

## Editorial

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We are pleased to introduce the second issue of the *Journal of Cognitive Historiography*. Whereas *JCH* 1.1 was a special inaugural issue, based on papers initially presented at the 20th World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religion, *JCH* 1.2 is our first “regular” issue. It includes peer-reviewed articles and book reviews – and also a commentary section. While commentaries are common to, even expected of, scientific journals, they are less often a feature of historical journals. Our intention in introducing a commentary feature to *JCH* is to highlight, and reflect on issues that arise from bringing two very different disciplines together – and perhaps prompt some contributions to the journal focused on the methodological questions this raises.

To inaugurate the commentary section of *JCH*, we welcome two noted scholars who have reviewed the first issue of the journal: Robert Parker, Wykeham Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, and

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1. Esther Eidinow is Assistant Professor in Ancient Greek History in the Department of Classics at the University of Nottingham. She has published widely in the field of ancient Greek religion, including *Oracles, Curses, and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (2007, repr. 2013) and *Luck, Fate and Fortune* (2011).

2. Luther H. Martin is Professor Emeritus of Religion, University of Vermont. He also has been a Distinguished International Fellow at the Institute of Cognition and Culture, Queen's University Belfast, and a Visiting Professor at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. He is the author of *Hellenistic Religions* (1987) and of numerous articles in this field of his historical specialization. He has also published widely in the field of theory and method in the study of religion, especially, in the area of cognitive theory and historiographical method, and has co-edited several volumes in this area, including *Past Minds: Studies in Cognitive Historiography* (2011). He is a founding member of the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion and is co-editor of its *Journal of the Cognitive Science of Religion*.

the experimental anthropologist, Professor Dimitris Xygalatas, now at the University of Connecticut. Their reviews raise some key questions that we hope readers will find stimulating.

Parker notes the selective character of the phenomena treated across the papers in *JCH* 1.1. The “humdrum daily business of ancient religion – sacrifice, dedication, non-trance divination, purifications, processions” are neglected, he notes, in favour of an emphasis on the more dramatic themes of incubation, trance, Mysteries. More broadly, Parker concedes that modern historians, with their detailed monographs on religious particulars, “the only defence against banality and error,” have missed the grand theorizing characteristic of nineteenth-century historiography and now reintroduced by a cognitive historiography. But, he wonders, do the cognitive sciences significantly contribute to historical study anything “that is not paid, if in less theoretical terms, by many other approaches?” A challenge for future contributors!

As a first response, we volunteer that cognitive historiography can attempt an adoption of experimental methods. Xygalatas recommends three ways in which historians might benefit from experimental work in their attempt to understand past minds: first, by employing “existing experimental evidence from living subjects to make inferences about past people”; second, by using historical data to design experiments that test cognitive historiographical hypotheses; and finally, Xygalatas points to the historiographical benefit of “natural experiments” in history, which consist of applying systematic quantification and statistical analysis to historical material.

Xygalatas notes that the contributors to *JCH* 1.1 (save one) have “limited” their approach to a cognitive historiography simply by employing cognitive theorizing to their work. This theoretical “limitation” is, of course, a usual historiographical approach; but future pathways may be indicated by, for example, Alison Griffith’s contribution, which includes the design of a relevant experiment (as both Parker and Xygalatas note and applaud); perhaps others will find a way forward in the interdisciplinary collaboration so strongly advocated by Xygalatas.

We are most grateful to Robert Parker and to Dimitris Xygalatas for accepting our invitation to be the first to plunge into the still untested waters of our commentary section. They raise a number of relevant questions concerning, for example, and among others, the selectivity of historiographical phenomena for inquiry (and of the data in support of defining those phenomena); the particular – whether archival or experimental – versus the theoretical general; judgments about the validity of generalizations themselves (whether qualitative or quantitative); and overall considerations

and deliberations of theory and method that have long been of concern to historians – and will continue to be. These concerns characterize the kind of issues that this interdisciplinary exchange might address, and which we hope will be a regular feature of the *Journal of Cognitive Historiography*.