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Type: **Talk**

[3] Mechanical Thinking: The Pascaline and its Planetary Predecessors

Monday 4 September 2023 16:30 (45 minutes)

The Pascaline is often hailed as the oldest surviving mechanical calculator, and the Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon in Dresden proudly holds the largest of the extant machines by Blaise Pascal. Starting from an analysis and visualization of this machine, the talk moves to consider earlier analog calculators, in particular planetary automata designed to represent the real-time, ‘true’ movement of all stars and planets visible to the naked eye in accordance with Ptolemaic theory. Four such automata from the 16th-century survive (in Paris, Vienna, Kassel, and Berlin) and may rightly lay claim to being the most intricate machines of their era. This richly illustrated talk will present recent research underscoring the mechanical thinking manifest in these subtle machines and attempt to explain how and why their makers –mathematicians, astronomers, and mechanics –used surprisingly varied means to achieve putatively similar ends.

Theoretical Work

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