

MARLEEN THALER

Postdoctoral Researcher

Department of Religious Studies

University of Graz

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Nationality: Austria



RESEARCH AREAS & INTERESTS

global religious history, the transformation of religion, alternative religious currents, the modern history of yoga, religion and technology, eco-spirituality, religious traditionalism, esoteric studies, religion and drugs, the history of ideas

SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

Languages

German (native language)

English (excellent knowledge)

French (good knowledge)

Spanish, Italian, Arabic (basic knowledge)

Latin (rudimentary knowledge)

Soft skills

project management, acquisition and management of third-party funding, teamwork, event coordination, efficient time management

EMPLOYMENTS & FELLOWSHIPS

2025–2028	Postdoctoral FWF Fellow , Department of Religious Studies (IRW), Univ. of Graz
2025–present	Third-Party Funding Coordinator , Dean's Office, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Univ. of Vienna
2025–2026	Research Fellow , Department of Religious Studies (IRW), Univ. of Vienna
2025	Conference Manager , European Academy of Religion
2024–2026	Communication and Editorial Manager , Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society (RaT), Univ. of Vienna
2022–2023	OEAD Fellow , Department of Religious Studies (IRW), Univ. of Vienna
2019–2022	Doctoral FWF Fellow , IRW, Univ. of Vienna
2019	Project Assistant , IRW, Univ. of Vienna
2017–2019	Student Assistant , IRW, Univ. of Vienna

EDUCATION

2019–2024	Dr. Phil. in Religious Studies, Univ. of Vienna: graduation with distinction
2019	Master of Arts in Religious Studies, Univ. of Vienna: graduation with distinction
2017	Bachelor of Arts , in Oriental Studies, Univ. of Vienna
2013	Bachelor of Arts , in Cultural and Social Anthropology, Univ. of Vienna
2008	Matura (University-Entrance Diploma), Secondary School, Bundesoberstufen Realgymnasium Salzburg: graduation with distinction

THESES

- 2024 **The History of Modern Kundalini Research. Gopi Krishna and the Transformation of a South Asian Goddess in the Late Twentieth Century.**
Dissertation, Univ. of Vienna, supervisor: Ass.-Prof. Dr. Karl Baier
- 2019 **John Michell's Sacred Place Theory. Alternative Religion, Traditionalism, and the Notion of Glastonbury as New Jerusalem**
MA Thesis, Univ. of Vienna, supervisor: Ass.-Prof. Dr. Karl Baier

GRANTS & PRIZES

- 2025 **Faculty Dissertation Prize**, awarded in a faculty-wide competition, Univ. of Vienna
- 2025 **ÖGRW Dissertation Prize**, awarded in a nation-wide competition by ÖGRW
- 2025 **Travel Grant**, awarded by AAR
- 2024 **Travel Grant**, awarded by EASR
- 2024 **Travel Grant**, awarded by VDTR
- 2022–2023 **Marietta Blau Scholarship**, awarded in a nation-wide competition by OeAD
- 2022 **Go.Investigatio Grant**, awarded in a nation-wide competition by ÖAW
- 2022 **Travel Grant**, awarded by ÖGRW
- 2019 **Wilhelm Keilbach Thesis Price**, awarded in a university-wide competition, Univ. of Vienna
- 2019 **Travel Grant**, awarded by ESSWE
- 2015–2016 **Non-EU Student Exchange Scholarship**, awarded in a university-wide competition, Univ. of Vienna

PUBLICATIONS

monographs

- 202* **Albion's Sage for the New Age. John Michell, Radical Traditionalism, and the Myth of Sacred England**
Equinox Publishing. Contracted and submitted.

edited volumes

- 2025 **Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present** (together with Julian Strube and Dominic Zoehrer)
Brill: Numen Book Series.

journal articles

- 2023 **Of Crops, Dragons, and Re-enchanted Landscapes. John Michell's Impact on British Earth Mysteries**
JRaT (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh), Vol. 9 (No. 2)
Free Contribution | Open Access
- 2022 **How Modern is Technology? The Liaison Between Prehistoric UFOs and Modern Traditionalism**
Religio: Revue pro religionistiku, Vol. 30 (No. 1)
Contribution to conference proceedings | Open Access
- 2021 **Feindbild Islam. Über die Salonfähigkeit von Rassismus**
Religion in Austria (Wien: Praesens), Vol. 6.
Review Article | Open Access

book chapters

- 202* **Technological Serpents. Biofeedback and the Arousal of the Tantric Notion of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti***
The Tantric World (London: Routledge). Contracted and submitted.
Contribution to edited volume | Open Access
- 2025 1 **Introduction** (together with Dominic Zoehrer and Julian Strube)
Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present (Leiden: Brill). Contracted and submitted.

