Introduction

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In the last decades, the public has time and again been shocked by events which are often associated in the media, in politics, and in social debate with the term "religious/ religiously motivated violence". Examples include the attacks of September 11, 2001, committed by Islamist terrorists, or the blowing up of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, by the Taliban in March of the same year.[1] On December 6, 1992, a long-simmering dispute between Hindus and Muslims escalated near the Indian city of Ayodhya. In the course of a mass rally organized by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (the self-styled "World Council of Hindus") and others, thousands of demonstrators entered the grounds of the Babri Mosque and destroyed it within hours; the riots that then broke out throughout India cost the lives of more than 2,000 Hindus and Muslims.[2] Outrage was also sparked by the case of Paul Jennings Hill. Hill had been a priest of the Presbyterian Church in America, then of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, but in 1993 he was excommunicated on the grounds of his closeness to the so-called Army of God, a militant Christian fundamentalist anti-abortion organization. In 1994, he shot and killed John Britton, a doctor who performed abortions, and his bodyguard, James Barrett, in Florida. In a statement before his execution in 2003, he said he felt no remorse for his actions, but expected "a great reward in heaven"; his supporters saw him as a martyr.[3]

In 2020, the Bremen District Court (Amtsgericht) examined the criminal relevance of homophobic statements made by a Protestant pastor and finally convicted him of incitement to hatred against homosexuals.[4] On Reformation Day 2006, in Erfurt a

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1 Cf. e.g.: https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/weltkulturerbe-der-bildersturm-der-taliban-erschuet tert-die-weltoeffentlichkeit-116208.html (retrieved 05/04/2023).

2 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/8032688/India-braced-for-violence-ahead-of-Muslim-v-Hindu-Ayodhya-verdict.html (retrieved 05/04/2023).

3 https://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/04/us/florida-executes-killer-of-an-abortion-provider.html (retrieved 05/04/2023).

4 https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2020-11/amtsgericht-bremen-pastor-volks verhetzung-homosexualitaet?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F (retrieved 05/04/2023).

Protestant pastor had burned himself to death out of fear of the spread of Islam.[5] And there is no shortage of further examples.

On the other hand, members or leaders of religious communities repeatedly call for the renunciation of violence and for peace – either on the occasion of such events or without any specific reason – thus delegitimizing violence in religious terms. To cite just a few recent examples: after the attack on the satirical magazine "Charlie Hebdo" on January 7, 2015, many imams condemned violence and terrorism, following the calls of French Islamic organizations.[6] On May 24, 2016, the discussion group "Christians and Muslims" at the Central Committee of German Catholics (Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken) published a statement entitled "Keine Gewalt im Namen Gottes! Christen und Muslime als Anwälte für den Frieden" (No violence in the name of God! Christians and Muslims as Advocates for Peace).[7] On June 17, 2017, a peace march initiated by Muslims took place in Cologne, and as part of the Religions for Peace initiative, 1,000 religious leaders from over one hundred countries met at Lake Constance in August 2019 and pledged to work together for peace on a multi-faith basis out of respect for religious differences.[8] And this list, too, is far from exhaustive.

Against this background, the topic of "religiously motivated violence" continues to be a central focus of research interests and controversies in the humanities. In particular, the question of whether religions as such are more likely to unleash violence or to inhibit it has been the subject of dispute. In this context, scholarship has investigated whether religions are more prone to tolerance or to intolerance, and to what extent religious intolerance then leads to violence. Scholars have also asked whether religions have a fundamentally different relationship to violence than, for example, secular ideologies or worldviews. These debates are conducted partly in relation to religion(s) per se, but also partly in relation to specific religions. Furthermore, there is also a very controversial discussion as to whether there is a categorical difference between monotheistic and polytheistic religions with regard to their propensity for violence.

On the whole, there is a move away from speaking of "religious violence" (in the sense of a separate type of violence).[9] Instead, researchers increasingly view violence

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5   https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/suizid-pfarrer-verbrennt-sich-aus-angst-vor-dem-islam-1383974.html (retrieved 05/04/2023). The pastor explicitly made a connection between his own suicide and an event in August 1976, when in East Germany a pastor set himself on fire to protest against the communist regime.

6   https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/nach-anschlag-von-paris-muslime-verurteilen-den-terror-13361923.html (retrieved 05/04/2023).

