

## RaT-Newsletter



### Dear members and friends of RaT,

In our last newsletter before the summer break, we have some important news to announce: RaT is organizing next year's annual conference of the **EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION**, which will take place from **July 08-12, 2025 at the University of Vienna!** During this year's edition of the conference in May, RaT was present with its own panel and advertised next year's event. You can find a detailed report directly below this introduction.

This is not the only good news we have to announce: We are also glad to welcome two new members to RaT: Welcome, **Arno Böhler** and **Ikenna Okafor!**

Apart from the good news, we also present you, as usual, with recent publications and research activities conducted by our members: This time, we are especially proud to announce the start/approval of four new third party funded research projects, headed/co-organized by RaT members **Arno Böhler**, **Constanza Cordoni**, **Andrea Lehner-Hartmann** and **Lukas K. Pokorny**. You can find more details on all these interesting projects below!

Recent publications by our members include [an article on \(Christian\) sacred buildings as auditory spaces](#) by **Jakob Deibl**, a [textbook on law on religion \(Religionsrecht\)](#), written by **Richard Potz** and Brigitte Schinkele, and [a critical commentary on the spiritual support for Putins war of aggression by the Russian Orthodox Church](#) by **Jan-Heiner Tück**. Last but not least, we want to mention **Christian Danz's** reflection on [the role of Kants philosophy for a modern \(protestant\) understanding of religion](#), published as part of [our cooperation with the Austrian daily derStandard](#).

Even though there is usually not much happening at our university during the summer break, we can even announce two upcoming events: a workshop on “Zeitdiagnostik religiöser Vielfalt in Wien und Österreich” (September 13-14), organized by **Karsten Lehmann**, and Prof. **Wolfram Reiss**’s valedictory lecture (Abschiedsvorlesung), which will take place on September 27.

Scroll down to discover these texts, events and much more! The next edition of our newsletter is going to arrive in October. In the meantime, we wish you all a pleasant reading and a wonderful and relaxing summer!

*Kurt Appel, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Daniel Kuran, Magdalena Lorenz, Astrid Mattes, and Marian Weingartshofer*

PS: Please consider forwarding our newsletter to those interested in the topics we work on! If you are not subscribed yet, just click [here](#).

To download a pdf.-version of this newsletter, [click here](#).

## RAT-NEWS: EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION: A look back and a look ahead

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*Kirsten Rüter, Noemi Call, Marco Fiorletta, Daniel Kuran, Kurt Appel and Jakob Deibl (left to right) at this year's European Academy of Religion in Palermo*

At this year's "[European Academy of Religion](#)" (EuARE), which took place in Palermo from May 20 to 23 on the topic of "Paradigm Shifts", RaT was represented by a large group of researchers.

Kurt Appel, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Marco Fiorletta, Esther Heinrich-Ramharther (philosopher and deputy speaker of the centre) and Daniel Kuran presented a panel on RaT's joint research focus "[Religious Exits: Transitions into Alternative Symbolical and Political Worlds?](#)" and promoted the next edition of the European Academy of Religion with a presentation during the annual general assembly held during the conference. **The**

next annual conference of the EuARe will be organized by RaT and take place at the University of Vienna from July 8–12, 2025 on the overarching topic „[Religion and Socio-Cultural Transformation: European Perspectives and Beyond](#)“.

RaT member [Kirsten R ther](#) was also present at the EuARe 2024. She gave a lecture on the topic of "Apartheid's Emptiness: The Norwegian Mission Society's Photographs of Land- and Cityscapes Devoid of African People's Presence" at the panel on "(Transforming) Visions of Empire: Documenting Politics and Religion in the Twentieth Century", organized together with colleagues from the VID Specialized University in Stavanger and Coimbra University.

The entire RaT team is very happy that we have succeeded in bringing EuARe 2025 to Vienna. **The fact that such a major conference will take place in Vienna underlines the important role that our university plays within the field of theology and religious studies.** The conference will provide all researchers at the University of Vienna who work in our field with an excellent opportunity to present their research and meet colleagues from all over Europe.

It is also a particular priority for us to promote the research on religion conducted at the University of Vienna during the conference. Therefore, **we will organize a panel dedicated to research carried out at our university, which will cover the whole event. We will provide more detailed information on this in the upcoming months.**

We would already like to invite all members of our research centre to participate in this panel!

To learn more about the conference topic, visit [the section on the EuARe conference on our website](#). Further details will be published there as the conference organisation progresses.

## NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!

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**Univ. Doz. Dr. Dr.habil. Arno B hler**

*Department of Philosophy*

*Faculty of Philosophy and Education*

*University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna*

As a philosopher and artistic researcher, who teaches Philosophy and Aesthetics at the University of Vienna and at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, I am delighted to enter the stage of the research center Religion and Transformation.