Contribution to conference proceedings | Open Access

2 **Gaia's Subtle Energies. The Interplay of Eco-Spirituality and Terrestrial Energy Healing**

Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present (Leiden: Brill). Contracted and submitted.

Contribution to conference proceedings | Open Access

2024 1 **Pathology or Transcendence? Kundalini's Interpretation as Spiritual Emergency and Rebirth Process**

Taking Seriously, Not Taking Sides (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh).

Contribution to edited volume | Open Access

2 **Approaching a Universal Pattern? Gopi Krishna's Initial Kuṇḍalinī Experience within the Frame of Universalism and Religious Scientism**

Intentional Transformative Experiences: Theorizing Self-Cultivation in Religion and Esotericism (Oldenbourg: DeGruyter).

Contribution to conference proceedings | Open Access

reference entries

202* 1 **Hiroshi Motoyama's Kundalini and Chakra Archive**

The Archive of Mystical Experiences (Edited by Matthew Dillon and Charles Stang). Harvard University, Center for the Study of World Religions.

2 **Carl Friedrich Freiherr von Weizsäcker's Meditation Experience**

The Archive of Mystical Experiences (Edited by Matthew Dillon and Charles Stang). Harvard University, Center for the Study of World Religions.

3 **Christina Grof's Experience of Spiritual Emergency**

The Archive of Mystical Experiences (Edited by Matthew Dillon and Charles Stang). Harvard University, Center for the Study of World Religions.

4 **Gopi Krishna's Kundalini Rising Archive**

The Archive of Mystical Experiences (Edited by Matthew Dillon and Charles Stang). Harvard University, Center for the Study of World Religions.

5 **Edgar Mitchell's "Ecstasy of Unity"**

The Archive of Mystical Experiences (Edited by Matthew Dillon and Charles Stang). Harvard University, Center for the Study of World Religions.

blogs & newsletters

- 2023 5 **The Rising Serpent at Esalen**
ESALEN Newsletter, Summer 2023
 Newsletter contribution | Open Access
- 2023 4 **Surrender to the Beauty Within and Without — #myEsalen**
MyEsalen Blog, April 26, 2023
 Blog contribution | Open Access
- 2022 3 **PhD Project Feature**
ESSWE Newsletter, Vol. 13 (No. 1)
 Newsletter contribution | Open Access
- 2022 2 **Kampf der modernen Welt**
Y-Nachten
 Blog contribution | Open Access

PRESENTATIONS

invited lectures

- 2025 3 **Kundalini's Modern Transformation as Scientification**
 Seminar lecture, IRW and DK "Resonante Weltbeziehungen", Univ. of
 Graz, December 10
- 2023 2 **Pathologization or Spiritual Crisis? A Brief Introduction into
 Kuṇḍalinī's Modern Interpretation as Spiritual Emergency**
 Public lecture, University of Leipzig, Department for Religious Studies,
 October 25
- 2022 1 **The Kundalini Research Foundation(s): Gopi Krishna's
 International Network of Kuṇḍalinī Aficionados**
 Public lecture, ETH Zürich, Chair for Literature and Cultural Studies,
 September 21

international conferences

- 2025 21 **Serpents and the Clinic. Kundalini Research and Treatment at the
 San Francisco-based Kundalini Clinic**
 AAR Conference, Boston, November 22–26

