

#### RaT-Newsletter



#### Dear members and friends of RaT,

In this edition of our newsletter, we present to you the latest publications and research activities by our members. First of all, we want to cordially welcome two new researchers to RaT: Mădălina Diaconu and Daniel Kuran!

We also want to draw your attention to two newly approved FWF third party funded projects: Two Sarahs: Victimhood in the Bible and Its Reception by Katerina Koci and Yogic Icons in the Making by Lukas K. Pokorny. Our members have also continued their research work and published new articles and books which you can find below. One recently published article by Kurt Appel, The Eighth Day. Biblical Time as Openness of Chronological Time, is part of an anthology which includes contributions by two Nobel Laureates in Physics!

Please also check out the upcoming events in May and June, which include, as usual, many interesting talks and conferences and this time even an exhibition: Reframing Space: Film as History, organized by Milja Radovic in collaboration with the Viennese artist-in-residence Daniel Domig. Last but not least, we want to mention an article on Kants Philosophy of Religion, written on the occasion of his 300th birthday by Prof. Rudolf Langthaler, which was published on the website of the Austrian daily derstandard as part of our cooperation with the newspaper.

We wish you all a pleasant reading and a wonderful rest of the current summer term!

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! Want to subscribe? Just click here.

To download a pdf.-version of this newsletter, click here.

#### **NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!**



**Dr. Dr. Mădălina Diaconu, Privatdoz. MA**Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Philosophy and Education

Department of Romance Studies Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies

Department of Intercultural Philosophy of Religion Faculty of Catholic Theology

During the past years I have extensively researched on phenomenology and new directions in aesthetics, related to the inclusion of touch, smell and taste, urban sensescapes, environmental aesthetics, and the aesthetics of atmosphere. As a philosopher and theologian educated in Romania and Austria and committed to cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approaches, I am particularly interested in issues of social aesthetics (the transformation of urban space and everyday life in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe) and in ritual design (including new practices in the orthodox diaspora). At present I am working on the project of a "Christian cosmology" related to the presence of smells across various theological disciplines, and editing issues of journals on atmosphere from an intercultural perspective, on olfactory aesthetics and on ecophenomenology.

Joining the RaT-Centre represents a good opportunity to have a fruitful exchange with scholars from different disciplines researching on similar topics.

To learn more about Mădălina Diaconus' research, visit her profile on our website.



**Dr. Daniel Kuran, BA BA MA MA**Department of Systematic Theology and Ethics
Faculty of Catholic Theology

As a theologian and philosopher my research interests are the question of God, political theology, theology and philosophy of history as well as religion and aesthetics. My special research field is fundamental theology and in particular a critique of sovereignty based on the biblical concept of God that builds on the works of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben a.o. In my philosophical research I focus on the role of religion within the intersecting fields of classical thought in Kant and Hegel on the one hand, and the philosophies of language, hermeneutics and deconstruction of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries on the other hand. In the context of the research centre RaT I have also

worked in the field of religion and aesthetics and published on the relationship between religion, art and a secularity.

To learn more about Daniel Kurans' research, <u>visit his</u> <u>profile on our website.</u>

#### **CONGRATULATIONS**



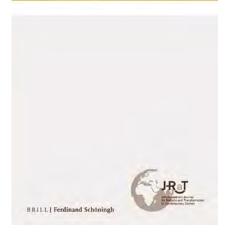
RaT Member Julian Strube appointed as Professor for "Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology"

<u>Julian Strube took up his new post at the University of</u> Göttingen, Germany on April 1st, 2024.

We would like to congratulate him on this new step in his career and look forward to working with him in the future!

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

Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society



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

- <u>Triggers of Exceptional Experiences on the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage</u>, by **Snežana Brumec**
- <u>Fuzzy Hybrid Approach to Shatter Religious</u>
   <u>Tolerance and Fundamentalism Stereotypes</u>
   <u>across Diverse Nations</u>, by <u>Alessandro Indelicato</u> and <u>Juan Carlos Martín</u>
- The Hebrew Bible and Philosophy of Religion, by Jaco Gericke
- Esoteric Dance Practices of the Early Twentieth Century: Case Study of George Gurdjieff's Movements, by Makhabbad Maltabarova

#### **PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies**



Hannes D. Galter, Rüdiger Lohlker, Siegfried Haas (eds.): Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. Grenzgänger zwischen Orient und Okzident. Graz: Leykam 2024.

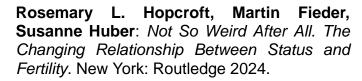
This book approaches the person of Hammer-Purgstall from different perspectives. Historians, scholars of Oriental studies and writers explain the facets of his work and constantly build a bridge to the



present.

Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall was a writer, translator and diplomat, historian, collector and traveler to the Orient. He met Napoleon and Sultan Selim III at a time of great change. He lived in Constantinople and Cairo, acquired Arabic and Persian manuscripts and provided the Austrian museums with ancient Egyptian and Babylonian antiquities. He corresponded with Champollion, translated Hafiz and 1001 Nights and inspired Goethe to write the "West-Eastern Divan". At Hainfeld Castle near Feldbach, which he had owned since 1835, he devoted himself to regional history.

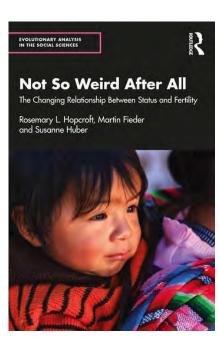
#### Link to the publication.

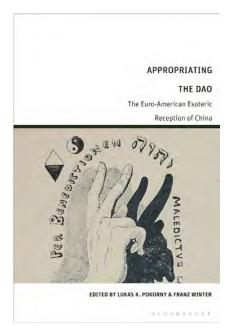


This is the first book to fully examine, from an evolutionary point of view, the association of social status and fertility in human societies before, during, and after the demographic transition. In most nonhuman social species, social status or relative rank in a social group is positively associated with the number of offspring, with high-status individuals typically having more offspring than low-status individuals. However, humans appear to be different. As societies have gotten richer, fertility has dipped to unprecedented lows, with some developed societies now at or below replacement fertility. Within rich societies, women in higher-income families often have fewer children than women in lower-income families.

Evolutionary theory suggests that the relationship between social status and fertility is likely to be somewhat different for men and women, so it is important to examine this relationship for men and women separately. When this is done, the positive association between individual social status and fertility is often clear in less-developed, pretransitional societies, particularly for men. Once the demographic transition begins, it is elite families, particularly the women of elite families, who lead the way in fertility decline. Post-transition, the evidence from a variety of developed societies in Europe, North America and East Asia is that high-status men (particularly men with high personal income) do have more children on average than lower-status men. The reverse is often true of women, although there is evidence that this is changing in Nordic countries. implications of these observations evolutionary theory are also discussed. This book will be of interest to students and researchers in the social sciences with an interest in evolutionary sociology, evolutionary anthropology, evolutionary psychology, demography, and fertility.

Link to the publication.

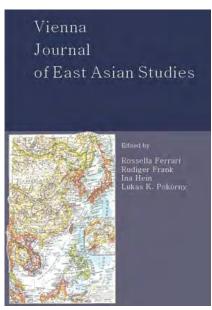




Lukas K. Pokorny, Franz Winter (eds.): Appropriating the Dao. The Euro-American Esoteric Reception of China. London: Bloomsbury 2024.

Positioned between eighteenth-century's mesmerism and intersections with the modern martial arts current, the contributions specifically centre on nineteenth and early twentieth-century occult appraisals and representations. This book opens up an underexplored area of research in the field of East–West interactions and the global history of religions.

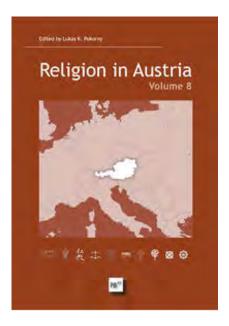
Link to the publication.



**Lukas K. Pokorny (Editor-in-Chief)**: Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies, Volume 15 (2023): Issue 1 (Apr 2024): *Special Issue "Digitalisation in East Asia: from Discourse to Praxis"*.

Since 2023, the journal maintains a strategic collaboration with the Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society at the University of Vienna. As a result of this close partnership, *VEAS* has strengthened its focus on articles related to the study of religions in the East Asian context. Volume 15 focuses on religions in Vietnam.

Link to the publication (full access).



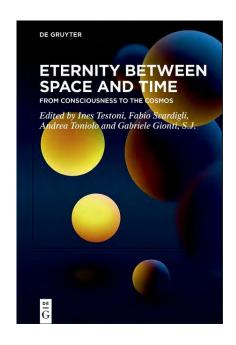
**Lukas K. Pokorny (ed.):** Religion in Austria 8. Wien: Praesens 2023.

This new volume in the series brings together brilliantly written articles covering a wide range of topics and research methods with editions of primary sources. This is complemented by highly appreciated indices of recent research on religion in Austria and an extensive review section. A must-read for all scholars in the field of Austrian Studies and a significant contribution to the wider field of Religious Studies.