My research focuses on Continental Philosophies with a special emphasis on Post-Structuralist Philosophies and Aesthetics, as well as on Indian Philosophies.

Currently I lead the research project „Arts in Philosophy : Philosophy in the Arts. On the Significance of the \*Heart\* in Artistic Research and Performance Philosophy“, sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

Crossing Nietzsche's concept of the Artist-Philosopher with the Vedic concept of the poet-seer (kavi) from the perspective of Sri Aurobindo Ghose's Integral Yoga, the project aims to unfold a cross-cultural concept of the \*Heart\* that culminates in the conceptual persona of the sahrdaya. This ancient

term for the aesthete literally means "somebody, having a heart".

To learn more about Arno Böhlers' research, [visit his profile on our website](#).



### **Mag. Dr. Ikenna U. Okafor**

*Department of Systematic Theology and Ethics  
Faculty of Catholic Theology*

May I humbly take the pleasure of introducing myself as a new member of this academic community, Religion and Transformation in contemporary society (RaT)?

My name is Ikenna Okafor, a lecturer of Intercultural Theology at the University of Vienna, Austria. I was born in Azigbo, Nigeria, and since my doctoral promotion in theology in 2011, I have been close to members of RaT network, most of whom have supported me in my academic career. I have followed the activities of this network from its inception and am glad to be officially a member.

My research interest is in the area of African theology. My favourite method is interdisciplinary approach that focuses on the deep connections between theology and literature. Currently, I am exploring the theological significance of Chinua Achebe's postcolonial narrative. I feel inspired and honoured to be in your midst.

To learn more about Ikenna Okafor's research, [visit his profile on our website](#).

## **PUBLICATIONS: JRAT and RaT Series**

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Interdisciplinary Journal for  
Religion and Transformation  
in Contemporary Society



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

- [Double Turning and Other Duplicities. A Performative Reading of John 20:11–18](#), by **Clarissa Breu**
- [Die Leiter in Jakobs Traum: Spekulationen zu einem Symbol](#), by **Richard Heinrich**
- [Theological Anthropology Facing Artificial Intelligence. The Investigation of an Intersection Based on Treatises](#), by **Judith Klaiber**
- [How Does the Old Testament Speak About God's Knowability? On the Complexity of the Topic, as Reflected in Previous Scholarship](#), by **Annette Schellenberg-Lagler**

## **PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies**

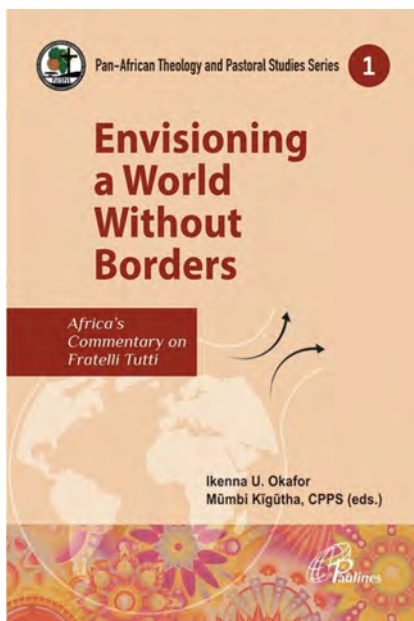
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**Rudolf Langthaler, Hans Schelkshorn (eds.):** *Okzidentale Konstellationen zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Beiträge zu Jürgen Habermas' Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie.* Darmstadt: wbg Academic in Herder 2023.

In his two-volume work *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* (2019), Habermas presents a comprehensive genealogy of post-metaphysical thought. The ten main chapters of this magnum opus were analyzed at a conference at the University of Vienna in 2021. Since, according to Habermas, post-metaphysical thinking emerged from the Occidental discourses on the relationship between "faith/belief and knowledge" ("Glauben und Wissen"), the contributions cover a wide range of topics: on the one hand, the intellectual awakenings of the Axial Age and the Christian theologies and philosophies from late antiquity to Luther, on the other hand, to the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which, according to Habermas, split into two strands with Hume and Kant, to Hegel as the founder of the discourse of modernity and to post-idealistic thinking from Feuerbach to Peirce. Habermas also provides a comprehensive response to the detailed studies on his history of philosophy in a reply.