- 20 **Japanese Parapsychological Kundalini Experiments**
Hiroshi Motoyama's Contribution to Empirical Kundalini
Research
IAHR Conference, Kraków, August 24–30
- 19 **The Modern History of Kundalini Research: Gopi Krishna's**
Contribution to Kundalini's Scientification
EuARe Conference, Vienna, July 8–12
- 18 **The Scientification of Kundalini. Gopi Krishna and the Modern**
History of Kundalini Research
ESSWE Conference, Vilnius, June 25–28
- 2024 17 **Kundalini Yoga Re-Discovered: Hindu Nationalist Efforts in**
Demystifying the Esoteric Nature of Kundalini
AAR Conference, San Diego, November 22–26
- 16 **Kundalini: A Force of Nature? Kundalini's Role within Terrestrial**
Energy Healing
EASR Conference, Gothenburg, August 19–23
- 15 **The Kundalini Research Foundations. Gopi Krishna's Global**
Network of Kuṇḍalinī Researchers
YDYS Conference, Hamburg, May 22–25
- 2023 14 **Technological Serpents. Biofeedback and the Arousal of Kuṇḍalinī**
EASR Conference, Vilnius, September 3–7
- 13 **Invoking the Serpent Power. The Entanglement of Scientism and**
Kuṇḍalinī Practices
ESSWE Conference, Malmö, June 26–28
- 2022 12 **The Geometry of the New Jerusalem. John Michell's Numerical**
Interpretation of Glastonbury as Heavenly City
ESSWE Conference, Cork, July 5–7
- 11 **John Michell's Radical Traditionalism. Geometry's Capacity of**
Releasing Modernity from its Depravities
EASR Conference, Cork, June 27–July 1

- 10 **The Magical Serpent: Kuṇḍalinī's Interpretation as Sexual Energy**
Hedonistic Occultism Conference, Brno, June 6–7 (hybrid)
- 9 **Modern Appropriations of Kuṇḍalinī: The Theosophical Society and the Serpent Power**
YDYS Conference, Kraków, May 18–21 (hybrid)
- 8 **Gaia's Energy Flows: The Interplay of Eco-Spirituality and Terrestrial Energy Healing**
Subtle Energies: Explorations within Holistic Healing and Spirituality, Vienna, April 28–30
- 2021 7 **Energetic resistance? Kuṇḍalinī's Oscillation Between Spiritual Chance and Emergency**
EASR Conference, Pisa, August 30–September 3 (hybrid)
- 6 **Approaching a Universal Pattern? Gopi Krishna's Initial Kuṇḍalinī Rising**
Intentional Transformation Conference, Bern, August 28–30 (hybrid)
- 5 **Kuṇḍalinī Rising. The Initial Theosophic Examination of the Tantric Concept of Kuṇḍalinī**
ESAS Conference, Vienna, July 26–29 (hybrid)
- 4 **The Re-Sanctification of the English Landscape. John Michell's Influence on Eco-Spiritual Devotees of Earth Mysteries**
Religion and Nature Conference, Munich, April 9–11 (online)
- 3 **How Modern is Technology? The Liaison between Prehistoric UFOs and Modern Traditionalism**
Deus Ex Machina Conference, Brno, February 5–26
- 2020 2 **Psychedelic Kuṇḍalinī. The Interrelation of Kuṇḍalinī and 5-MeO-DMT**
Religious Drugs Conference, Brno, February 28–29
- 2019 1 **Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Orientalism**
ESSWE Conference, Amsterdam, July 2–4

international workshops

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| 2025 | 6 | From Counterculture to Wellness Culture: The Shifting Pedagogies of the Esalen Institute
Anthology Esotericism and Education, Zurich, October 16–17 |
| | 5 | Margaret Kobelt's Contribution to the Modern Project of Kundalini Research
From Archives to Herstory: Women's Contributions to the Study of Asian Religions, Vienna, October 7 |
| 2024 | 4 | Die Transformation von Kundalini im 20. Jahrhundert
RaT Workshop, Noto, September 22–24 |
| | 3 | Kundalini: Die Schlangenkraft, die zur Krise führt? Globalgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu transpersonalen Bewältigungsstrategien Spiritueller Krisen
AK Religion & Medizin, Leipzig, June 12–14 |
| | 2 | Gopi Krishna's Global Network of Kundalini Research Foundations
Open Research Day, Vienna, May 6 |
| 2021 | 1 | Kuṇḍalinī Re-Imagined: Appropriations and Re-Interpretations of the Serpent Power
The Occult in the History of Science, Art, and Religion, ESSWE PhD Workshop, Ascona, April 2–5 |