7   https://www.zdk.de/veroeffentlichungen/erklaerungen/detail/Keine-Gewalt-im-Namen-Gottes-234e/ (retrieved 05/04/2023).

8   https://www.zeit.de/2019/35/religions-for-peace-religionsfuehrer-glauben-interreligioesitaet (retrieved 05/04/2023).

9   Cf. e.g. Lincoln (2021), who critically discusses the concept of religious violence from the perspective of systematic theology on pp. 62–70 and speaks overall of an "eigentliche Aporie dieses Begriffs" (p. 69). He also writes, however (p. 66): "Innerhalb von Religionsgemeinschaften gibt es

and religion as independent phenomena and factors that (also) need to be studied in their complex relationships to each other. One influential approach understands religion as a source of identity production.[10] Against this background, religiously motivated violence can be examined as a means to demarcate one's own identity more clearly, be it vis-à-vis people of other faiths or within one's own religious group. Another powerful research paradigm interprets religion from a decidedly economic perspective as a commodity that has to maintain its place on a market ("religious marketplace").[11] The relationship between religions can then be described with the help of the four Cs coexistence, cooperation, competition, and conflict.[12]

Ancient studies, too, have intensively discussed the topic of "violence and religion" for some time. The focus here is mostly on the confrontation between the new religion of Christianity and the pre- and extra-Christian religions of the Mediterranean region.[13] In this context, the question whether there is a categorical difference between monotheistic and polytheistic[14] religions plays an important role, too, especially since many Christian sources of the time focus on exactly this confrontation.[15] In varying degrees, ancient studies have adopted and adapted the above-mentioned questions and paradigms which play a significant role in the humanities when the topic of "religion and violence" is discussed in general.

Conversely, ancient studies are able to give relevant impulses to discourses oriented more to the present (or other epochs): for example, case studies from antiquity can broaden the spectrum of phenomena documented or conceivable in the thematic area of "violence and religion". At the same time, they enrich and complete the data on which more comprehensive theories can be tested, verified, falsified, or further developed. Furthermore, even research approaches that prove to be a 'dead end' in ancient studies might offer an opportunity for researchers of other disciplines to become more sensitized to methodological problems that they may be confronted with – in

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in der Tat Legitimitätsdiskurse hinsichtlich der Gewaltübung im Namen dieser Gemeinschaften. Diese Diskurse wissenschaftlich aufzuarbeiten, ist eine wichtige Aufgabe der Gewaltforschung".

10 Cf. Mayer (2020), p. 263.
11 Cf. e.g. Mayer (2020), pp. 259 f.
12 Cf. e.g. ibid. pp. 259 f.
13 Most of the contributions in the edited volumes by Mayer, De Wet (2018) and Dijkstra, Raschle (2020) refer to this debate.
14 It should be noted that the term "polytheism" is a profoundly monotheistic construct, cf. Ahn (1993).
15 Cf., for instance, contributions (e.g. Dijkstra, Raschle [2020], pp. 1 f.) which postulate an anti-religious, anti-monotheistic, or anti-Christian bias of research that they trace back to the times of Enlightenment (especially to the ideas of Edward Gibbon). For another example, see Bremmer (2020), p. 66, who puts forward the following thesis: "[T]he Christians directed their violence against pagan temples and statues, whereas the Romans directed their violence against Christian books, churches and people."

some cases, such approaches may even prove to be fruitful and enlightening when applied to phenomena of other epochs.

"Violence" and "religion" are in themselves highly emotive topics. Not least for this reason, some general risks that lurk when dealing with this topic should be recalled here. For example, the strong affirmation – or rejection – of religion(s) in general, of certain forms of religion (such as, e. g., monotheistic religions) or individual religions (such as Christianity) or of individual subtypes (e. g., the Roman Catholic Church) can motivate the study of the topic of "violence and religion" very efficiently. Yet those attitudes can also cloud a scholar's view of this subject area. In extreme cases, it may seem that an ancient conflict – apparently interpreted as timeless – continues to be fought out in the medium of classical studies. Related to this is the danger of narrowing the view to a certain (e. g. monotheistic or Christian) perspective that corresponds to one's own convictions or socialization. Such a perspective does not have to be religious, but can also be culturally determined (e. g. Eurocentric or Western). Even the assignment of persons, ideas, or actions to certain religions can be problematic – as can, on the other hand, their (non-)evaluation as violent. Considering the difference between self-attribution and attribution by others can be helpful here, at least to a certain extent. Furthermore, there is the danger of viewing religions as monolithic blocks and of underestimating the often considerable diversity of phenomena within a religion. Research on the topic of "violence and religion" can also be burdened by neglecting extra-religious factors, e. g. political or social ones, when assessing the emergence, use, and processing of violence. Conversely, there is also a risk of neglecting non-violent aspects of religion(s). Finally, it can also be problematic to consider only one source genre and thus possibly overvalue it (e. g. textual sources versus archaeological evidence). The risks just pointed out can in many cases only be reduced, but not completely eliminated. It is inevitable that people have a certain religious (or areligious or anti-religious) and also cultural background and that they approach research with their own experiences and convictions. This fact incidentally not only leads to specific 'blind spots' and weaknesses in perception, but can also have positive effects if it engenders not blind affirmation, but an empathetic approach to the sources.

