

## POLEMICS, RIVALRY AND NETWORKING IN GRECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

LECTIO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

12-14 December 2018

UNIVERSITY OF LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

### CALL FOR PAPERS

Disagreement and scholarly dispute are essential to any intellectual development. This holds true for ancient cultures no less than for us today. Greek philosophy has been agonistic from long before the formal constitution of philosophical 'schools' in the Hellenistic age. In **the classical period**, Athens famously served as an intellectual battlefield between Socrates and the sophists, in which a full armory of eristic and elenctic strategies was developed. This confrontation was to become a paradigm for the opposition between **rhetorical and philosophical models of education**, from Plato and Isocrates to the Second Sophistic and beyond.

**The Hellenistic age** saw the rise of schools and other, often more informal types of network which committed its members to a core set of doctrines – not only in **philosophy** (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism), but also in **medicine** (dogmatists vs. empiricists), **science** (mathematical astronomy vs. more philosophical cosmologies), **historiography** (pragmatic vs. rhetorical and tragic approaches; pro-Roman vs. pro-Carthaginian accounts), **grammar** (allegoracists vs. literalists), **rhetoric** (asianism vs. atticism), **poetry** (epos vs. shorter types of poetry), and **theology** (traditionalist vs. more liberal approaches). An essential ingredient of this phenomenon is the development of stereotypic depictions of rival schools and fixed patterns of refutations. Many of these depictions and tropes survived the actual debates from which they emerged and the schools against which they were directed, as is apparent from the Platonic and Christian texts from late Antiquity.

In the Hellenistic period, we also witness the emergence of new intellectual centers, like Alexandria, and of increasingly text-based scholarly communities and networks. **From the early imperial age** onwards, authoritative texts became increasingly important vehicles of wisdom, and written commentaries gradually acquired a central place in philosophical, rhetorical and religious education. Both **Christians and pagans** adopted polemical strategies in distinguishing between orthodox and heterodox interpretations of their founding texts, thus leading to controversy between authors who often had much more in common than they were ready to admit. In this context, polemical strategies not only served to refute one's opponents, but also contributed to establishing intra-school identity and intellectual alliances.

The aim of this conference is to study **the role that polemical strategies and intellectual controversy have played in the establishment of ancient learned networks**, such as philosophical and

scientific schools, scholarly and religious communities, literary circles, etc., as well as in the dynamics of intellectual alliances, traditions, and 'personal' networks.

**Topics of interest** may include, but are not limited to:

- literary, rhetorical and argumentative strategies for depicting adversary schools, individuals, and doctrines
- the role of polemics and controversy in the formation of group identity within schools and other intellectual networks
- polemical aspects of the encounter between Christianity and paganism in later Antiquity
- literary models (e.g. courtroom rhetoric) and/or linguistic aspects of polemics and controversy between schools and other learned networks
- the methodology of reconstructing ancient ideas and doctrines through polemical sources
- the role of polemics and controversy in the claim made by ancient schools and learned networks on 'founding fathers' and foundational doctrines
- strategies for disarming criticism and for incorporating adversary ideas in one's own intellectual frame of reference
- 'smoke screen discussions' in historiography and other genres
- socio-cultural aspects of intellectual or ideological disagreement within and between learned networks

The conference will be organized by the Leuven Centre for the Study of the Transmission of Texts and Ideas in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance (LECTIO). True to LECTIO's research spirit, we invite papers that tackle the theme of the conference from a **variety of perspectives and disciplines** (philosophy, religious studies, literary studies, historiography, history of science, etc.) and aim to study texts in both Greek and Latin. The conference will span **the ancient period broadly conceived**, from the very origins of Greek culture to the seventh century CE. A sequel to this conference, focusing on the medieval, renaissance, and early modern periods, is anticipated for 2019.

Confirmed **keynote speakers**:

- Philip van der Eijk (Berlin)
- Peter Gemeinhardt (Göttingen)
- Pantelis Golitsis (Thessaloniki)
- Irmgard Männlein-Robert (Tübingen)
- John Marincola (Florida State University)

We invite **submissions** for paper proposals in English, French, or German. Proposals should consist of a (provisional) title, an **abstract of 300-400 words**, and information concerning your name, current position, academic affiliation and contact details. Accepted papers will be awarded a **30 minutes slot** (20 min. presentation + 10 min. for discussion).

Please submit your proposal via email ([lectio@kuleuven.be](mailto:lectio@kuleuven.be)) by **February 28, 2018**. Applicants will be notified by email within four weeks from this date.

Successful applicants are expected to submit their paper for inclusion in a **thematic volume** that will be published in the LECTIO Series (Brepols Publishers). All submitted papers will be subject to a process of blind review.

For any **further queries**, please mail to [erika.gielen@kuleuven.be](mailto:erika.gielen@kuleuven.be) or [lectio@kuleuven.be](mailto:lectio@kuleuven.be).

Thank you for circulating this call within your academic network.

On behalf of the organizing committee,

Pieter d'Hoine  
Gert Partoens  
Geert Roskam  
Stefan Schorn  
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Erika Gielen

## CONTACT

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