

## Re: explain please the phi ratio

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**From:** David W. Cantrell ([DWCantrell\\_at\\_sigmaxi.org](mailto:DWCantrell_at_sigmaxi.org))

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Chan-Ho Suh <[suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu](mailto:suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu)> wrote:

> *In article <[df76407e.0409210630.27b0d10d@posting.google.com](mailto:df76407e.0409210630.27b0d10d@posting.google.com)>, Randy Poe*

> *<[poespam-trap@yahoo.com](mailto:poespam-trap@yahoo.com)> wrote:*

>

>> *Chan-Ho Suh <[suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu](mailto:suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu)> wrote in message*

>> *news:<[200920042115182382%suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu](mailto:200920042115182382%suh@math.ucdavis.nospam.edu)>...*

>>> *Architecture books seem to thrive on this kind of thing, so I*

>>> *wouldn't be surprised if some modern architects have incorporated phi*

>>> *into their work on purpose. I remember one particular book*

>>> *explaining how the Greeks made the facade of the Parthenon into a*

>>> *golden rectangle. They gave a very convoluted geometric argument and*

>>> *diagram to show this, but never explained how they chose the*

>>> *rectangle with which they enclosed the facade.*

>>

>> *Well, with the Greeks there's a fair chance the choice of*

>> *phi is deliberate, since they had almost religious beliefs*

>> *about the importance of ratios and the golden ratio in particular.*

>> *A little Googling tells me that Pythagoras was very*

>> *interested in phi, and was the origin of the idea that humans*

>> *are proportioned according to phi. He is also the originator*

>> *of the idea that (rational) ratios are important to*

>> *music and harmony, originating the Pythagorean tuning*

>> *that persisted for centuries.*

>>

>

> *Hmmm...so remember I said if you use Google, the noise-to-signal ratio*

> *is high? For something like this, it's really better to go out and*

> *read a made-from-trees book.*

I agree. But I regret to say that even in traditional books the

signal-to-noise ratio is not good at all.

> *Let me make a comment in addition to what others have said.*

>

> *Yes, Pythagoras was instrumental in promoting the idea that numbers are*

> *the source to knowledge, e.g. "everything is number" etc. The facts of*

> *the matter are that we know very little about Pythagoras, and much that*

> *we know about him is apocryphal. I've yet to see any evidence that the*

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- > *ancient Greeks had religious beliefs about the golden ratio in*
- > *particular.*
- >
- > >
- > > > *My favorite myth about phi is that it is supposed to be the ratio of*
- > > > *height of a person to navel height. Enough said.*
- > >
- > > *Possibly a myth, but firmly believed by the Greeks.*
- > >
- >
- > *I doubt it; I suggest you take a look at Underwood Dudley's book on*
- > *numerology; he gives more references. The Livio book someone mentioned*
- > *also looks good, although I haven't been able to read it thoroughly.*
- >
- > *It's funny how pervasive this golden ratio nonsense is. More so than a*
- > *lot of other things like finding 666 in books. Perhaps it seems much*
- > *more believable somehow.*

I think it's more believable because there are some legitimate connections with the golden ratio. For example, it's related to phyllotaxis, I think. And I regret to say that some respected modern artists have been so convinced by all the pseudo-mathematical aesthetics that they have consciously incorporated phi into some of their creations. I believe the composer Xenakis is an example. And so now, the true believers can point to such artists and say "See, phi is important in the arts!" But that's bogus reasoning IMO. Those artists were convinced to use phi based on incorrect information, and thus their actions were "tainted".

David Cantrell