

Uses, Misuses and Abuses of Historical Periodization

5:30 pm on Oct 11, 2017
CEU—TIGy Room (203)
Budapest, Nádor u. 9



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Meeting of doctors at the University of Paris. BNF, Français 1537, fol. 27v

The lecture will address the problem discussed in the last book by the great French historian, Jacques Le Goff. Middle Ages could be considered as the prime example of a historical periodization, not related to the reign of a great ruler (“the Augustan age”) or a dynasty (“the age of the Carolingians”), but to a more general set of cultural and political features. By designating a *media aetas* between themselves and “Antiquity”, the glamorous golden age they strove to resurrect, Petrarch and other humanists invented a tripartite periodization which survives till our days, and provided ample opportunity for modern historians from Burckhart and Huizinga to Kristeller, Panofsky, Ullmann, and Peter Burke to debate nuances of periodization. More recently two new frontlines have been also opened: that of “late Antiquity” and “early modernity”.

What can these periodizations be used for? Where are their shortcomings? Can one detect typical misuses?

Gábor Klaniczay is University Professor of Medieval Studies and head of the Doctoral School of History at CEU. A student of Jacques Le Goff, he specializes in intellectual and religious history, the history of mentalities, historical anthropology of European Christendom, comparative cultural and religious history of Central Europe, as well as the modern uses of Antiquity. He has published extensively, among other topics, on medieval magic, witchcraft, sanctity, hagiography, and the cult of relics. He has been awarded a number of prestigious prizes; recently he received the International Prize for History from the International Committee of Historical Studies, and won the 2017 CEU Award for Outstanding Research.