TEACHING

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| 2025–2026 | 8 | Religions of South Asia
IRW, Univ. of Vienna |
| 2025 | 7 | Organisation of an Academic Conference (together with Marco Fiorletta, BA MA)
Faculty of Protestant Theology, Univ. of Vienna |
| | 6 | Organisation einer wissenschaftlichen Fachtagung-aber wie?
IRW, Univ. of Vienna, May |

2022–2023	5	Alternative Religious Landscapes: A Modern History of Contemporary Spiritualities, South Asian Influences, and Sacred Places Esalen Institute, California
2021–2022	4	Specific Subject Didactics (together with Mag. Florian Mayrhofer) Faculty of Catholic Theology, Univ. of Vienna
2021	3	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religious Texts (together with Ass.-Prof. Gerald Hödl and Prof. Lukas Pokorny) IRW, Univ. of Vienna
2020–2021	2	Specific Subject Didactics (together with Dr. David Novakovits) Faculty of Catholic Theology, Univ. of Vienna
2020	1	Introduction to the Academic Study of Religious Texts (together with Ass.-Prof. Gerald Hödl and Prof. Lukas Pokorny) IRW, Univ. of Vienna

STUDY & RESEARCH STAYS ABROAD

2024	14	Center for Theory and Research (CTR) Conference Participant (invited) Esalen Institute, California, USA
2023	13	Perspectives on Death Symposium Participant (invited and funded) Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, Sweden
	12	Esotericism in Sweden Symposium Participant (invited and funded) Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, Sweden
	11	Archives of the Impossible Conference Participant (invited) Rice University, Texas, USA
	10	Teaching Faculty (invited and funded) Esalen Institute, California, USA

	9	Center for Theory and Research (CTR) Conference Participant (invited and funded) Esalen Institute, California, USA
	8	Visiting Scholar (funded) UC Santa Barbara, California, USA
2022–2023	7	Scholar-in-Residence (funded) Esalen Institute, California, USA
2022	6	Visiting Scholar (funded) UC Riverside, California, USA
	5	Visiting Scholar (funded) ETH Zürich, Switzerland
2018	4	Research trip Glastonbury, UK
2015–2016	3	Language Courses (Arabic, Palestinian Dialect) Polis Institute for Languages and Humanities, Jerusalem, Israel
	2	Exchange Semester (funded) Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel
2015	1	Internship (funded) Palestinian Peace Organization <i>Dar Annadwa</i> , Bethlehem, Palestine

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2025–present	18	Board Member (Vice-Treasurer) ÖGRW
2025	17	Journal Article Review Journal <i>Religions</i>
	16	Panel Chair, <i>East Asian Self-Cultivation Practices in Transnational and Diasporic Perspective</i> American Academy of Religion (AAR), Boston, November 22–26

- 15 **Panel Convenor, *Adaptation and Productive Tension: Kuṇḍalinī Reconsidered***
American Academy of Religion (AAR), Boston, November 22–26
- 14 **Book Response**
Book Launch “Yoga Breath”, IRW, Univ. of Graz, October 9
- 13 **Co-Organiser**
International conference *European Academy of Religion (EuARe)*,
Vienna, July 8–12
- 12 **Panel Convenor and Chair, *A Tangle of Serpents: Varieties of Kundalini Experiences***
European Academy of Religion (EuARe)
- 11 **Panel Chair, *Yoga Breath: Prāṇa and Prāṇāyāma in Early Modern Yoga***
European Academy of Religion (EuARe)
- 2023 10 **Organizational Assistant**
Collaboration between IRW and the Theosophical Society, Vienna
- 2023–present 9 **Steering Committee Member**
American Academy of Religion (AAR), Drugs & Religion Panel
- 2022 8 **Administrative and Organizational Assistant**
ÖGRW conference *Religionen und Sexualität*, Vienna, June 10–11
- 7 **Co-Organiser**
International conference *Subtle Energies. Explorations within Holistic Healing and Spirituality*, Vienna, April 28–30
- 2021–2024 6 **Student Representative**
Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion (VDTR)
- 2020–2021 5 **Didactic Reviewer**
Habilitation committees at the IRW, Univ. of Vienna
- 2019–2022 4 **Board Member (Vice-Treasurer)**
ÖGRW