[Link to the publication.](#)



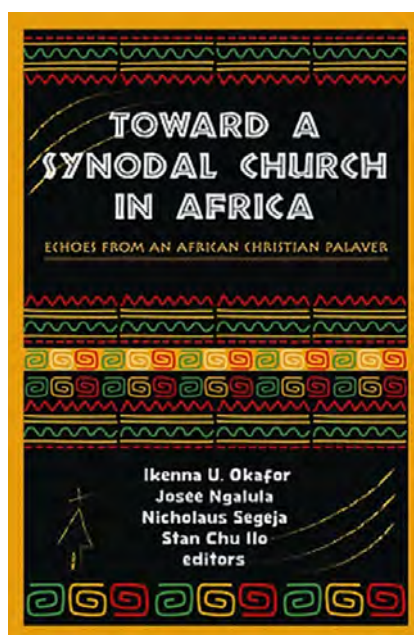
**Ikenna Okafor/Mumbi Kigütha (eds.):** *Envisioning a World Without Borders. Africa's Commentary on Fratelli Tutti.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 2023.

*Envisioning a World Without Borders* engages creatively with Africa's socio-political and economic problems without being reactionary. It appreciates a new paradigm shift from the hermeneutic of liberation to that of fraternal solidarity in its imagination of the demands of the zeitgeist. The book's main focus is on how to preserve traditional values that are the foundation of community and individual existence in Africa. It also identifies the internal and external obstacles inimical to Africans' human flourishing in philosophy, economics, politics, religion, and international relations.

Furthermore, *Envisioning a World without Boarder* tries to propose what can be done to achieve the ideal of Pope Francis' dream for the world. Above all, the book holds the belief that a brighter future for Africa is within reach and can be achieved by drawing on the wisdom of its ancestors. Its concise nature makes it convenient and easy to read, making it highly recommended. Additionally, the price is quite appealing, thanks to the publisher. This book introduces a brand-new series on Pan-African theology and pastoral studies, aiming to share the stories of the Holy Spirit's work within the African context. As one of the contributors, I strongly urge

young theological students in Africa to make space for this book on their personal bookshelves. The theme of fraternity is bound to play a significant role in theological discussions for the foreseeable future, and this book marks only the start of our journey.

[Link to the publication.](#)



**Ikenna Okafor/Josee Ngalula/Nicholaus Segeja/Stan Chu Ilo (Eds.):** *Toward a Synodal Church in Africa. Echoes from an African Christian Palaver.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2024.

This compendium of original essays by leading Catholic African scholars explores the meaning of synodality for the African church, with reference to the established method of African theology: "palaver," or talking--and listening--together.

Opening with messages by Pope Francis and Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, the contributions offer explications of vital themes such as "Proclaiming the Word of God to Young People," migration, theology of the people, "Ubuntu," a postcolonial critique of clericalism, the social dimension of synodality, the way of the laity, contested moral issues, the role of basic ecclesial communities, and the missionary role of communications.

[Link to the publication.](#)



**Richard Potz, Brigitte Schinkele:** *Grundriss Religionsrecht.* Wien: Facultas 2024.

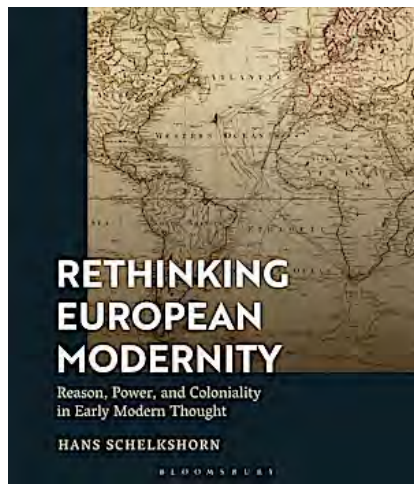
In the first decades of the 21st century, law on religion has developed into the "actual 'political' law of our time" (Christoph Möllers), which has found expression in dense religious law legislation and dynamic case law. For the secular, religiously neutral state, the challenge is to cope with the increasing pluralization and the overlapping of other policies, such as integration and security policy. These developments also entail the risk of infringements of religious freedom and lend Austrian law on religion, integrated into the European perspective, noticeably new accents.

The structure of this outline follows the concept already laid down in the two editions of the manual "Religionsrecht im Überblick". This presents law on religion as a cross-sectional subject that takes into account the legal particularities of the religious-ideological dimension in its entirety.

[Link to the publication.](#)



**Hans Schelkshorn:** *Rethinking European Modernity: Reason, Power, and Coloniality in Early Modern Thought,* Bloomsbury 2023.



This open access book undertakes a self-critical reinterpretation of European modernity and responds to the need for a global understanding of the development of Western thought. Showcasing contemporary Latin American approaches that align modernity with colonialism, and European theories of modernity, Hans Schelkshorn reassesses the origins of modernity. He brings neglected Renaissance thinkers into the narrative, discussing the work of Nicholas of Cusa, Pico della Mirandola, Francisco de Vitoria, and Michel de Montaigne, and critiquing the views of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke.