All of these debates – both the intra- and interdisciplinary scholarly discussions and those that intend an exchange between the humanities, politics, and the broader public – have at least one thing in common: they can only be conducted meaningfully and fruitfully if there is a sound basic understanding of the terms "religion/religious" and "violence" among all those participating in the discourse, even though it may not be possible to arrive at definitions that are devoid of any deficiencies whatsoever. Therefore, it is necessary to outline what has been subsumed under the relevant terms or semantic fields for the present volume. The following explanatory remarks are to be understood as working bases and semantic sketches of de- and connotations. For heuristic reasons, we wanted to include as broad a spectrum as possible; those explanations are by no means to be taken as conclusive definitions.

There is general consensus that the contemporary term "religion" (or its foreign-language counterparts) can hardly be defined conclusively.[16] For example, the religious studies scholar Michael Stausberg advocates the approach of the ethnologist and religious studies scholar Benson Saler to operate with a not limited set of characteristics that are considered typical of religion. Here, e.g., gods, authoritative writings, concepts of transcendence, revelations, pilgrimages, collective rituals, and symbolic objects are not understood as (exclusive) essential features, but as typical characteristics of religion(s); this catalogue of characteristics, obtained through comparisons, is always to be understood as provisional and modifiable, and there is no numerical limit of characteristics below which classification as "religion" would be prevented.[17] An additional problem in dealing with ancient religions is the fact that antiquity seems to lack an exactly corresponding emic term;[18] such terms as εὐσέβεια, θεραπεία, and θρησκεία or *religio* and *pietas* cover only specific aspects of what the noun "religion" may denote in common usage.[19] Furthermore, in antiquity religion is not a separate sphere, but is embedded in a variety of areas of public and private life, which is usually seen as a categorical difference from the current situation in the Western world.[20] Some people, therefore, have even rejected the term "religion" altogether, viewing it as an anachronistic category in the study of antiquity.[21]

Despite the above-mentioned complex problems, the present volume cannot do without the terms "religion" and "religious" for lack of generally accepted other linguistic options. The term "religion" will be used in accordance with the methodologically sound approaches of Saler and Stausberg, which show a certain closeness to the everyday use of the noun. In particular, in the title of this edited volume, the adjective "religious" can be understood as, e.g.: (a) related to the religion of the protagonists acting in a text and/or of the respective author; anchored in their (collective or indi-

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16   Cf. e.g. Stausberg (2012), who presents the problems involved with a definition of religion and distinguishes on pp. 40 f. between substantialist or functionalist real definitions (which features or functions are typical of religion?) on the one hand and nominal definitions (which facts are usually subsumed under the term?) on the other hand; cf. also, for instance, Nongbri (2013), pp. 15–24.

17   Stausberg (2012), pp. 42–44.

18   Cf. e.g. Dijkstra, Raschle (2020), p. 3.

19   Stausberg (2012), p. 36 is more optimistic: "Entgegen gängigen Annahmen findet man also schon in der römischen Geschichte einen Religionsbegriff, dessen Grundlinien dem heute üblichen entsprechen."

20   Cf. e.g. Bremmer (2020), p. 49: "The Greeks had no word for our 'religion', which since the late eighteenth century has developed more and more into a separate, private sphere in the Western world, unlike in modern Islamic countries, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, where the situation in this respect resembles that of Greece and Rome and, in many respects, the West in the Middle Ages." – For further bibliography, see Mayer (2020), p. 258, note 29.

