

## The Uses of Euhemerism: An Interdisciplinary Symposium Aberdeen, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Sir Herbert Grierson Centre for Textual Criticism and Comparative Literary History  
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The term 'Euhemerism' has been found indispensable by scholars of classics, religion, and mediaeval and Renaissance literature. We need it to describe what is clearly a strong and continuous current in European thought—loosely, a demystifying approach to mythology which interprets myth as a distorted account of human history—but we use it in often widely divergent ways. This diversity reflects the enigmatic nature of its origin, *The Sacred Inscription*, a prose narrative written in Greek by Euhemerus of Messene around 300 BCE, which survives only in partial paraphrases and in fragments of an early Latin translation, and which has been taken variously as an anthropological theory of religion, an atheist's manifesto, a justification for Hellenistic ruler-worship or a satire on the same, a fantasy travel narrative or a Utopian vision of a just society. When Euhemerism is encountered in later mythography, it is often denigrated as a dull and literal-minded approach, which strips mythology of its pleasure and complexity, or which simply reflects anti-pagan chauvinism inherited from early Christian apologetic, which embraced Euhemerism to debunk Roman religion. Yet its uses in literature from the classical to the early modern age often suggest a more sophisticated appreciation of its flexibility as a poetic and rhetorical tool. This symposium will bring together voices from across the disciplines to discuss the uses of Euhemerism by writers in different contexts over two millennia, and the various strategies it has served. The hope is that the combination of perspectives will be mutually beneficial, and help to achieve a fuller, more nuanced and more focussed understanding of this complex and important phenomenon.

### Speakers:

Emma Buckley (St. Andrews)  
Elizabeth De Palma Digeser (University of California, Santa Barbara)  
Raphael Falco (University of Maryland)  
Denis Feeney (Giger Professor of Latin, Princeton University)  
Amanda Gerber (Saint Louis University)  
Ethan Guagliardo (Boğaziçi University)  
Samantha Newington (University of Aberdeen)  
Syrthe Pugh (University of Aberdeen)  
Nickolas Roubekas (University of Vienna)  
Robert Segal (Sixth Century Chair, University of Aberdeen)  
Tim Whitmarsh (A.G. Leventis Professor of Greek Culture, University of Cambridge)

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