Across a series of historical studies, Schelkshorn presents modernity as a complex process. His use of the concept 'de-limitations' (Entgrenzungen) shows how the new idea of an infinite universe and the discovery of the Americas deeply influenced the foundations of modern science, politics and economies in the 17th century. Making a major contribution to scholarship on early modern philosophy, Schelkshorn paves the way for a more cosmopolitan account of European thought.

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


## PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

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**Kurt Appel:** *Pensare oggi il tempo e il suo oltre*, in: Vincenzo Di Pilato/Simona Segoloni Ruta (eds.): *Questo tempo e il suo oltre*. Aggiornamento sull'escatologia. Milano: Edizioni Glossa 2024.

The text traces the biblical concept of time, starting with the idea of the seventh day. The seventh day, which is celebrated on the Sabbath and on Christian Sunday, is not simply a chronological indication of time; rather, it denotes the transcendent dimension of a time that must not be reduced to a series of present moments. It contains a moment of promise of a future in which the world and human individual and collective action will have proven meaningful. In a second step, based on Leibniz and Hegel, it is shown that a philosophical understanding of time cannot be limited to scientifically measurable time and is open to a future that does not just continue the present.

[Link to the publication.](#)

**Jakob Deibl:** *Christliche Sakralbauten als Hörräume: Modulationen von einer visuellen zu einer auditiven Sprache*, in: *limina* 7 (1/2024), 53–75; DOI: 10.25364/17.7:2024.1.5; 

This article endeavors to develop a sense of (Christian) sacred buildings as auditory spaces. Contrary to the paradigm of the visual as predominant ("ocularcentrism"), sacred buildings will not be considered from an optical point of view, but rather their timbre, i. e. their distinctive tonal characteristics will be explored. The article begins with a chapter focusing on the history of philosophy, which seeks to explain the relationship visual and auditory perception have with cognition. The following chapter addresses the challenges that arise when attempting to perceive architecture — a primarily visual art form — through auditory perception. In the three subsequent chapters, the article develops different motifs for considering sacred buildings from the perspective of sound. In doing so, the author first addresses the motif of configuring sacred spaces as worlds of sound and then proposes a renewal of the interconnection between music, cosmic harmony and

construction. Finally, from the biblical scriptures, he develops the idea of the sacred space as a resonance chamber for the Word of God and then identifies various implications of these considerations for our present time.

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

**Alfred Garcia Sobreira-Majer/Karsten Lehmann:** *Potenziale und Grenzen des interreligiösen Begegnungslernens im Kontext von Schule. Pädagogische Reflexionen am Beispiel eines interreligiösen Begegnungstages (IRBT) an einem Wiener Gymnasium*, in: Theo-Web – Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik 23 (2024), p. 273–291.

The article is based on the results of an empirical research project that dealt with a specific Interreligious Encounter Day (IED) at a Viennese school. Based on a participant observation design, a group of researchers from the KPH Vienna/Krems recorded and analyzed the preparation, implementation and reflection of this day. The analyses of the lesson observations revealed how much organizational and didactic preliminary decisions as well as structural framework conditions affect the course of the IED and the possible acquisition of skills by the students. Some aspects are, as it were, "adjusting screws" that can be "turned" in the sense of optimization, such as the choice of topic or consideration of the limited receptivity of students. Others - such as the confrontation between the religious majority and religious minorities or the opportunities and risks of expert learning - seem inherent to IED. They are realities that need to be considered when planning and implementing IED with students.

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

**Karsten Lehmann:** *Ethics Education in the Context of an Interreligious Encounter Day (IED). Empirical Research Results from Austria*, in: Religions 15 (2024), p. 389–404.

This article adds an empirical contribution to international discussions on interreligious education, taking the point of view of the academic study of religion. It presents results from a Viennese research project that used a participant observation design to analyze one of the more recent pedagogical formats to deal with religious plurality at school—the so-called Interreligious Encounter Day (IED). More precisely this article focuses on the role of Ethics Education (EE) within the context of a specific IED that was organized in 2019. Along those lines, it highlights the ambiguity of IED practices at a school by presenting a threefold argument: first, the article makes the point that the IED opened up a space to explicitly make religion a subject of discussion at school. Second, it argues that—within the context of the IED—religion is constructed in a specific way that can be described as 'school religion'. Third, it proposes that the observed IED format has the tendency to prioritize specific individual constructions of religion—especially those prompted by theology.

