

RaT-Newsletter



Dear members and friends of RaT,

Welcome to our last newsletter for the academic year 22/23! This time, we are especially proud to present many new RaT publications: The two recently published volumes in our RaT book series: [Vol. 23: Interreligiöser Dialog. Wissenschaftliche Zugänge zur Begegnung der abrahamitischen Religionen](#) and [Vol. 24: Humanitarian Islam. Reflecting on an Islamic Concept](#). Furthermore, the first volume of JRAT 9: [Exploring Asian Religions in Europe](#) is out now.

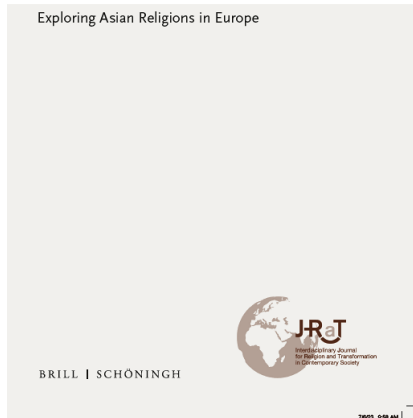
Other than that, you can find new books and articles written by our members below, a look back at the conference "Neutral State?" and at the two events of this semester's Poetics Lectureship and much more! Even though summer has just started, our members are already busy planning conferences for the upcoming winter term, one of which you can find below.

Our next newsletter will come out in October. Until then, we wish all our readers a nice and relaxing summer!

Kurt Appel, Hannah Bleckenwegner, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Magdalena Lorenz, Astrid Mattes, Marian Weingartshofer

PS: Please consider forwarding our newsletter to those interested in the topics we work on! Want to subscribe? Just click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS: JRAT and RaT Series

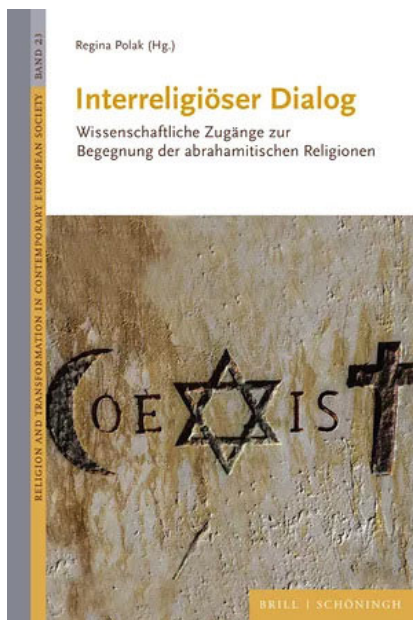


Latest Issue(s):

JRAT 9 (1/2023): *Exploring Asian Religions in Europe*, edited by Ugo Dessì & Lukas K. Pokorny

In the last fifty years there has been an increasing interest in alternative “spiritualities” in the European context, which have crystallised to a significant extent around “Eastern” religious forms. Whereas an important impulse has certainly been given in this respect by Orientalist views, the role played by missionaries in the transmission of Asian religious forms to Europe has been equally important. Still another major factor behind the transmission of “Eastern” religions to Europe is migration, which is becoming more and more relevant with the increasing number of immigrants from Asian countries. Against this general framework, the articles collected in this special issue attempt to shed more light on selected aspects of Asian religions in the European context, with particular attention to institutional, semi-institutional, and more informal practices, still relatively understudied areas (e.g., parts of Eastern Europe), and broad historical developments.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

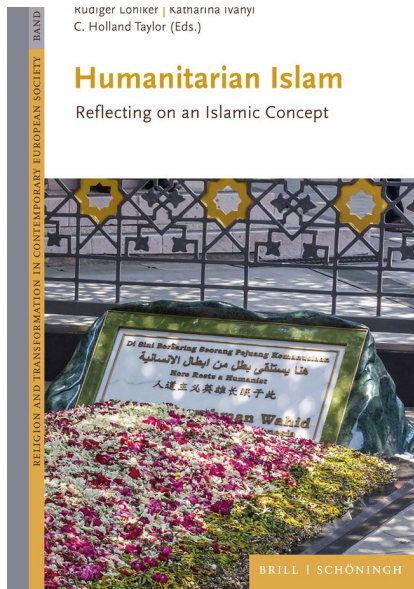


Latest Issue(s):

RaT Series (Volume 23): *Interreligiöser Dialog. Wissenschaftliche Zugänge zur Begegnung der abrahamitischen Religionen*, edited by Regina Polak.