Hans Gerald Hödl, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Vienna

Link to the publication.

#### **PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles**



Kurt Appel: The Eighth Day. Biblical Time as Openness of Chronological Time, in: Ines Testoni, Fabio Scardigli, Andrea Tolino, Gabriele Gionti (eds.): Eternity Between Space and Time. From Consciousness to the Cosmos. DeGruyter: Berlin/Boston 2024, 163-172. DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111313610-014">https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111313610-014</a>

This volume includes contributions by Nobel Laureates in Physics <u>Prof. Roger Penrose</u> and <u>Prof. Gerard 't Hooft</u>.

This paper examines how the biblical conception of time differs from, and poses a challenge to, our currently predominant chronological understanding of time. A chronologically conceived time essentially implies a physicalist understanding of the world, tracing the universe back to elementary particles and the physical forces acting upon them. Crucial here is the notion of an unbroken causal sequence of connections between entities. Leibniz and Hegel, whilst never invalidating the noetic validity of natural sciences for humankind, both criticised this view as unbalanced. They claimed that space and time cannot be understood independently of the subject. Our world is not a mechanism, but has subject-like dimensions. Similar thoughts are also expressed in the Bible. The key figure is the eschatological "eighth day", which inscribes a fundamental non-objectifiable openness into time which renders void the gapless linear causality of space-time. The eighth day, which manifests the eschatological meaning of the Sabbath, provides the basis of freedom and alterity. Importantly, it reveals itself in the time of the feast, thus transcending any functional determination of Being.

#### Link to the publication.



**Kurt Appel:** Recognition, Irony, and Faith, in: Peter Jonkers, Pavol Bargár (eds.): The Faith and Beliefs of "Nonbelievers". Council for Research in Values and Philosophy: Series VIII. Christian Philosophical Studies; Vol. 24, 151-161.

This volume includes contributions by Charles Taylor and José Casanova.

Link to the publication (full access).

**Limacher:** Adapting my religion: How young believers negotiate religious belonging, in: Social Compass, online first publication.

Scholarship on religious belonging has overwhelmingly labelled believers' religion in very broad and superficial terms, presuming that individual practices and beliefs are congruent with religious doctrines and official discourses. By splitting up religious socialisation into two crucial phases, the adoption and the adaption of religion, this article offers a more procedural understanding to investigating how young believers develop their own sense of religious belonging. Based on biographical narrative interviews with Viennese believers (aged 16–25) from 7 religious groups, we observe that the adoption of a certain religion is primarily bound to family ties. The adaption phase serves to develop personal approaches towards religion based on two major rationales: adapting one's own religiosity by engaging with religious doctrine and community itself, and negotiating religion within society. We argue that adaption is closely tied to social relations within and across religions and to (secular) society at large.

Link to the publication (full access).

**Eva Synek:** "Man braucht Zeit, bis eine gewisse Sache reif wird". Die Orthodoxe Kirche in Nordmazedonien, in: Österreichisches Archiv für Recht und Religion 70 (2023, de facto 2024), 58-93.

How does an Orthodox church become autocephalous? This eminently important question of ecclesiastical constitutional law was the subject of an essay published in the 67th volume of this journal (FN 2) on the occasion of the still controversial Constantinople Autocephalietomos for the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (OKU). While the churches claiming autocephaly in the two Balkan republics of North Macedonia (FN 3) and Montenegro were both classified as uncanonical (schismatic) from a pan-Orthodox perspective at that time, today this only applies to the state-protected Montenegrin jurisdiction (FN 4), which only represents a minority among the local church population, in which the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) still has a great deal of support. (FN 5) In contrast the schismatic state of the church in North Macedonia can be considered to have been finally overcome, despite a number of questions that remain unanswered, not least concerning the name of the local church in question - hereinafter referred to as "MOK" for short - (FN 6), after the Ecumenical Patriarchate and then also the SOK and the Church of Bulgaria (BOK) (FN 7) formally (re)established canonical communion with the said church in 2022.

Link to the publication.

**Discover more publications by our members** 

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



VDTR Public Lecture with Denis Kulandaisamy (Rome):

The Art of "Storytelling": The role of Narrative Criticism in Biblical Hermeneutics. A case study of John 2:1-12.

June 18, 2024, 6 p.m. Lecture hall 1, fifth floor, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Vienna

A narrative is "any work of literature that tells a story." We use narratives in conversations to communicate

aspects of life that can't be conveyed otherwise. The Gospels are "stories" read in various ways, with narrative criticism being crucial for revealing the linguistic techniques of the Gospel writers. This lecture will explore narrative criticism, covering features like "narrative events," "characters," "settings," "point of view," "narration," "irony," and "symbolism." It will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this method, using John 2:1-12 (Wedding at Cana) as a case study.

More information can be found here: <a href="https://vdtr.univie.ac.at">https://vdtr.univie.ac.at</a>

#### **RESEARCH: Projects**

#### THIRD PARTY FUNDED PROJECTS



Two Sarahs: Victimhood in the Bible and Its Reception. FWF Lise Richter Project by Katerina Koci (in Cooperation with RaT)

Project no.: V 1047 Start: May 1, 2024 End: April 30, 2028

Funding amount: €444,906

This project presents a nuanced exploration of gender dynamics within the context of biblical sacrifice, grounded in feminist and gender philosophical-theological inquiry. Drawing from the rich tapestry of biblical exegesis and literary analysis, this study delves into the archetypal narrative of sacrifice, guided by the insights of Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical philosophy.

Through a comparative lens, this inquiry juxtaposes biblical narratives with select works by Margaret Atwood, including "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Testaments". Central to this examination is the concept of "double victimhood," which illuminates the complexities of long-term oppression and its manifestations.

By examining the portrayal of biblical matriarch Sarah and her contemporary counterparts in Atwood's literature, such as Aunt Lydia and Handmaid Jeanine, this study highlights the intersecting themes of oppression and self-sacrifice.

While the study acknowledges the issue of gendered violence, its primary objective is to uncover the underlying origins of violence, situating it within broader power dynamics. Through this academic inquiry, we aim to deepen our understanding of gender, power, and sacrifice in both biblical and literary contexts.

For more information about the project, click here.



## Yogic Icons in the Making. FWF Principal Investigator Project by Lukas K. Pokorny

Project no.: PAT 9461023 Funding amount: €413,133

Yoga is very popular and practised all over the world encompassing many different meanings and currents. Recent studies have shown how its development has taken place since the 1930s, and especially since the 1960s, in a dynamic interaction between India, and more generally Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The process began as early as the end of the 19th century, at the crossroads of esoteric, scholarly, literary, and artistic circles. While a few works have focused on the conception of yoga in English-speaking theosophical circles, the role of French occultist circles in the cultural history of global yoga remains insufficiently studied.

Thought of first and foremost as a practice, yoga has also been scarcely studied from the angle of the figures who embody it, the yogis and yoginis, who have played a key role in shaping the imagery surrounding India and Tibet. The transfer of yoga imagery from India to Tibet in the global context deserves particular attention. The works of the Belgian-French Buddhist traveller and writer Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969) shed light on this lesser-known history of yoga.

David-Neel's work on yoga goes back to her very first writings in the late 19th century, within the theosophical and scholarly circles of the time, and continues right up to her very last writings at the end of her life in the 1960s. Above all, her books on Tibet, starting in the late 1920s, helped popularise Tibetan yogis and yoginis. This literary output allows for an examination of nearly a century of yoga development in France within the global context, and is key to understanding the emergence and creation of "yogic icons."

For more information about the project, click here.

#### **RESEARCH: Other Projects**



"A new way of doing Theology": Christianity, Secularization and Modernity in the Thought of Ivan Illich. Postdoctoral Research Project by Anna Sjöberg

The aim of this 3 year postdoc project is to study the Austrian 20th century philosopher, social critic and Catholic priest Ivan Illich's thinking pertaining to theological questions, specifically with regard to his idea of modernity as a secularized form of Christianity. It will examine the possible relations between Illich's early writings on the Church, his

critique of the institutions of modern society and his late interviews in which he developed his ideas on modernity as an extension of church history. The project furthermore aims to evaluate Illich's thinking on theology and modernity by investigating its relation to other prominent literature in the field of political philosophy and theology. The project will be the first in-depth scientific study attempting to summarize and evaluate Ivan Illich's understanding of theology, secularization and modernity, and contribute to the interdisciplinary research on Christian theology, secularization and modernity.

For more information about the project, click here.

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Workshop: Komparative Theologie aus islamisch-theologischer Perspektive *May 22, 2024, 09 a.m. - 01:30 p.m.* 

Faculty of Catholic Theology, Deans Office, Universitätsring 1 (stairway 8, 2nd floor), 1010 Vienna

In cooperation with the Paderborner Institut für Islamische Theologie

With contributions by:

- Muna Tatari: Systematisch-theologischer Zugang zur KT
- Naciye Kamcili-Yildiz: Religionspädagogischer Zugang aus der Perspektive der islamischen Religionspädagogik
- Idris Nassery: Zugang zur KT aus der Perspektive der islamischen Jurisprudenz

All those interested are welcome! However, if you want to attend, please register by e-mail: marian.weingartshofer@univie.ac.at.