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

**Nikola Pantić:** *Probing Hidden Knowledge through Divine Inspiration: Charismatic Authority and Occult Sciences in 17th- and 18th-Century Ottoman Conservative Theology*, in: Aca'ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural 4 (2023/2024), p. 37-58.

This paper discusses the conservative theology of two 17th and 18th-century Ottoman Naqshbandi scholars with regards to Ottoman occult sciences, their permissibility, licit practitioners, and legal justifications. Situating these authors against the backdrop of a long theological tradition, interrupted by the re-emergence of Salafist thought, the article questions the plausibility of theses about Ottoman "disenchantment" during this period.

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

**Jan-Heiner Tück/Bernard Mallmann:** *Außerhalb der Taufe kein Heil? Der Fall*



*Mortara als Anstoß für eine Revision von c. 868 § 2 CIC 1983*, in: Theologische Quartalsschrift Tübingen, 204 (2024), 219–235.

For Jews in Rome, Pius IX remains „the kidnapping pope“ to this day. Edgardo Mortara, a Jewish boy, received the baptism in mortal danger. In order to Catholic education, he was taken into the care of the church in 1858 at the behest of the pope. To this day, canon law contains the canon, that children in danger of death may receive baptism against the will of their parents (c. 868 § 2 CIC 1983). This is in contradiction to the universal salvific will of God and the inclusivistic ecclesiology as reformulated at the Second Vatican Council. This canon is also contrary to the rights and the duties of parents to educate their children. In addition, a theology sensitive to Israel recognizes the certainty of salvation of Judaism, which is founded in circumcision, the „sacramentum veteris testamenti“. All of this speaks in favor of revising this canon.

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

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

## VDTR: Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion

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### A look back: VDTR activities during the summer term 2024

The VDTR had a full programme of events in the summer semester. On 6 May, the **VDTR Open Research Day** took place for the fifth time, where our members presented their research to an interdisciplinary audience (note: the next Open Research Day will take place on 28 October). In addition to this interdisciplinary dialogue, the VDTR was also able to offer a number of thematic events. A particular highlight was the public lecture given by our SAB member Prof. Kristina Stöckl (LUISS, Rome) in April.

Besides its regular teaching programme, the VDTR offered various **academic skills courses**. A very popular workshop on "Research Methods and Academic Writing" was again held by Dr Elias Haslwanter, to whom we would like to express our gratitude. In cooperation with the Doctoral School of Historical and Cultural Studies, the VDTR organised a Completion Workshop for the second time.

In June, we organized an exchange between doctoral students/post-docs and journalists from Ö1 and ORF. This event allowed researchers to present their topics, answer questions, and gain insights into media practices.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity **to bid farewell to Prof Dr. Gerhard Langer**, who has been a member of the VDTR's management team since 2021 and head of the School since October 2023. Due to his upcoming retirement, he will be stepping down as VDTR director at the end of June, but will remain associated with the School as a supervisor.

Prof Dr. **Christian Danz** from the Faculty of Protestant Theology and already part of the management team will take over the management of the School for the next two years. We are pleased to announce that the VDTR management team will be joined by Associate Prof DDr. **Esther Heinrich-Ramharter**. We would like to thank Gerhard Langer for his commitment to the VDTR and wish both Christian Danz and Esther Heinrich-Ramharter a good start!

- **Save the date: The next Open Research Day will take place on October 28, 2024. We are looking forward to seeing you there!**

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**New Publications by VDTR members**

Gabriele Palasciano (éd.)

## Christianisme, cancel culture et wokisme

Quel rapport au passé en société contemporaine ?



Avec une note introductive de Noam Chomsky



L'Harmattan

**Gabriele Palasciano:** *Christianisme, Cancel Culture et Wokisme. Quel rapport au passé en société contemporaine ?* Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan 2024.

What is Christianity's relationship with cancel culture and wokism? What is considered here, on a theoretical level, is the perception that "supporters" of cancel culture and wokism have of Christianity as a religion associated with the darkest and most tragic aspects of history: responsible for crimes against humanity; guilty of both individual and collective moral regression; promoter of intolerance and injustice - the latter linked in particular to colonialism. Such a perception would justify its erasure, mainly through the destruction of its artistic, socio-cultural and intellectual references. These radical criticisms of Christianity are analyzed in four main dimensions: ethical, historical, hermeneutical and theological. The aim is to offer a wide-ranging, thoughtful perspective on topical issues that concern the future of Christianity and the civilization to which it gave birth.

[Link to the publication.](#)

**Florian Mayrhofer:** *Gender constructions in Austrian RE textbooks – a comparative linguistic textbook analysis*, in: *British Journal of Religious Education*, 1–12, 2024.