Interreligious dialogue can make a significant contribution to peaceful coexistence in ideologically plural societies. In this context, the trilateral dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims is at the center of attention. Admittedly, this dialogue is associated with highly heterogeneous understandings, interests and goals. Religious people associate different ideas with interreligious dialogue than social or political actors. In this volume, internationally renowned scholars address interreligious dialogue from interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives - i.e., theological, historical, religious, social, educational, and practical - and explore the complexity of the phenomenon, the problems associated with it, such as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and its possibilities and limits.

[Link to the publication.](#)



Latest Issue(s):

RaT Series (Volume 24): *Humanitarian Islam. Reflecting on an Islamic Concept*, edited by Rüdiger Lohker and Katharina Ivanyi.

Humanitarian Islam is an innovative concept that has begun emerging from the traditions of Islam in Indonesia in recent years. The most important contemporary Islamic organizations in Indonesia support it. Nevertheless, it seems to be unknown beyond the Southeast Asian context, despite its global potential, aspirations and claims. Moreover, the concept has not received any academic attention so far. This volume presents reflections on the idea of Humanitarian Islam by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars from Europe and beyond.

[Link to the publication.](#)



Latest articles published online in advance (all our articles are published open access):

- [Sita in Cultural Translation. The Use of the Rāmāyana to Educate on Perfect Womanhood by Annie Besant, Marie Musaeus Higgins, and Leelawathy Ramanathan](#), by Jessica A. Albrech
- [Post-secular Feminist Research: The Concept of “Lived” Religion and Double Critique](#), by Sabine Grenz
- [Nga rang gi chos khyod rang gi chos: “My Religion and Your Religion”? About Some Fundamental Issues in the Global History of Religion](#), by Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz
- [Of Crops, Dragons, and Re-enchanted Landscapes. John Michell’s Impact on British Earth Mysteries](#), by Marleen Thaler

PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies

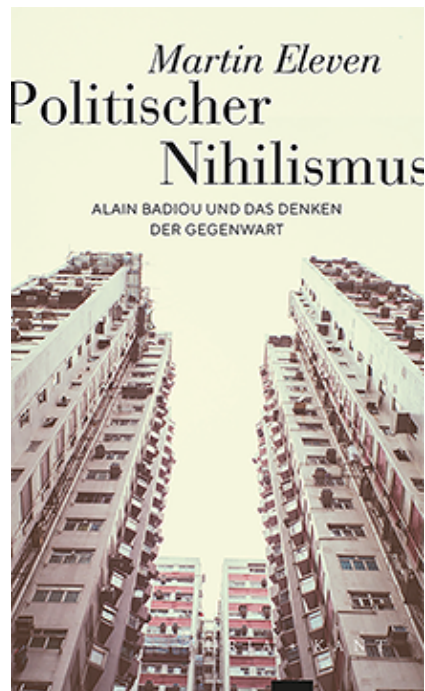


Hüseyin Çiçek: *Religion – Gewalt – Minderheiten. Studien zu religiöser Identität im Kontext der geopolitischen Herausforderungen der Moderne*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2023.

The volume takes a look at current topics in religious studies from different perspectives in religious studies and the social sciences. They are explicitly or implicitly based on the central thesis of religious studies and religious policy that solidarity within communities is fostered by hostility toward the outside. This seemingly simple formula has many

facets and is therefore analyzed from different perspectives in the respective articles with a specific focus on religion, violence/terrorism, and minorities in order to put it to the test both comparatively and connectively.

[Link to the publication.](#)

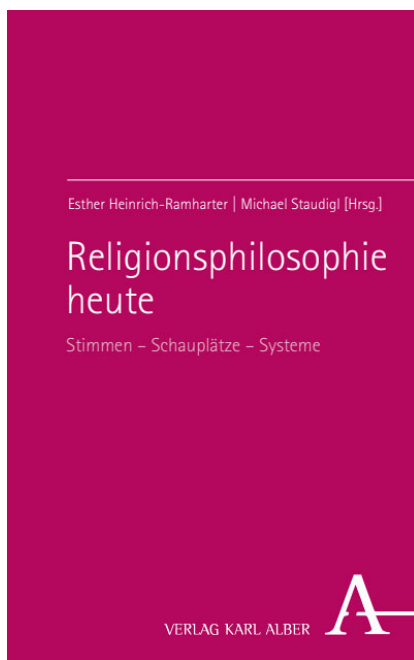


Martin Eleven: *Politischer Nihilismus. Alain Badiou und das Denken der Gegenwart.* Wien: Turia+Kant 2023.