2019–2021	3	Network Coordinator Occult South Asia Network (OSAN)
2018–2022	2	Mentor for Master students IRW, Univ. of Vienna
2018	1	Administrative and Organizational Assistant International Workshop <i>Occult South Asia. From the 19th to the 21st century</i> , Vienna, November 23–24

MEDIA COVERAGE

2025	5	Pflanz' mich – Magic Mushrooms Interview by Ö1 (Austrian radio station), “Im Fokus – Religion und Ethik”, May 21
2024	4	Religionen der Welt TV interview by ORF 2 (Austrian TV station), November 16
	3	Glauben hören - So klingen Hindu Religionen Interview by Ö1 (Austrian radio station), “Im Fokus – Religion und Ethik”, October 2
2023	2	Rausch und Religion - Was tun die Kirchen gegen die Sucht? Interview by Norddeutscher Rundfunk (German radio station), “vertikal horizontal. Glaubens- und Gewissensfragen”, October 29
	1	Neon Shrines Invited guest at Radio Valencia, San Francisco, April 7

SCIENCE TO PUBLIC OUTREACH

2025	11	Trommel, Trance und Transformation: (Neo-)Schamanismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart VHS Landstraße, December 4
	10	Reawakening the Serpent. Modern Transformations of Kundalini Occulture Conference, Berlin, October 23–26

2024	9	Tiere in den Religionen (together with Dr. Robert Wurzrainer) Teaching at KinderuniWien, Univ. of Vienna, July 17
2022	8	Ein Himmel voller Götter und Göttinnen – eine Forschungsreise zu den Religionen Indiens Interview by Ö1 (Austrian radio station), July 14
	7	Ein Himmel voller Götter und Göttinnen – eine Forschungsreise zu den Religionen Indiens (together with Dominic Zoehrer, MA) Teaching at KinderuniWien, Univ. of Vienna, July 14
	6	Tantra – a Sexual Religion? MOP Event, Bystřice, CZ, July 4–11
2021–2022	5	Religious Studies on the Fast Track I and II Relay team captain at the Vienna City Marathon, Vienna
2021	4	Ein Himmel voller Götter und Göttinnen – eine Forschungsreise in das hinduistische Indien (together with Dominic Zoehrer, MA) Teaching at KinderuniWien, Univ. of Vienna, July 19
2019	3	The New Jerusalem Diagram. John Michell’s Staircase to Heaven Occulture Conference, Berlin, October 31–November 3
	2	Timothy Leary’s Psychedelic Religion Ozora Event, Ozora, HU, July 30–August 4
2018	1	New Age as a New Religious Movement MOP Event, Bystřice, July 5–7

MEMBERSHIPS

2024–2025	European Academy of Religion (EuARe)
2023–present	American Academy of Religion (AAR)
2021–2024	Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion (VDTR)
2020–2023	European Association for South Asian Studies (EASAS)

2019–present	European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR)
2019–present	European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE)
2019–present	Österreichische Gesellschaft für Religionswissenschaft (ÖGRW)
2018–present	Occult South Asia Network (OSAN)

INSTITUTIONS & ADRESSES

Institut für Religionswissenschaft (IRW), University of Vienna
rw-ktf.univie.ac.at | Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Wien

Institut für Religionswissenschaft (IRW), University of Graz
religionswissenschaft.uni-graz.at | Attemsgasse 8, 1010 Graz

Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF)
fwf.ac.at | Sensengasse 1, 1090 Wien

Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society (RaT)
religionandtransformation.at | Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Wien

Agentur für Bildung und Internationalisierung (OeAD)
oead.at | Ebendorferstraße 7, 1010 Wien

Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (ÖAW)
oeaw.ac.at | Vordere Zollamtsstraße 3, 1030 Wien

Universität Wien
univie.ac.at | Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien