosophy and literature.



Tuesday 24 May
6.30pm

Theatre A, Old Arts Building,
The University of Melbourne,
Parkville.

Admission is free. No bookings required. Seating is limited.

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Hosted by the School of Historical and
Philosophical Studies and the Classical
Association of Victoria



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