The author provides an insight into Alain Badiou's understanding of philosophy and politics. The focus is on the contemporary diagnosis of political nihilism. Badiou's new draft of an ontology of multiplicity is elaborated, which allows an analysis of the "emblem of democracy" as a transcendent signifier: The "emblem of democracy" covers the void in the midst of political structures of order. Referring to Badiou's central concept of the event, the demand for "real life" is pursued. This can only succeed by taking into account an emancipatory politics that traverses the void of the political and the phantasms that cover it.

Martin Eleven has previously worked in the RaT-management (2019-2022) and is currently VDTR prae-doc fellow.

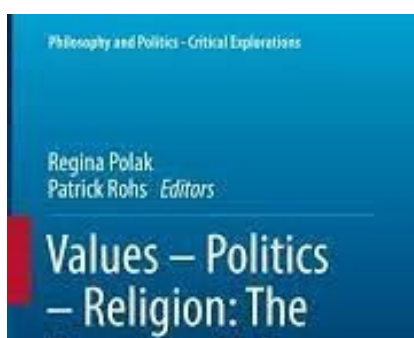
[Link to the publication.](#)



Esther Heinrich-Ramharter, Michael Staudigl (eds.): *Religionsphilosophie heute. Stimmen – Schauplätze – Systeme.* Baden-Baden: Karl Alber 2023.

The volume "Religionsphilosophie heute. Stimmen - Schauplätze - Systeme" offers an insight into the diverse developments in contemporary philosophy of religion. The focus is on new lines of thought - systematic outlines as well as statements on current challenges - that shape the discussion. The topics range from - updated - antiquity to the present, across different religious communities and cultural-geographical zones. Contributions are also devoted to the positions of outstanding authors such as Jacques Lacan, Simone Weil, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Charles Taylor, and Emmanuel Levinas.

[Link to the publication.](#)



Regina Polak, Patrick Rohs (eds.): *Values – Politics – Religion: The European Values Study In-depth Analysis – Interdisciplinary Perspectives – Future Prospects.* Springer 2023.

This open access book analyses the international data of the European Values Study (EVS 1990 - 2017), with a focus on the impact of religious on



political values from empirical as well as theoretical perspectives, i.e. sociology, political and cultural studies, philosophy, ethics, theology and the law. It interprets results from interdisciplinary perspectives, including the viewpoints of social ethics, sociology and cultural studies, law and practical theology. In the political and public as well as media debates of the European Union, the recourse to (above all "European" and also "Christian") values has played a central and controversial role in the field of politics and religion for several decades. This collection is a contribution to a qualified discourse on values in Europe by providing empirical, hermeneutical and ethical criteria for a responsible use of the concept of values.

[Link to the publication.](#)

AVISO: On November 28, 2023 (10:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.), an inter- and transdisciplinary conference on "The Crisis of Liberal Democracy and the Role of Religion Therein" will be held in the Volkshalle of Vienna City Hall, where the publication will be presented and its findings discussed with stakeholders from society, politics, education, business, and religious communities. Perspectives for action will be explored to strengthen democracy - including the specific contribution of religious communities. For more information: regina.polak@univie.ac.at. Registrations are now already possible at the Institute for Practical Theology, Catholic-Theological Faculty at the University of Vienna: monika.mannsbarth@univie.ac.at.

PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

Kurt Appel: Divine Providence, Theodicy, Freedom and the Essence of Time, in: Concilium. Internationale Zeitschrift für Theologie (3/2023), pp. 279-286.

This article outlines the meaning of the notion of divine providence. The thought leads, as Leibniz shows, to a world sufficiently grounded in the love of God. This is not a matter of mechanistic predestination, but of human freedom always responding to the infinite openness and the related sense of divine creative power. Leibniz's reflection shows the relational content of divine providence, Kant the meaning of autonomy, and Hegel the "Mit-Sein" (Being-With) in solidarity that opens bodies in their vulnerability to one another and makes them the site of God's experience. In all three thinkers, the idea of providence offers a potential for resistance against a nihilistic devaluation of the world. The conclusion of the paper shows that the temporal form on the basis of which the talk of divine providence seems to make sense is the anticipated future.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Kurt Appel: *Kritik an Repräsentationen der Macht. Die politische Dimension des Evangeliums in der geschwisterlichen Alterität von Bibel und Koran*, in: Regina Polak (ed.): *Interreligiöser Dialog. Wissenschaftliche Zugänge zur Begegnung der abrahamitischen Religionen*, Brill 2023, pp. 149-169.