21   So e.g. Nongbri (2013), *passim* and Barton, Boyarin (2016), p. 212: "Translating *religio* or *thrēskeia* by 'religion' obscures more than it reveals. Our extended studies have yielded further fruit in that we have found in these words whole cultural systems very different from our own systems of borders, boundaries, and binaries." For further literature on this topic see Hunt (2018), pp. 9.30.

vidual) system of norms based on religion; (b) denoting behavior that is pleasing to deities/a deity in the eyes of the protagonists acting in a text and/or the respective author; (c) referring to a behavior of individuals or collectives that is considered to be paradigmatic and that is handed down orally or in writing within a religious community; (d) relating to the religion of the person with whom someone interacts in a friendly, competitive, or hostile manner.[22]

This conception of the term "religious" has several hermeneutical advantages and makes it possible to consider a broad spectrum of case studies. Both intra- and interreligious constellations can be included in the investigations, as well as those that could be described as 'unilaterally religious': this phrase refers to situations in which agents or authors (de)legitimize violence against the religion of an opponent without explicitly discussing the agents' or authors' own religion as a crucial factor. Furthermore, the realm of myth, which from a systematic point of view is to be strictly separated from the sphere of historical religion, becomes accessible for analysis. In myth, too, the protagonists act within the framework of their own religious norms and convictions (whose concrete fictional form must, of course, be appreciated individually for each instance of a myth turned into literature), and, in some cases, they refer to those norms and convictions in order to (de)legitimize violent actions.

The concept of violence, too, eludes a simple definition.[23] However, we can differentiate it in various ways. The approach of the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, for example, is influential. He distinguishes three types of violence: (a) direct violence, which can be attributed to concrete agents and includes not only physical forms of violence (murder, manslaughter, rape, torture, bodily harm, etc.), but also verbal forms of violence, such as insults or other verbal abuse; (b) structural violence, which cannot be attributed to concrete agents, but results from structures and conditions that cause an unequal distribution of resources such as wealth or knowledge and thus also lead to an inequality of opportunities. According to Galtung, structural violence is even present, "wenn Menschen so beeinflußt werden, daß ihre aktuelle somatische und geistige Verwirklichung geringer ist als ihre potentielle Verwirklichung";[24] (c) cultural violence, which legitimizes direct and structural violence. Galtung specifies "Religion und Ideologie, […] Sprache und Kunst, Wissenschaft und Recht, Medien und Erziehung"[25] as areas in which cultural violence is used.

Forms of violence can also be distinguished with regard to their object. Are they directed against one's own person (for example, in an ascetic context), against other

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22   For a different definition see Kippenberg (2020), p. 20: "An action is religious if it is oriented to subjective expectations of salvation."

23   Schotte (2020) has recently published an entire monograph with the title "Was ist Gewalt?". In it, he argues, among other things, for violence to be included among the "essentially contested concepts" in the sense of William B. Gallie (ibid., p. 47).

24   Galtung (1984), p. 9.

25   Galtung (1998), p. 18.

people (individuals or groups), or against material objects or against ideas? Likewise, it matters who the subject of the violence is: individuals, groups, or states. It can also be interesting to combine different criteria for differentiating violence. For example, one could ask whether all combinations of subjects of violence and objects of violence are also actualized in real constellations of violence, etc. Further criteria according to which different forms of violence can be distinguished are, for instance, reasons, goals, motives and, last but not least, patterns of justification.[26]

Research into (de)legitimation of violence encompasses a broad spectrum of objects, from a micro-level – for example, in relation to the statements of juvenile perpetrators of violence collected in interviews[27] – to a macro-level in relation to institutional or state order in general.[28] (De)legitimation in the sense of this edited volume is to be located precisely between the microscopic and the macroscopic perspective. Nevertheless, the following definition – admittedly formulated in the course of dealing with a more microscopic question – can be used:

> Als Legitimationen sollen vielmehr alle Rechtfertigungen und Begründungen verstanden werden, die eigenes oder fremdes Handeln als richtig, erstrebenswert oder zumindest angemessen beschreiben. Sie zielen somit in zeitlicher Hinsicht auf Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft.[29]

It should also be noted that legitimation of violence itself is considered and referred to as "cultural" violence in Johan Galtung's model of violence. Approaches to legitimation can also be differentiated from one another according to various criteria. For instance, we can ask who puts forward the legitimation approaches: are they agents or victims of violence? Or are they rather third parties who, in turn, may themselves be affected by the violence in different ways and to different extents, e. g. as witnesses or indirect beneficiaries, but who may also be removed from the violence by a wide spa-

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26 Cf. Imbusch (2002), pp. 34–36.

