



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG

Call for Papers

Workshop

The Benefit of the Doubt. Between Scepticism and Godlessness, Critique or Indifference in Ancient Mediterranean Religious Traditions

It is safe to say that critique of religion is as old as religion itself. In this workshop we want to bring together scholars from various fields of Ancient Studies (Ancient History, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Classics, Egyptology, Early Judaism and Christianity, Religious Studies and related fields) to exchange about critical discourses on religion prevalent in their field of interest. One basic presumption to start from is to assume that the parameters of proper religious behaviour in a given political or ethnic community are set and there exist implicit and self-evident social expectations that are not necessarily written down in manuals – though in some cases normativising texts were produced.

The focus of the contributions shall be on critique of religion from within the specific tradition in the various forms of expressing doubts, or scepticism about the passed-down religious narratives, practices, and authoritative structures. But also sheer indifference or non-interest in all things 'religious' shall be addressed. Of special interest are the social dynamics that are set free between individual and group. What thoughts or forms of behaviour are considered as deviating in a specific context? Where is the source for the normative distinction – the ancient authors who transmit their positions or the scholar who categorises and files situations? How would those who looked for other options and answers, who were sceptical and critical, see and describe themselves? We would appreciate papers that address their sources with some of the following questions:

- What intensity do the doubts about or the disrespect of religious traditions have?
- What degree of disregard of sacral spaces, cultic acts or cultic times can be detected? Does one just stay away out of disinterest, or does s/he act consciously and wilfully disturbs the religious realm?
- Important is also the frequency: is it a one-time or an iterated action?
- Is it the attitude of just a single person, acting and being responsible for him/herself or does s/he try to influence others, even trying to gain followers and start a movement?
- To what degree then is this disregard seen as a threat to the community?

We deliberately decided against the term atheism because with its whole modern overload of implications and connotations, it overshadows too often the many nuances of criticism of religion and non-religion.

Time and Place

21 – 22 February 2019
Humboldt University Berlin

Deadline for abstracts of max. 300 words is 30 November 2018.

Notification of acceptance
by 15 December 2018.

Travel and accomodation may be covered. The possibility of publication will be discussed at the workshop.

Please contact for any further questions

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