Political theology aims at criticizing structures of power and power's claim to self-representation. On the basis of an examination of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this

paper supports the idea that religion can be considered as a rupture in the projection of the subject's claim to power. Such a rupture becomes especially apparent in the biblical canon and its core, the name of God, YHWH, and its New Testament equivalent, the Cross. This is impressively demonstrated in the Gospel of John and in the Revelation of John. In the final section, the paper presents the idea that the Koran and the Bible need each other to ironise their respective claims to validity and power and thus open the way to a true brotherhood of religions.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Kurt Appel: *L'Europa, il sacrificio, l'apocalisse. Il contributo biblico per la pace*, in: *Hermeneutica. Annuario di filosofia e teologia. Le ragioni della pace e le ragioni della Guerra*, Morcelliana 2023, pp. 85-104.

Firstly, the article considers the conception of the European Community as a peace project. It examines which narratives and particularities characterise Europe and why the European Union has assumed a special vocation to pioneer the realisation of a peace order. Secondly, the significant contribution that biblical tradition offers to a rationality of peace is examined philosophically. Two biblical categories are considered, namely the apocalypse and sacrifice. The paper highlights how apocalyptic tradition represents an ironic challenging of imperial order. Furthermore, the historiography of apocalypticism is imbued with a memory of suffering, a dimension which also shapes the European Union. The work reveals how the Bible reinterprets sacrifice as a gift of life and not of death; furthermore, how the New Testament tradition rejects any imperial sacrificial logic. Thus, secularisation ought not to be understood as a loss of religion, but as an abolition of imperial ideology.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Kurt Appel, Martin Eleven: *Hegel und das Offene der Gottesfrage mit einem Ausblick auf Lacans Register des Imaginären, des Symbolischen und des Realen*, in: Esther Heinrich-Ramharter, Michael Staudigl (eds.): *Religionsphilosophie heute. Stimmen – Schauplätze – Systeme*, Karl Alber 2023, pp. 65-109.

This article deals with Hegel's position on the question of God, which is known to have been extremely controversial in the history of philosophy. This part can also be read on its own. A shorter second part establishes a connection to Lacan's psychoanalysis. In doing so, it is intended to suggest, on the basis of a path of thought that has been strongly received in recent decades, how fruitfully Hegel's conception of religion can also be used in contemporary discussions of the philosophy of religion, many of which involve psychoanalysis.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Kurt Appel, Daniel Kuran: *La vita non è diversa dalla vita, perché la vita è nella Divinità unificata. Amore e libertà negli Scritti giovanili di Hegel*, in: M. Moscini (ed.): *Idea*, in: *Nova Theoretica*, Inschibboleth Edizioni 2023, pp. 33-57.

This article examines the themes of love and freedom in Hegel's early writings (the Frankfurt period, *Frühe Schriften II*) and in particular elaborates on their significance for an understanding of Hegel's later works: the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. By interpreting central passages on love in the early writings, Hegel's critique of Kant, which is situated in the context of his interpretation of Christianity, is explained and the extent to which Hegel's understanding of love goes beyond the mere opposition of subject and object as well as the theoretical and practical mastery of objects which is implicit in transcendental philosophy is shown. In contrast, according to Hegel, love implies a relationship free of domination that is able to encounter the world as subject and the Other in its difference without unilaterally reducing the latter to a fixed object. For Hegel, the - though insufficiently realized - significance of Christianity manifests itself in the category of love, which, mediated by desisting from the claim to absoluteness of one's

own position, enables a compassionate approach to the world.

Hüseyin Çiçek: *Humanitarian Islam, the State, fundamental rights and the free democratic state*, in: Rüdiger Lohlker et al. (ed.): *Humanitarian Islam*. Brill 2023, pp. 45-55.

Today's religious-ideological pluralism in Germany has a long and challenging history to show. Many different developments have led to the existence of a legal system that guarantees the religious and individual rights of citizens. The idea of Humanitarian Islam could possibly lead to new discussions with regard to Islamic law and state and possibly initiate developments that lead to religious-ideological pluralism. This article attempts to embed the ideas of Humanitarian Islam in the context of the liberal democratic state and to demonstrate the added value for politics and society.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Hüseyin Çiçek: *Diaspora und Religion. Religionspolitische Herausforderungen in der jüngeren Geschichte der Aleviten in der Türkei und Deutschland*, in: *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik*, 6, 2022, pp. 641–659.