The contribution gives insights into a comparative linguistic textbook analysis of two Austrian Catholic Religious Education (RE) textbooks for colleges for higher vocational schools ('BHS') and vocational schools for apprentices ('VocEd'). Gender constructions are still a desideratum in RE textbook research in Austria. Previous gender-oriented analyses mostly used qualitative content analysis or mainly questionnaires. This paper followed the approach of linguistic textbook analysis addressing gender constructions on a linguistic level by comparing both textbooks, asking which and how two selected chapters of Austrian RE textbooks in use construct gender on a linguistic level. A discussion of the main results, considering previous gender sensitive RE research, aimed to develop criteria for prospects of action with teaching materials in the current context of plurality of genders and sexualities in a democratic society.

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


## RESEARCH: Projects

### THIRD PARTY FUNDED PROJECTS



**Philosophy in the Arts: Arts in Philosophy. Cross-Cultural Research on the Significance of the Heart in Artistic Research and Performance Philosophy**

Principal Investigator: Arno Böhler

(FWF) Grant-DOI: 10.55776/AR822 

Start: March 1, 2024

End: August 30, 2027

Funding amount: €427.885

Funding program: Arts-based research

Arts-based-philosophy is an emerging research concept at the cutting edge of the arts, philosophy and the Sciences, in which cross-disciplinary research collectives align their research practices to finally stage their investigations in field-performances, shared with the public.

Our research aims to explore the significance of the heart (intuitive mind) for artistic research and performance philosophy from a cross-cultural perspective. The investigations are based on the concepts of the heart in the works of 2 artist-philosophers, who gave us a delicate taste of what art-based-philosophy could be, once the arts and philosophy cross their potentials: Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Aurobindo's poetic opus magnum Savitri.

What is new in the conception of the heart in Nietzsche and Aurobindo is their common claim, that a heart implies a virtual plane. Hearts are drawn toward a future to come which make them attractors of virtual possibilities, ready to matter. In its deepest depth, a heart cares for the event of possibilities, that so far have not yet mattered by creating a taste (bodily-felt-sense) that allows one to feel the possibility of a future, right before it does matters and collapse. Such concepts show striking similarities with contemporary concepts in philosophy-physics, e.g. the concepts of "virtual particles" and "quantum vacuum fluctuations" (Barad, Traxler).


Our artistic research methods will include the following research formats: art-labs, a notebook, mobile heart-labs (Volkstheater Wien/Red Bar, Shopping malls) and 12 field-performances, in which the voices of contemporary Physics, Cardiology, South-Asian-Studies, Nietzsche-Studies and the arts will finally be staged on two research festivals Philosophy On Stage#6-#7 in Vienna (BRUT Wien) and in India (ADHISHAKTI Laboratory For Theatre Art Research and SVARAM Music Research). The format field-performance has been developed by Böhler (PI) and Granzer over the last 25 years as an innovative method to stage philosophical questions in cross-disciplinary manner in touch with the public.

*More information about the project can be found [here](#).*



## **Job in Early Medieval Jewish Literature**

**Principal Investigator: Constanza Cordoni de Gmeinbauer**

**(FWF) Grant-DOI: 10.55776/PAT5867124** 

**Funding amount: €485.405**

The book of Job - one of the most puzzling books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, one of the few associated with canonical biblical wisdom, and the book in Scripture that reflects most deeply on the problem of innocent suffering - has a rich history of reception across faiths. While there is no Jewish running commentary on Job comparable to late

antique and early medieval Christian commentaries or to those composed by Jewish authors in the later Middle Ages, we know that late antique Jewish exegetes were interested in the time when Job lived, in his ethnicity, his piety and the reason(s) for his suffering. They interpreted verses of the book of Job not only when discussing the figure and the story of Job, but very often quoted Joban verses dissociating them from their scriptural context.

This project focuses on a chapter in the history of the reception of the book of Job that has never been systematically addressed, by examining the Jewish literature that emerged in Christian lands shortly after the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud. This early medieval Jewish literature will be analysed using DH tools to describe the ways in which Jewish intellectuals of the period contributed to the shaping of the figure of Job and interpreted Joban verses outside the context of the story of Job.

*More information about the project can be found [here](#).*



**“Coloring white habits. Case studies on (dis)regard for white normativity and racial diversity in parishes in Belgium and Austria” (I 6378-G), 2024–2028 (in cooperation with the KU Leuven)**

**Principal Investigator: Andrea Lehner-Hartmann**

**Project Staff: Johanna Kalian**

**Project no.: I 6832**

**Start: July 1, 2024**

**End: June 30, 2028**

**Funding amount: €266.690**

The research project was approved by the FWF as part of an international WEAVE project in January 2024 and will start on July 1, 2024 at the Department of Practical Theology in cooperation with the KU Leuven. The project will be led by Andrea Lehner-Hartmann (University of Vienna) together with Annemie Dillen (KU Leuven).

