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ATHARVAVEDIC ‘MAGIC’ AND THE (RITUAL) AGENCY OF WOMEN IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

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The Atharvaveda is often viewed as being particularly concerned with practices of “magic” and “sorcery” to be employed for various purposes. This view has also influenced the interpretation of instances and characters connected with the Atharvaveda in the Mahābhārata epic. As a result, the vocabulary and the semantics of “magic” populate the rendering of Atharvavedic themes in the epic — often without addressing the conceptual issues implied in the use of the label “magic” for epic receptions of the Atharvaveda. In discussing some of these issues, the talk revisits epic passages that have been interpreted as depictions of “sorcery”. The focus is on epic representations of such practices in domestic settings, in which women are cast as wielding power due to (ritual) knowledge based on the Atharvaveda.

Thursday December 5th 2019, 4-6pm,
Philosophiegebäude, Room Ü14