This article will focus on recent Alevi history in Turkey and Germany. Developments in Turkey and the Alevi diaspora in the Federal Republic will first be presented independently and then related to each other in the summary. The decision to do so follows from two important considerations: The Alevis are among the important followers of the founder of the Turkish republic and were not supported in the founding period of the republic, as well as in the era of Cold War, in establishing and expanding their own identity and religious practice, and in practicing one. In this regard, the political, religious and social demands of the Alevis in the Turkish Republic to this day are not ones that would undermine the Turkish nation or identity. Rather, it is the failure of the Turkish state, for example, to recognize the Alevis as equals in matters of identity and religion, which has led, among other things, to the emergence of antagonisms and dichotomies.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

Jakob Deibl: *Auf dem Weg zu einer ästhetischen Philosophie. Zwischen Nostalgie für das Universale und Aufmerksamkeit für das Partikulare*, in: Caterina Genna (ed.): *Quale filosofia ad inizio del XXI secolo? Introduzione di Gianni Puglisi*. FrancoAngeli, pp. 265–272.

Inspired by Gianni Vattimo's weak thought ("pensiero debole"), the article argues that a renewal of philosophy cannot start from the idea of overcoming previous philosophical conceptions, but from their reconfiguration. Today, the modern paradigm of overcoming is itself deeply in crisis. Such a philosophy is a monument of the philosophy preceding it and preserves its resources without exhausting or even destroying them. This approach of reconstruction I call "aesthetic".

Jakob Deibl: *The Concept of Religion in the Context of Aesthetics*, in: Christian Danz, Jakob Helmut Deibl (eds.): *Transformation of Religion. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, BRILL/Schöningh 2023, pp. 133–162.

This article presupposes that a clarification of the concept of religion must also direct its attention towards aesthetics. The questioning line starts from aesthetics and seeks to contribute to an explanation of religion. However, it is not only the sought-after concept of religion that is unclear; aesthetics also offers no secure terrain from which we can start. We first ask whether their connection is merely a sub-discipline of other fields or, as the discipline of Religionsästhetik claims for itself, whether it also touches on fundamental reflections. With Kant and Hölderlin, we examine whether religion and aesthetics refer directly to each other or can only be related to each other via a third moment. We then ask with Vattimo whether the interrelatedness of religion and aesthetics can be considered ahistorically or whether it provokes philosophical-historical questions.

Concluding, we ask with Hegel about the permeability of the categories of religion and aesthetics.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Jakob Deibl: *From Infinite Rapprochement to the Open. From Kant to Hölderlin*, in: Vítor Moura, Connell Vaughan (eds.): *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* vol. 14 (2022), pp. 56–67.

For Hölderlin, Kant is the starting point of his thinking. However, religion for Hölderlin is not primarily inscribed in the matrix of practical philosophy, but contains essential impulses from its relation to aesthetics. Hölderlin wants to move from “philosophy to poetry and religion” without taking the path via practical philosophy. In the “Fragment of Philosophical Letters” Hölderlin concludes: “Thus all religion would be poetic in its essence.” While Kant opens up ethically based religion to aesthetic categories only in selected places, Hölderlin places the latter at the centre. This is particularly evident in his reference to God in poetry from 1800 onwards, which borrows essential motifs developed by Kant in the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

Daniel Kuran: *Religion and the Expressionless—A Religious Perspective on Art in Benjamin*, in: *Religions* 2023, 14(6), 703.

In this article, I investigate the relationship between religion and art in the work of Walter Benjamin. I demonstrate how this relation is embedded in Benjamin’s understanding of a dialectic of secularization, which has recently been examined by Sigrid Weigel and Daniel Weidner. Within this context, I focus on the “expressionless” and its relation to the holy in Benjamin’s thought. I follow different applications of the expressionless in Benjamin’s texts from different periods and analyze their overall significance. My thesis is that the expressionless is a specifically aesthetic category that can rescue the difference between the holy and the profane, granting both spheres their own rights and thereby resisting any sacralization of art in an aesthetic cult. Therefore, with reference to the holy and to the expressionless, one can claim with Benjamin that a religious perspective on art in a secular context is of irreplaceable value, while the expressionless simultaneously safeguards the autonomy of art.