Attention to racial diversity is on the rise in Europe, spurred by various social movements. However, there's a question lingering: is this acceptance of diversity less prevalent within Roman Catholic congregations in Belgium and Austria? Despite being a global organization with diverse memberships, there's a perception that conservative religious groups might harbor racist attitudes. Both Austria and Belgium, despite their longstanding Catholic identities, have seen declines in religious affiliation, marking them as post-Catholic. How do parishes in this post-Catholic context either resist or contribute to issues of racism, whiteness, and diversity?

This project aims to engage parishioners and leaders from eight Roman Catholic parishes actively in research, employing interviews, observations and art-informed methods to challenge the unconscious normalization of whiteness and highlight diversity.


Understanding racial diversity involves not just ideas but also materiality. Researchers and collaborators will hold discussions on racial diversity, co-create art, and foster community dialogue.

More information about the project can be found [here](#).



## Depth Psychology and the Origins of Interpersonal Hatred

**Project team: Dr. Ivana Ryška Vajdová; Univ.-Prof. MMMMag. Dr. Lukas K. Pokorny, M.A.**

**(FWF) Grant-DOI: 10.55776/ESP1286024** 

**Start: September 1, 2025**

**End: August 31, 2028**

**Funding amount: €340.819**

**Funding program: FWF ESPRIT**

In today's society, we observe the never-ending competition, not only between states or political parties, but also between individuals and their ideas about the world and themselves. The inevitable clash of views that often contradict each other leads to a defensive-offensive reaction and even amounts to a "democracy fatigue," because it is the democratic system that allows ideas to circulate and collide freely.

The project aims to demonstrate that we can use philosophy, depth psychology, and religious studies to examine the level at which the clash of personal meanings occurs and why the psychological result of this clash is inter-personal hatred. Such philosophically and psychologically defined hatred is marked by a specific emotional charge, which corresponds to religious feelings in its urgency. For this reason, hatred in the project is conceived as something "deep" compared to other phenomena treated by behavioural and social sciences.

From a philosophical point of view, we can analyse the notion of "meaning" and the ideas behind it. From a psychological point of view, we can describe the emotional dynamics involved in the meaning making process. From a joint perspective of psychology and religious studies, we can clarify the seriousness with which individuals take the creation and defence of their meaningful universe and the mitigation of its possible threats.

The main outcome of the project will be the first complex study of interpersonal hatred from a combined perspective of philosophy, depth psychology, and religious studies. Such an interdisciplinary approach reflects the complexity of the issues and will provide a fresh perspective and possible new avenues for the therapy of interpersonal hatred.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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## Zeitdiagnostik religiöser Vielfalt in Wien und Österreich

**Scientific Workshop  
September 13-14, 2024**

On September 13 and 14, a workshop entitled "Time Diagnostics of Religious Diversity in Vienna and Austria" will take place in the deans office at the Faculty of Catholic Theology (main building, University of Vienna). The starting point of this workshop is the observation that Austria is characterized by a high degree of religious diversity. On the other hand, the tragic events in the aftermath of October 7, 2023 have once again shown how complex and sometimes conflict-laden or fragile this situation is and what diverse consequences it has for life in Austria – in public, at work and/or in the private sphere.

The interdisciplinary and international workshop responds to this situation and aims to provide input for professional debates on the topic of religious diversity. During the workshop, participants will work together to diagnose the current situation of religious diversity. The focus will be on the following questions: What characterizes religious diversity in Vienna and Austria? How can it be practically defined? What are the special features of the local situation in an international comparison? What does this mean for professional action?

**The workshop is organized and conducted by HS-Prof. Dr. Karsten Lehmann. The conference language is English. All RaT members are cordially invited. The workshop is financed by RaT, the City of Vienna and the KPH Wien/Krems.**

*For more information and a detailed program, click [here](#).*



### **Interkulturelle und Interreligiöse Begegnung. Grundlage für religionswissenschaftliche und berufliche Expertise?**

**International Conference  
September 26-27, 2024**

The Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna, in cooperation with the Research Centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society", invites you to the symposium "Intercultural and Interreligious Encounters - Basis for Religious Studies and Professional Expertise?" from 26-27 September 2024.

On these two days, the focus will be on the question of the extent to which it is possible to include personal experiences without falling into an uncritical "crypto-theology" that regards these experiences as normative or distorts the representations of religions.

