

# Atheism and unbelief in Ancient Greece (Working title)

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## Topic

The topic of my project is the study of unbelief in Ancient Greece mainly focused in Athens during the Classical period. The core interest of this project is to understand the phenomenon of unbelief in Classical Athens. Looking at the sources, we can observe different worldviews that describe how the individuals established their relations to the world. The dissertation focuses on two issues. Firstly, the concept of “unbelief” and its historical application. Secondly, the study of primary sources dated during the Classical Athenian period in which atheistic ideas are discussed.



## Research questions

The principal questions that motivate this project are:

- How did the criticism of the traditional image of the gods during the classical period in Athens develop?
- What was the influence of this rationalization (“de-traditionalization”) of divinities on the formation of self-world relations?

These two main questions open the discussion that structure the rest of the project.

## Data / Sources / Material

The project deals with the diversity of sources in Classical Athens, especially those texts that discuss the nature or the existence of the gods. Authors like Euripides, Hippocrates, Aristophanes, Prodicus, Protagoras, or Plato, among others, are highly relevant. The corpus of material in this project can be divided into two main groups:

- Bibliography on the study of unbelief and the theoretical approach to atheism with particular emphasis in the sociological studies of non-religion.
- A broad approach to Greek sources dated in Athens during the Classical period together with the reading and analysis of secondary bibliography.

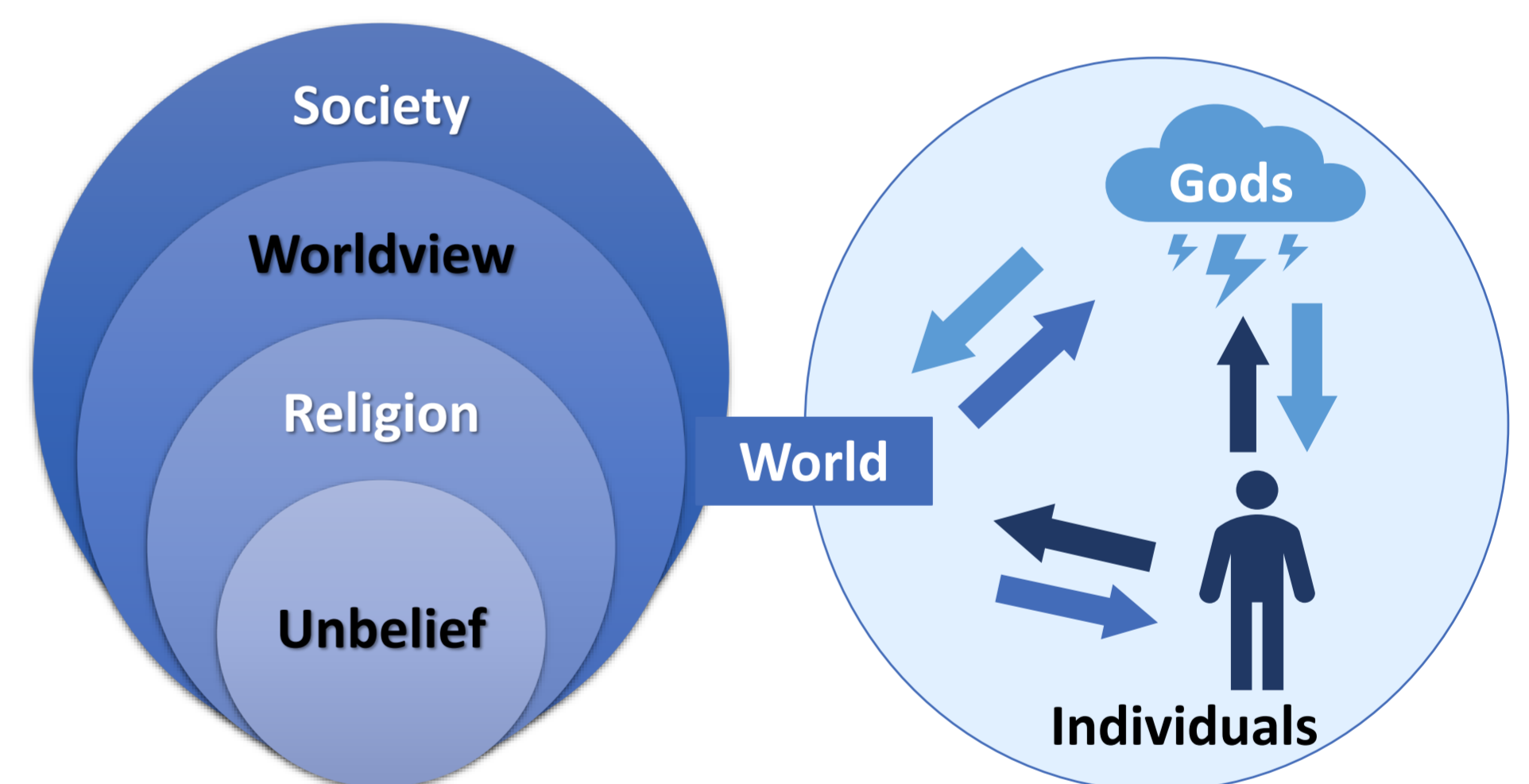
## Aim

The main aim of the project is to observe the analytical potential of the term “unbelief” to understand the atheistic ideas developed in Classical Athens. Studying the critique of the traditional notion of the gods allows us to know how the people perceived their world and the relation to the divinities as an ecological interconnection. The framework of “Resonanztheorie” (Rosa, 2016) helps me to elaborate more on the development of self-world relations based on a specific worldview (*Weltbild*).

## Methods

The project embodies the methodological variety of Religious Studies, emphasizing a historical-comparative approach to the study of unbelief. The dissertation is focused on two theoretical ideas:

- “Live Ancient Religion” approach (Gasparini, *et al.*, 2020) applies in Ancient history the definition of religion as a “lived” phenomenon based on the experiences of religious individuals in everyday life.
- Religious “individualisation” (Fuchs, *et al.*, 2020) enables to analyse how individuals develop their communication to the gods by choosing or rejecting ideas and practices of religious traditions.



## Next steps

Currently, I am working directly with primary sources. I am applying the theoretical arguments mentioned above in the sources of the Classical period. During the last semester, I was working on the Platonic dialogues and the Euripidean tragedies. I will continue to analyse the rest of the sources in the following months with especial emphasis in the Sophists.

## References

- Fuchs, M., Linkenbach, A., Mulsow, M., Otto, B.-C., Parson, R. B., and Rüpke, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Religious Individualisation*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Gasparini, V., Patzelt, M., Raja, R., Rieger, A.-K., Rüpke, J., and Urciuoli, E. (2020). *Lived Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
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**Source of image:** Goulet, S. (1794). *L'Athéisme*. De Vinck, 6292. Bibliothèque nationale de France. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69505444> (25/08/20).

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