Conceptions and experiences of the body in ancient Egypt

A Lecture and Video-Conference by Rune Nyord, Cambridge University

Thursday, September 29, 2016 4 p.m.-6 p.m. (Paris time) at the Ivry sur Seine CNRS building, 27 rue Paul Bert, Porte de Choisy/Porte d’Ivry subway station, room C in the basement or by distance through video-conference

This talk discusses dominant ancient Egyptian conceptions of the body with particular focus on the religious domain. An underlying idea of great importance is the conception of the human body as a vessel whose contents is ordinarily hidden, but can be revealed under particular circumstances. This idea plays a role in the social and administrative sphere, where especially persons of authority show a great interest in techniques for revealing the contents of the bodies of those they rule. In religious practice, the model underlies widespread conceptions of the acquisition and use of ritual power, and in the funerary sphere, the transformation of the body and its contents becomes of key importance for the regeneration of life. The presentation also discusses the nature of bodily difference in ancient Egyptian thought, as well as attempting to tackle the difficult question of what we can mean with the notion of ‘body’ when dealing with a culture without the notion of a separate physical domain usually serving as the backdrop of the notion.

This presentation constitutes the first monthly session of the interdisciplinary seminar “The Individual and his Body in the Ancient Mediterranean Basin” organized by Alice Mouton.


All the persons who are interested in attending the session (either in Ivry sur Seine or through video-conference) are welcome for free but should register by e-mail beforehand. contact: alice.mouton@cnrs.fr