The aim of the conference and anthology is to examine the effects of personal and professional experiences, encounters and stays abroad on the personal development and academic expertise in various professional fields of people who deal with other religions and cultures. The discrepancy between the significance of these personal experiences and the demand for neutrality and objectivity in religious studies research will be analysed. The aim is to find out how personal influences and experiences can be included in research without creating a distorted or normative representation of religions from a certain perspective.

For more details on the event, click [here](#).



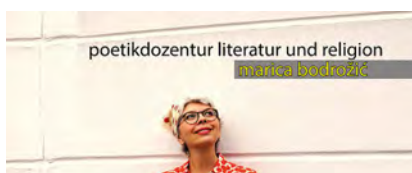
**Interkulturelle und Interreligiöse Begegnung. Grundlage für religionswissenschaftliche und berufliche Expertise. Abschiedsvorlesung von Prof. Dr. Wolfram Reiss**

**Friday, September 27, 5 p.m.  
Aula am Campus im Alten AKH, Hof 1.11,  
Spitalgasse 2-4, 1090 Vienna**

## PAST EVENTS

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**Poetics Lectureship summer term 2024: Das Wunder vollzieht sich in der Dunkelheit. Lazarus und die Autorität des Todes, by Marica Bodrožić**



A report by Jakob Deibl: On Tuesday, June 18, 2024, the writer **Marica Bodrožić** was a guest at the [Poetikdozentur, organized by the Research Centre Religion and Transformation and the Faculty of Catholic Theology](#). The title of her lecture was: „Das



Wunder vollzieht sich in der Dunkelheit. Über die Figur des Lazarus und die Autorität des Todes“ ("The miracle takes place in the darkness. On the figure of Lazarus and the authority of death"). The author, who comes from Yugoslavia, experienced her entry into poetic language and her literary socialization in Germany and writes in German, began her lecture with a reference to language and death. As a child, a relative spoke the paradoxical sentence as his last words before dying: "Life is an orange, you must never forget that" (according to Hegel: an infinite judgment). In a wonderful interpretation of the biblical story of the resurrection of Lazarus from the Gospel of John, the author then led to the point of the challenge that the linguistic legacy of the relative given in the face of death means:

"While everything passes, time inevitably moves and becomes past in the movement, there are also moments in the chronological that tilt inward, toward kairos and inner time, in which the solar forces of resurrection, a new vertical, begin to work and the orange that is life becomes a challenge – a challenge in seeing, a challenge in walking and standing. What challenges us is a call – to take up a new vertical position and to trust the orange, the image that is initially nothing more than an offer to learn to see anew."

But the orange is above all a challenge in and for writing, forcing us to find a language for the point on the border to the unspeakable that can transform us (with the authority of death).

The discussion was moderated by **Cornelius Hell**.

## RAT-BLOG

During the last months we published articles by our members and guest authors that cover a broad range of topics:

- [Edgar Allan Poes Helden: Kinder des Untergangs oder Relikte einer nie endenden kulturellen Epoche?](#), by **Vera M. Waschbüsch**
- [Kriminalliteratur mit religiöser Qualität. Zur ästhetischen und theologischen Hermeneutik in Agatha Christies Kriminalromanen](#), by **Vera M. Waschbüsch**
- [Holy Mother as a Feminist Symbol: The Virgen de Guadalupe in the Modern Women's Movement](#), by **Hannah Pale**

## 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@derstandard**

As part of our cooperation with the Austrian daily derstandard, a new article has



recently been published on their website:

- RaT member and deputy speaker **Christian Danz** has written a text, reflecting on how Kant's philosophy has impacted protestant theology with its development of a modern concept of religion: [Kant und die protestantische Theologie: Eine Transformation der Religion](#)

## Notable Media Appearances

In her contribution to the ORF report on the vandalism against the sculpture of the Virgin Mary giving birth in Linz Cathedral, **Katharina Limacher** talks about the symbolic and political dimensions of this action.

- [Arena eines Kulturkampfes](#)

**Astrid Mattes** contributed her expertise in the sociology of religion to a discussion on Falter radio on the topic of "Islamistische Messerattentate: Was tun?"

- [Islamistische Messerattentate: Was tun?](#)

In the course of June, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) presented some of the results of the research project "What does Austria believe?" led by **Regina Polak** and **Astrid Mattes** in various TV programs. A report on orf.at provides an overview of the developments revealed by the project.

- [„Was glaubt Österreich?“ – Erste Trends der großen Umfrage](#)

**Jan-Heiner Tück** wrote a critical commentary on the spiritual support for Putins war of aggression by the Russian Orthodox Church for the Austrian daily [diePresse](#):

- [Die russisch-orthodoxe Kirche auf Abwegen](#)

### Impressum

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