Editorial: Distant Reading – Perspectives of a Digital Age

Esther Kobel, Ulrich Volp
Dorothea Erbele-Küster, Raphaela J. Meyer zu Hörste-Bührer, Michael Roth, Ruben Zimmermann

Research Centre "Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity" (*e/αc*)
Protestant Faculty of Theology
Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz
Germany

Dear esteemed reader,

big data versus close reading? The field of digital humanities (DH) is gradually establishing itself as an independent discipline and demonstrates its potential to change dramatically the view of sources with its shift from the established close reading methods to the distant reading of large quantities of texts and to relate this to other forms of data. In this issue of JEAC 4, we attempt to focus on unresolved questions of DH regarding the research of ethics in antiquity and Christianity. We have been able to recruit a number of authors who have dealt with different content-related questions and DH methods. Thus, this volume contains corresponding essays from the field of New Testament studies (Heilmann), big data reception research (Nikki/Kaše/Špiclová), patristics (Nunn) and church history (Brunner). As a reading recommendation for those who have not yet been confronted with the specific methods of distant reading, our Miszelle on MaxQDA (Totsche) is recommended as one's first stop; it presents a possible methodology, but at the same time points out its limitations. Such limits are again systematically problematized and presented as a point of view in our dialogue section (Heil; this time without a written response). The dialogue is open to anyone interested in the topic – we look forward to your feedback! When preparing this issue, we experienced that, firstly, the many definitional ambiguities that currently exist often stand in the way of such a dialogue and, secondly, we perceive ourselves to be still at the very beginning in the area of research into ethics in antiquity and Christianity concerning the methodology of distant reading. Thus, the reader finds a brief introduction to this topic by the *e/αc* members who are mainly responsible for editing this issue – right after this editorial introduction.

We sincerely hope for your enjoyment in reading this – hopefully stimulating – issue.

(Translated by Ulrich Volp and Andrew Bowden)