Daniel Kuran has been a member of the RaT-organizational team between 2016 and 2022. He is currently a post-doc assistant at the department of Systematic Theology and Ethics at the Faculty of Catholic Theology.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

Karsten Lehmann et al.: *School as the central place of contacts among religious youth in rural Austria*, in: *ÖRF-Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum* 31 (2023), pp. 208-231.

This study examines the place of religious pluralism in the life world of adolescents in rural areas in Austria (Tyrol, Voralberg, Upper and Lower Austria). 15 group discussions (2021-22) with Alevi, Sunni, Catholic, Protestant and secular youth groups demonstrate that the school appears as the central place of contact with religious pluralism and participation at religion classes marks religious differences. These contacts are described as marginal and knowledge-based.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

Karsten Lehmann, Alexandra Katzian: *On the central role of religion-teachers in the memories of former students*, in: *ÖRF-Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum* 31 (2023), pp. 232-250.

The article looks at a dimension of the teacher-student interaction that has repeatedly

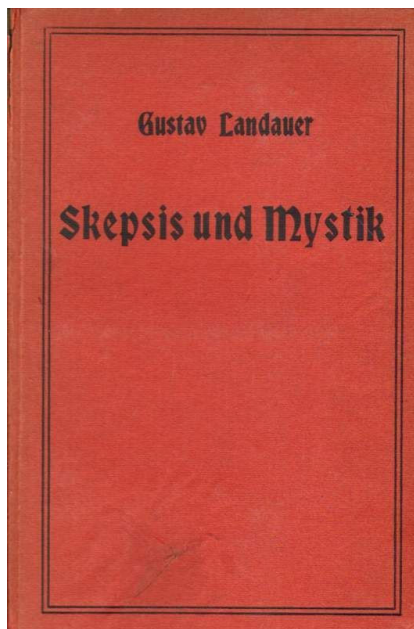
been discussed in the wake of John Hattie. Based on a total of 24 detailed oral history interviews, it focuses on the *longue durée* of memories of (religion) teachers. The article analyses how contemporary witnesses, who attended Viennese schools in the interwar period, remember their teachers in the present. The analyses show on the one hand that teachers who were generally remembered positively can still be present as personalities decades after their pupils attended school. Teachers characterized as negative, on the other hand, are very rarely remembered in the long run. The same applies to the concrete content of lessons. Even in their memories of a clearly defined subject such as religious education, the eyewitnesses in the interviews hardly ever refer to concrete subject content.

[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

RESEARCH: Projects

THIRD PARTY FUNDED PROJECTS



Socialist Mysticism, Mystical Socialism

PI: PD Dr. **Julian Strube**

Two PhD positions (75%, 36 months), € 293.265

Throughout history, religious and socialist movements overlapped in complex ways. Scholars have demonstrated how, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, socialist movements were perceived as “heretical” and “mystical,” and how they intersected with alternative religious movements, such as spiritualism and Theosophy. Such connections, however, generally remain unexplored in the study of religion. The proposed project will contribute to this gap by tracing entanglements between religion and socialism in the early twentieth century. The works of authors such as the anarchist Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) and the Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), are particularly instructive in this regard. By creating two PhD positions, this project will explore this milieu of socialist and related writers, explaining their “mystical” understandings of “socialism” in their religious historical context. This will generate both novel perspectives on their work, as well as on larger developments at the intersection of religion and socialism. Moreover, a critical analysis of the terms “socialism,” “mysticism,” “esotericism,” and “occultism” in contemporary socialist discourse will contribute to and revise the theoretical and terminological repertoire of religious studies.

RESEARCH VISITS



Deniz Coşan Eke

Deniz Coşan Eke has been accepted as a visiting scholar in the Interfaith Program of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Cambridge under an STSM (Short-Term Scientific Mission) grant from the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST Action 20107).



She presented her studies on Alevism at a roundtable event titled "Diversity, Migration, Public Space," which will include scholars* from the fields of architecture, politics, and theology.

For more information on this event, please visit the [Cambridge Interfaith Program website](#).



Julian Strube

In July and August, Julian Strube will be a fellow at Harvard University, funded by a fellowship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation. He will work on exchanges between Unitarian and Indian reformers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on social reform and women's rights.

In September, Julian Strube will be in Japan to continue a collaboration with Chiba University and Tohoku University. As part of this collaboration, a workshop was held in Vienna on June 30 on the question "What is Esotericism in South and East Asia?".

Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion



Conference Report: VDTR Open Research Day

On May 22, the third VDTR Open Research Day took place. The modified format - plenary part with lectures in the morning, workshops organized by PhD students in the afternoon - was well received. The day took place at the invitation of the ASH Forum Civil Society at the Albert Schweitzer House and concluded with a panel discussion on the topic of "Secular/Religious Vienna" - organized in cooperation with RaT - during which the former RaT speaker Sieglinde Rosenberger was bid farewell.

A look back at the VDTR Public Lecture with [Joe Moshenska](#) (University of Oxford): "Iconoclasm as Child's Play: Dolls and Idols in the Reformation"

On June 9, a workshop organized by VDTR PhD student Alisha Saikia in cooperation with RaT entitled "Thinking Through Dolls: Religious Studies, Anthropological and Artistic Approaches to Human Simulacra" took place. For one day, experts from different universities and disciplines, among them RaT-member Hans Gerald Hödl, exchanged ideas about dolls in their respective fields of research. In the course of the day, the permeable boundary between religion and play was repeatedly addressed. It was also the topic of the public evening event, where Joe Moshenska from Oxford University gave a lecture entitled "Iconoclasm as Child's Play: Dolls and Idols in the Reformation" to an

interested audience.



From left to right: Katharina Limacher, Fabio Gygi, Linda Franca, Lisa Zingerle, Joseph Moshenska, Agnès Giard and Alisha Saikia.

EVENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

12th International Symposium on "Commercialisation of Religions in the Globalising World", organized by the Department of Islamic Theological Studies, University of Vienna and the Department of Theology at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Nicosia
September 15-17, 2023

Religion and rituals have been part of being human and interpreting human existence since time immemorial. Religion and the "sacred" belong together. Sacred places and times, objects and persons, symbols and signs, words and writings take people into the religious sphere.

Society and religions are always in motion in their relationship to each other. In secular societies, economic aspects of institutions not only play a role in politics and people's personal lives, but are also in the interest of religious communities. This means that the spiritual world is no longer an island of the spiritual and is no longer protected from material power and greed. Due to far-reaching globalisation, the border between the material and the spiritual is becoming thinner and thinner.

This international symposium will explore questions relevant to both religions and the future of the global community, shedding light on the consequences of commercialisation for society and religious communities.

More information on the symposium can be found [here](#).

Workshop: "The Bible and Philosophy" October 20, 2023, University of Vienna

The workshop will explore the manifold relationships between the Bible -- the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible -- and philosophy. The focus will be on considerations that identify the relationship between philosophy and the Bible as being relevant in today's world. Transformations of concepts, narratives, minor and major theories that reach into the present will be considered. Among other things, the workshop will serve to prepare a volume that will be published in the J-RaT series.

With presentations by: Kurt Appel, Clarissa Breu, Isabella Bruckner, Jakob Deibl, Isabella Guanzini, Esther Heinrich-Ramharter, Richard Heinrich, and Sandra Lehmann.

If you are interested, please register by sending an e-mail to:
marian.weingartshofer@univie.ac.at

***Self-Annihilation as Self-Realization: Interreligious Perspectives.* International Conference November 3–4, 2023, University of Vienna**

With lectures by Max Rohstock (Neoplatonism), Frederek Musall (Judaism), Marco Antonio Sorace (Christianity), Raid Al-Daghistani (Islam), Silvia Schwarz Linder (Hinduism), Sebastjan Vörös (Buddhism), Claire Maes (Jainism), Friederike Assandri (Daoism), and Fabian Völker (Global Philosophy of Religion).

Organization: Fabian Völker (Department of Intercultural Philosophy of Religion, University of Vienna) and Raid Al-Daghistani (Centre for Islamic Theology, University of Münster) in cooperation with RaT (Research Centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society", University of Vienna) and APIG (Archivbibliothek für Post-Neukantianismus und kritischen Idealismus der Gegenwart, Wuppertal).

More Information can be found [on our website](#).

PAST EVENTS

Neutral State? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Autonomy of Religion, Art and Science.

From June 19 to 20 the conference "Neutral State Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Autonomy of Religion, Art and Science?" organized by the research cluster "Transformations of Law in Religion and Society" of the Research Centre RaT took place. The aim of the event, which was organized under the direction of Prof. Stefan Hammer (Department of Legal Philosophy) and Prof. Andreas Kowatsch (Department of Canon Law and Law on Religion), was to bring experts from the three fields into conversation with each other and to offer an insight into current debates and problems.