27 Cf. Sykes, Matza (1957).

28 This is the case, for example, in Berger, Luckmann (1980). Ibd. (pp. 114 f.) we find a further idea of relevance to our topic, namely that the legitimation of repressive measures also has a productive side (pp. 114 f.): "Es versteht sich von selbst, daß häretische Gruppen die symbolische Sinnwelt nicht nur theoretisch anfechten, sondern für die institutionale Ordnung, deren Legitimation die angefochtene symbolische Sinnwelt ist, auch eine praktische Gefahr darstellen. Mit den üblichen Repressalien der Hüter der 'offiziellen' Ordnung brauchen wir uns nicht auseinanderzusetzen. Für unseren Gedankengang ist das Bedürfnis wichtig, solche Repressalien zu legitimieren, wozu natürlich wiederum theoretische Konzeptionen herangezogen werden, die zur Stütze der 'offiziellen' Sinnwelt gegen die Herausforderer entworfen werden. In der Geschichte war eine Irrlehre oft der erste Anstoß zur theoretischen Systematisierung symbolischer Sinnwelten. Die Ausbildung der christlichen Theologie als Folge häretischer Herausforderungen der 'offiziellen' Überlieferung ist ein Exempel dafür."

29 Schmidt-Lux (2017), p. 40 (English translation: "Rather, all justifications and reasons that describe one's own or other people's actions as correct, desirable or at least appropriate are to be understood as legitimations. In temporal terms, they thus aim at the past, the present and the future.").

tial, temporal, social, etc. distance? Does the legitimation take place before, during, or after the use of violence? Do the people who put forward the (de)legitimation belong to the same religion as the agents and/or victims of the violence?

Do the religious motivations or concerns raised in connection with the (de)legitimation of violence correspond to 'genuine' religious ties or sentiments? It will, as a rule, be difficult to find a conclusive answer to this question. Such an answer, however, is irrelevant in the context of many research interests related to such (de)legitimation.[30]

This conference volume presents a selection of case studies on the legitimation or delegitimation of violence in antiquity.[31] Most of the case studies refer to late antiquity and involve Christianity, but pre-Christian Greek and Roman civilizations and Judaism are also considered. In addition, atheism and literary myth are also taken into account. All in all, this volume gathers case studies covering the period from the fifth century BCE to the fifth century CE. This should permit, within the limits imposed by the number of contributions, an analysis of possible continuities and discontinuities. Like the temporal framework, the geographical scope is broad, extending from Gaul to Israel and Egypt.

The focus is on ancient justifications or evaluations of actions recommended, performed, or forbidden, but not on their historicity (or non-historicity), which plays a subordinate role, if any, in the 'functioning' of these strategies of legitimation. In this respect, these case studies are little affected by the question increasingly raised in research in recent years asking to what extent there is a discrepancy between violence actually perpetrated historically and violence staged only rhetorically in literary sources.[32] With this focus comes a shift in another line of inquiry. The volume focuses less on the religious or non-religious nature of the violence itself – a question which more often than not is difficult to answer. Rather, it seeks to examine the – somewhat more easily discernible – extent of religious aspects involved in approaches to the legitimation of violence. Since approaches to the (de)legitimation of violence are much more evident in textual sources than, say, in archaeological ones, it will hardly come as a surprise that textual sources are clearly in the foreground in the contributions to this volume. The special relevance of texts in connection with the thematic field of "religion

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30   The wording in Gotter (2011), p. 152, is harsher: "So erscheint es weder heuristisch noch quellenkritisch sinnvoll, danach zu fragen, ob es bei dieser oder jener Auseinandersetzung um eine 'wirklich religiöse' Sache gegangen sei oder ob man die Religion lediglich vorgeschoben habe. Da der Historiker an die individuelle Psyche der spätantiken Akteure nicht mehr herankommt, ist eine essentialistische Unterscheidung zwischen einer genuin religiösen Überzeugung und einer lediglich sekundären religiösen Intention nicht zu treffen und sollte daher – als heuristischer Irrealis – auch nicht das Ziel der Analyse bilden." and ibid., p. 153: "Jenseits der kommunikativen Oberfläche sozialen Handelns allerdings beginnt rasch die rekonstruktive Willkür."

