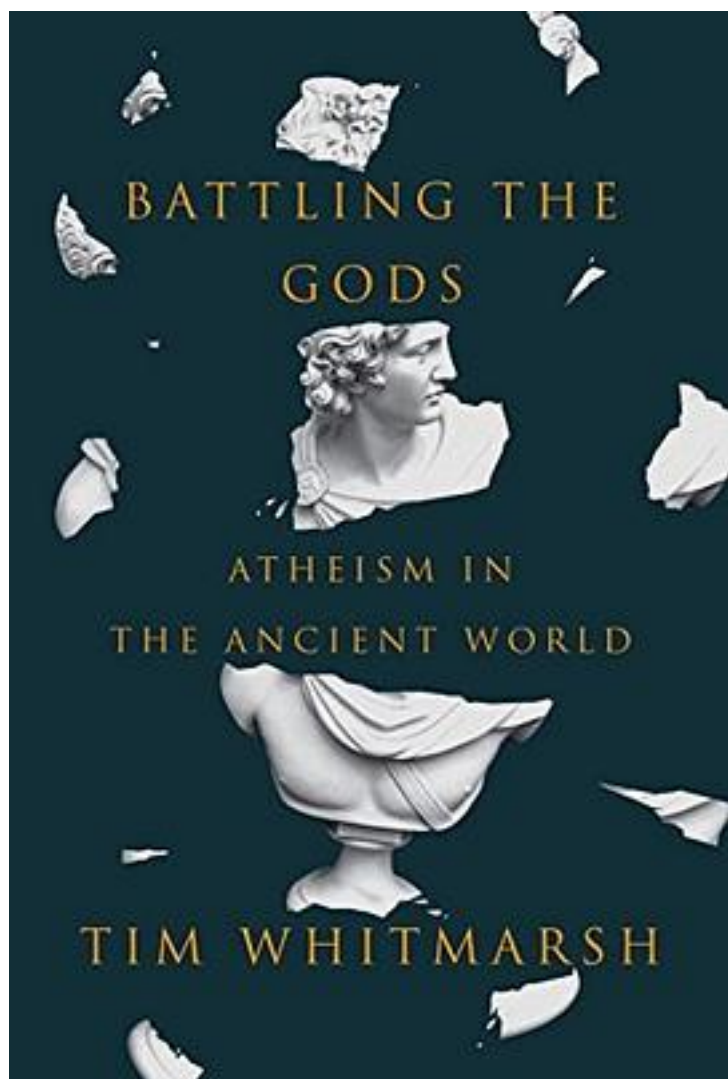


Battling the Gods



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著者:Tim Whitmarsh

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How new is atheism? Although adherents and opponents alike today present it as an invention of the European Enlightenment, when the forces of science and secularism broadly challenged those of faith, disbelief in the gods, in fact, originated in a far more remote past. In *Battling the Gods*, Tim Whitmarsh journeys into the ancient Mediterranean, a world almost unimaginably different from our own, to recover the stories and voices of those who first refused the divinities.

Homer's epic poems of human striving, journeying, and passion were ancient Greece's only "sacred texts," but no ancient Greek thought twice about questioning or mocking his stories of the gods. Priests were functionaries rather than sources of moral or cosmological wisdom. The absence of centralized religious authority made for an extraordinary variety of perspectives on sacred matters, from the devotional to the atheos, or "godless." Whitmarsh explores this kaleidoscopic range of ideas about the gods, focusing on the colorful individuals who challenged their existence. Among these were some of the greatest ancient poets and philosophers and writers, as well as the less well known: Diagoras of Melos, perhaps the first self-professed atheist; Democritus, the first materialist; Socrates, executed for rejecting the gods of the Athenian state; Epicurus and his followers, who thought gods could not intervene in human affairs; the brilliantly mischievous satirist Lucian of Samosata.

Before the revolutions of late antiquity, which saw the scriptural religions of Christianity and Islam enforced by imperial might, there were few constraints on belief. Everything changed, however, in the millennium between the appearance of the Homeric poems and Christianity's establishment as Rome's state religion in the fourth century AD. As successive Greco-Roman empires grew in size and complexity, and power was increasingly concentrated in central capitals, states sought to impose collective religious adherence, first to cults devoted to individual rulers, and ultimately to monotheism. In this new world, there was no room for outright disbelief: the label "atheist" was used now to demonize anyone who merely disagreed with the orthodoxy—and so it would remain for centuries.

As the twenty-first century shapes up into a time of mass information, but also, paradoxically, of collective amnesia concerning the tangled histories of religions, Whitmarsh provides a bracing antidote to our assumptions about the roots of freethinking. By shining a light on atheism's first thousand years, *Battling the Gods* offers a timely reminder that nonbelief has a wealth of tradition of its own, and, indeed, its own heroes.

作者介绍:

TIM WHITMARSH is currently the A. G. Leventis Professor of Greek Culture at the University of Cambridge. He has published widely on ancient prose fiction, including *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance*, and edited *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*.

目录:

[Battling the Gods_ 下载链接1](#)

标签

宗教

无神论

评论

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书评

[与神作战]

我们被一遍遍告知，无神论是近代的发明，是欧洲启蒙运动的产物。在一些人看来，倘若不存在与宗教真理相对立的世俗国家观和科学思想，简直是件不可思议的事。这种看法其实是由“新无神论”论辩双方共同培植出的神话：无神论拥护者希望把对超自然的存在质疑，看作科...

用单一的无神论来描述书里的各种思潮感觉略显简略，不仅是书里描绘的古典地中海世界，其他文明区域的无神思想也是非常多彩。

物质主义者：这类思想认为我们生存在一个纯粹的物质世界中，这听起来非常接近我们今天理解的无神论，但这种理论在科学诞生前还是过于稚嫩，毕竟很容易...

看似价值不大的一个结论——“无神论”古已有之而非只是现代社会的产物，其实却拥有揭开“有神论”和“泛神论”以及“无神论”三者所间隔的“薄幕”——看似轻薄实则厚重又纠缠——之重要意义和功效。“神以何种方式存在”，这其实已经触碰到了信仰的本质，作为信徒到底只是需...

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