From the many knowledgeable contributions and the lively discussion, two points in particular emerged as decisive: First, under the current legal and social conditions, skepticism about the possibilities of



religious-ideological neutrality of the state is necessary. Second, there is a crisis in the claim to autonomy of the various fields, but especially of science: Self-determination is visibly coming under pressure under the increasing economic-political dependencies. This shows how important it is to critically question the concepts of autonomy and neutrality again and again.

With presentations by: Jakob Deibl, Marie-Luisa Frick, Marcello Neri, Reinhold Esterbauer, Stefan Hammer, Astrid Mattes, Markus Müller, Andreas Kowatsch; panel discussion with: Cornelia Offergeld, Imet Mehmedi, Dieter Beck; moderated by Katharina Limacher.

The contributions to the conference will be published in a volume of the RaT print-series. To view a more detailed report and the conference program, click [here](#).



Poetics Lectureship: A look back at the events of the summer term 2023

Last semester, two events took place as part of the Poetics Lectureship "Literature and Religion". On May 8, 2023, the German writer Ulrike Draesner gave a dense lecture entitled "Das ZumZum. Sechs Annäherungen an das Unsagbare" ("The ZumZum. Six Approaches to the Unsayable"). Literature begins, she said, where language takes itself as its subject - and so the entire lecture, excellently put into words, revolved around speaking, writing and literature, around the unspeakable and translation. One should not fight against the limits of speech - the unsayable - but rather translate them: They are a special good of literature. About the talk, Anna Trost, who attended the poetics lecture as a student, writes: "Draesner has made it her task to make the unspeakable audible by translating it into language. Following the title, she opened up the boundaries and challenges that go along with this by means of six poems. This method enables the audience as well as the speaker to approach the actual complexity of the topic together. As if they were six different paths to the same goal: an approach to the unsayable. For in Draesner's understanding of the world and art-making, the following holds true: 'Language is not an expression of the form of life (Lebensform). Language is a form of life.'"

Interested? To watch a recording of Ulrike Draesner's Lecture, just click [here](#).

On June 1, Austrian writer Sophie Reyer gave a lecture titled "Religion im Zeitalter der Biomacht. Ein Kreuzweg" ("Religion in the Age of Bio-Power. A Way of the Cross"). Like a Way of the Cross, the reading was divided into 14 stations. In doing so, the author spanned an arc leading from the earliest experiences of death to narration: Each sentence by Sophie Reyer is a plea against the loss of the ability to mourn and against the extinction of narratives when addition (the quantified world) replaces narration. And so, towards the end of her talk at the 14th Station, the author asks, "Will humans be the first species to annul themselves? I don't know. In any case, one thing is certain: pain always has to do with longing. If we want to revolutionize the system, we must spare each

other - that is, leave each other in our otherness and strangeness. We must comfort each other - in our grief. This requires distance. It's a pain of the closeness of distance - one we can no longer experience in the digital age where everything is defined by the distance of closeness - see Facebook, Zoom, Skype." It was striking how many audience members came forward after the lecture to engage in conversation with the author. Rarely have I experienced such a respectful mood, even in the critical inquiries, which I think expressed a little of the revolutionary power of taking care of each other.

THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES

RaT members contribute to public discourse by writing in newspapers, giving statements in television and podcasts, and by publishing on our blog.

RAT BLOG

In their article, *Tackling the Complex Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity at the European Level: The International COST Action "COREnet"*, **Regina Polak** and **Gintarė Pociūtė** introduce us to the research network „COREnet: Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity“. The full article can be read [here](#).

NEWSPAPERS

Hüseyin Çiçek has written comments on the presidential elections in Turkey and their reception in the Austro-Turkish community for multiple Austrian media outlets. For one example, see his commentary in the Austrian daily "Kurier" (30.05.2023): <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/tuerkei-europa-nato-erdogan-aussenpolitik-usa-schweden/402468200>.

RADIO

Katharina Limacher contributed from a religious studies perspective to a radio feature on the topic of "Queer and Religious" that was [broadcast by the Austrian radio station Ö1 on June 17, 2023](#).

Under [this link](#), you can also find an "interjection" by **Regina Polak** on the topic of "What does Austria believe?", which was heard on the radio station Ö1 on June 4, 2023.

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Impressum

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