31   Cf. Dijkstra, Raschle (2020), p. 4, who write that "finegrained analyses of case studies, in which due attention is given to the local historical contexts in which the violence arises, should be the norm."

32   Cf. e. g. Mayer (2020), pp. 261–264, furthermore Hahn (2004), Hahn (2015), and the contributions in Hahn (2011).

and violence" is also suggested by a study considering Judaism, Christianity, and Islam that has recently been published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung).[33]

The following questions would make promising starting points for further research: which religious acts are explicitly associated with the term "violence" on a semantic level, and where is this framing omitted contrary to modern expectations? Does such a semantic connection also constitute a priori a problematization? How are ancient texts that depict religiously (de)legitimated violence treated and evaluated secondarily, that is, in ancient scholia or exegetical works or even in modern research literature? Finally, a comparative study of ancient approaches to religious (de)legitimation of violence and present-day patterns would be a productive avenue for further research. This broader concern, which transcends the individual disciplines, must of course be pursued in a prudent and differentiated manner.

The contributions in this volume are based on papers presented at the conference "Religiöse (De-)Legitimationsansätze von Gewalt in der Antike". The fact that this conference could take place at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz from September 5 to 7, 2019, and that we were able to welcome speakers from five continents is due, among other things, to the generous financial support of two institutions: the internal university research funding of the JGU Mainz and the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft), which provided funds within the framework of the Excellence Strategy of the German federal and state governments. Furthermore, thanks are due to the Department of Classical Philology of the Mainz Institute of Ancient Studies for its indispensable and diverse infrastructural support. Finally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the editors, especially Claudia Schindler, for accepting our volume in the series „Hamburger Studien zu Gesellschaft und Kulturen der Vormoderne".

Using the trials of Anaxagoras, Diagoras, and Protagoras as examples, **Alexandra Eppinger** explores the question of whether these cases prove the existence of religiously motivated state violence against people perceived as ἄθεοι. In doing so, she first introduces the difficulties associated with the terms ἄθεος, δυσσεβής, and ἀσεβής, and explains the unsatisfactory state of source material. Eppinger concludes that later authors apparently found the idea plausible that in 5th century BCE Athens, religious dissenters were persecuted and subjected to harsh punishments even if, like Protagoras, they only raised doubts about the existence of the gods. She emphasizes that the denial of the divinity of the sun attributed to Anaxagoras does not yet imply atheism in the modern sense. Similarly, in the case of Diagoras, it is shown that, although he was

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33 Koopmans, Kanol (2021).

apparently persecuted by the Athenian state, he cannot be viewed as an atheist in the modern sense. The only thing that can be said with certainty – according to Eppinger – is that, on the basis of the accusation of ἀσέβεια, state-motivated persecution of religious dissenters was possible in Athens in the second half of the 5th century BCE, and that among these religious dissenters there may also have been atheists in the modern sense of the word.

Iris Sulimani examines how Diodorus (1st century BCE) depicts violence directed by gods and mythical heroes at people who murder or otherwise mistreat others and/or commit sacrilege against the gods. The violence against criminal and impious people corresponds to the benefits that gods and mythical heroes bestow on righteous and pious people. Sulimani first discusses several examples from myth and then turns to historical events marked by Diodorus as divine punishment. With reference to several examples from both the mythic and historical realms, she further notes that in these cases Diodorus emphasizes the principle of divine retribution much more pointedly than the other writers used for comparison. Diodorus legitimizes violence when it serves to create 'a better world', and here shows a great closeness to Roman imperial ideology, which ultimately also legitimizes the actions of Caesar and Augustus. In doing so, he does not shy away from creating mythical precedents for events in Roman history – for example, by making Hercules the founder of the Gallic oppidum Alesia.

Arnold Bärtschi analyzes the literary representation of expiatory rituals involving human sacrifice in the Roman Republic. Specifically, he discusses the self-sacrifice of M. Curtius, who threw himself into a fissure in the earth that had opened up on the Forum Romanum; five cases of vestal virgins executed for violating the chastity prescribed for them; three cases of non-Romans buried alive on the Forum Boarium; and the total of 13 cases of non-adult intersexual people put to death by more indirect means. Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, and Iulius Obsequens, *Liber prodigiorum*, are the main sources to which he refers. In particular, Bärtschi explores the questions of how the sources contextualize the prodigies and the atonement ritual they trigger in the surrounding narrative, and how they legitimize the atonement rituals or the violence associated with them. Noting that the texts he examines often avoid explicitly mentioning the lethal consequences of the atonement rituals, he distinguishes the following specific strategies of (de)legitimation: 1. invocation of the common good, 2. explicit and implicit marking of atonement rituals as 'un-Roman' and 'foreign', 3. invocation of a particular crisis situation, 4. dehumanization.

