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ABSTRACT

The fear of God
Religious interpretations of diseases and epidemics. A cultural-historical search for clues

As COVID-19 terrified the world, conspiracy theories surrounding the epidemic gained ground, with some claiming it was a punishment from God. The idea of a divine or demonic influence on diseases and epidemics has its roots in the ancient Orient. This belief influenced the world of imagination in archaic Greece and the later emergence of monotheistic religion in ancient Israel, spreading a sense of guilt and fear. However, the idea was eventually abandoned with the development of philosophy and rational ancient medicine. Diseases and epidemics were demythologized, and these findings were incorporated into the holy scriptures of Christianity and Islam, so that by the end of late antiquity (5th/6th century) and the beginning of the Arab expansion (7th century), the idea of disease and epidemics as divine punishment had been overcome.

Short CV Univ.Prof.Dr.Dr.h.c. Ludwig Tavernier

After teaching and research activities in Munich, Rome, Leipzig, Santa Barbara (USA), Graz and Salzburg, he was appointed to the University of Koblenz-Landau, where he headed the Institute of Art Studies at the Koblenz campus until his retirement in 2021.

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