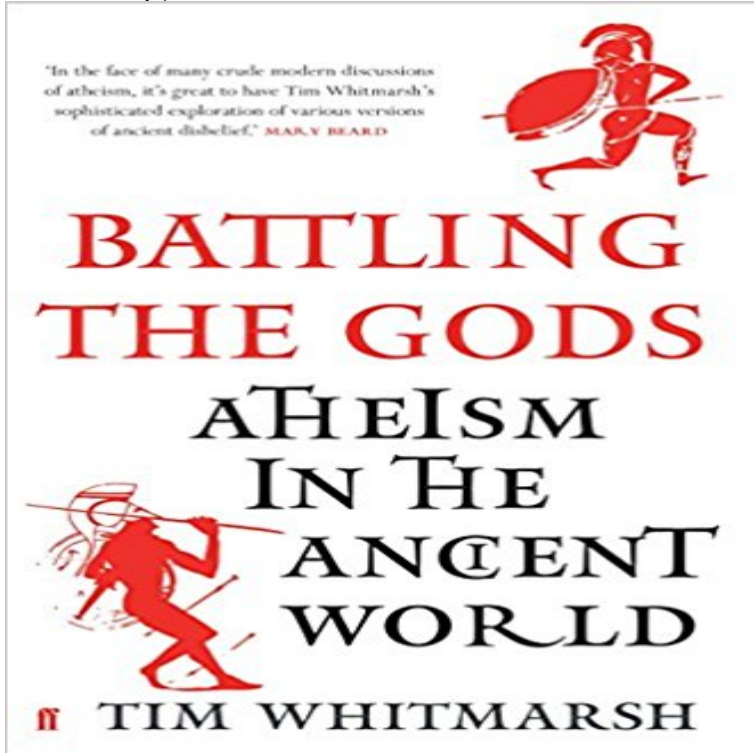


Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World



How new is atheism? In *Battling the Gods*, Tim Whitmarsh journeys into the ancient Mediterranean to recover the stories of those who first refused the divinities. Long before the Enlightenment sowed the seeds of disbelief in a deeply Christian Europe, atheism was a matter of serious public debate in the Greek world. But history is written by those who prevail, and the Age of Faith mostly suppressed the lively free-thinking voices of antiquity. Tim Whitmarsh brings to life the fascinating ideas of Diagoras of Melos, perhaps the first self-professed atheist; Democritus, the first materialist; and Epicurus and his followers. He shows how the early Christians came to define themselves against atheism, and so suppress the philosophy of disbelief. *Battling the Gods* is the first book on the origins of the secular values at the heart of the modern state. Authoritative and bold, provocative and humane, it reveals how atheism and doubt, far from being modern phenomena, have intrigued the human imagination for thousands of years.

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