Kimberly B. Stratton analyzes two texts from the first and second centuries CE which legitimize Roman violence against Jews on religious grounds: Flavius Josephus' accounts of the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple (70 CE) and Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, which also addresses the bloody suppression of the Bar Kochba revolt (132–135 CE). According to Josephus, drawing on interpretive patterns from the Book of Ezekiel, God had granted victory to the Romans in order to punish the moral misconduct of some radical Jews. Justin, too, legitimizes the violent suppression of the

Jewish rebellion in religious terms; however, he interprets it as divinely ordained pun-ishment for the killing of Christ – possibly, Stratton suggests, as a retort to the accus-ation by a companion of Trypho that the followers of Jesus had not sufficiently obeyed the Mosaic law and were therefore responsible for that catastrophe. Stratton highlights the different modes of explaining the failed Bar Kochba uprising and integrating it into a meaningful interpretive paradigm as important factors in the formation of distinct Jewish and Christian identities.

Marcela Caressa examines the representation of the Canopus myth in Rufin's *Church History* and its relationship to the numerous descriptions of pagan places of worship destroyed by Christians in this work, including the destruction of the temple of Canopus by bishop Theophilus of Alexandria. Against the generally accepted view, she does not understand "Canopus" (also) as a pagan theonym, but suggests that the word exclusively designates the Egyptian city. Rufin reports how in pre-Christian times the cult image of Canopus, created by a priest and consisting primarily of a water storage container, 'defeated' the competing Chaldean god of fire and literally extinguished it. Caressa argues that this narrative, which also draws on Origen's *Contra Celsum*, under-scores the anthropogenic character of pagan idols and the fact that they were sometimes destroyed already in pre-Christian times; accordingly, she contends, it contributes to the legitimation of contemporary violence against pagan images of the gods.

Maijastina Kahlos addresses the (de)legitimation of violence in the Donatist controversy, focusing on Augustine's dispute with the Donatist bishop Petilianus of Cirta, which she understands as an element of information warfare. She begins with the observation that Christian authors and leading Christian dignitaries of the fourth and fifth centuries reveal a variety of different attitudes toward the use of violence. For the actual controversy between Augustine and Petilianus, which is 'documented' in Augustine's work *Contra litteras Petiliani*, Kahlos concentrates on the functionalization of biblical passages/exempla and the concept of persecution and its legitimacy as well as on the role of the infamous circumcellions; further she addresses the relevance of the interpretive authority determining who might be considered a Christian martyr in the context of the Donatist controversy. The closing section of the paper gives a short overview comparing Augustine's views on violence and coercion in his other works.

Liliane Marti's contribution also deals with Augustine's (de)legitimation of vio-lence in the Donatist controversy. She traces how Augustine's attitude changed over time from delegitimizing the use of violence against the Donatists to his doctrine of *coge intrare* legitimizing violence and analyzes the arguments he put forward in each case. Following this, she interprets both attitudes with recourse to individual psycho-logical approaches as strategies for coping with conflict, with problem-oriented and meaning-oriented coping being particularly relevant.

Kathleen M. Kirsch argues that Prudentius intentionally legitimized the violence of the virtues against the vices (among which Prudentius also numbers *veterum cul-tura deorum*) in his allegorical poem *Psychomachia*. According to Kirsch, the poet,

displaying ethical coherence and literary creativity, uses violence as a metaphor for the conversion of the soul. To support this interpretation, she points especially to the fact that in Prudentius' depiction, virtues and vices stand in ontological opposition to each other, so that the very existence of one poses an existential threat to the other. A particular achievement of Prudentius, she argues, is that he reworks the theme of civil war in order to present the first unproblematic civil war in Latin literature. Kirsch sees the function of the metaphor of violence in the demarcation of the mutually exclusive identities of virtues and vices. Kirsch also deals with the criticism that has been leveled at Prudentius' use of violent metaphors in various ways in research. In doing so, she presents several arguments to refute this criticism.

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