The detailed program can be found here.



# Maimonides Lectures: Ärzt:innen am Bett religiöser Patient:innen

May 22-23, 2024

Karl Landsteiner Privatuniversität für Gesundheitswissenschaften, Festsaal, Dr.-Karl-Dorrek-Straße 30, 3500 Krems an der Donau

The motto of the 18th Maimonides Lectures is Medical Humanities: Doctors at the Bedside of Religious Patients. Experts from various disciplines - medicine, theology, psychodynamics - will address the question of listening and understanding subjective ideas about illness, life and the end of life, among other things. The ability to listen, to hear with the "third ear" makes it possible to understand the person being treated and is what makes it possible to understand patients in today's multi-confessional world.

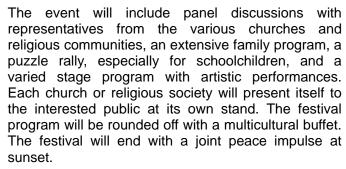
The full programme and registartion can be found here.

u.a. mit: Alevitische Glaubensgemeinschaft, Altkatholische Kirche, Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft, Evangelische Kirchen A.B., H.B., methodistisch, Freikirchen in Osterreich,

Fest religiöser Minderheiten und Kulturen May 26, 2024, 2:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Main Building, University of Vienna





The full programme can be found here.



# The Narrativization of the Babylonian Talmud. What can Distant Reading Teach Us? Lecture by Dr. Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

May 28,2024, 04:30 p.m.

Lecture Hall 1, Department of Jewish Studies, Campus of the University of Vienna, Spitalgasse 2-4, court 7.3

The stories woven into the Babylonian Talmud have for many years aroused much interest among scholars. Yet the number of Talmudic stories that have actually received detailed literary analysis is quite small compared to the estimated few thousand stories transmitted in the Babylonian Talmud. What happens when we try to explore the stories of the Babylonian Talmud as a whole? In this talk, I will try to demonstrate how the adopting of a point of view which Franco Moretti called 'distant reading' can shed light on the understanding of these stories as a system.

Those interested in the event, are asked to register until May 27 at judaistik @univie.ac.at



## Exhibition: Reframing Space: Film as History

June 1st -June 25, 2024 2nd floor, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Vienna

The exhibition *Reframing Space: Film as History* is based on the same FWF Project led by Dr Milja Radovic. This exhibition, inspired by William Faulkner thought 'The past is never dead, It's not even past', brings worldview and experiences of the people from the past to the foreground. Constructed in collaboration with **the Viennese artist-in-residence Daniel Domig** we will display the still images from the early films, re-framed in the artistic collage by Mr. Domig. Its aim is to inform us, and make us re-think our concepts of past, memory, history and the embodied histories. The Exhibition will show for the first time the unseen images from the films and archives from

1896 to 1939 of the Yugoslav space, bringing then to the light of day.

The Exhibition will be installed on the second floor at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna – the RaT Research Centre in Schenkenstrasse 8-10, and will run from the beginning of June to 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.

### Conference: Muslim Futures – Muslimische Zukünfte

June 8, 2024, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Room E603 Sigmund Freud Private University, Freudplatz 3, 1020 Vienna

Who has the privilege to dream - and who does not? What circumstances need to be created to think about Muslim futures? At a time when racist discourses and policies are affecting Muslim imaginations, how does this affect visions for Muslim futures? How do Muslims shape their identities and their presence in a world that - among many other challenges - is increasingly characterized by anti-Muslim racism? Can Muslim Futurism be used as an approach to support the development of future strategies by and for Muslims and demonstrate the important role that art and culture can play in this? In this context, collective imagination processes would be understood as a project of decolonization.

We invite you to a conference that deals with Muslim futures as a concept that deals with the development of Muslim communities, culture, sustainability and art. In addition to providing space for interdisciplinary academic reflection and exchange, the conference will also offer the opportunity to get to know and discuss specific initiatives and projects.

The full programme and information on how to register (conference fee: 79€) can be found <u>here</u>.

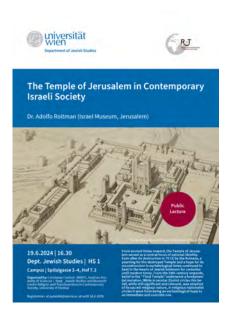
# The Temple of Jerusalem in Contemporary Israeli Society. Lecture by Dr. Adolfo Roitman (Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

June 19, 2024, 04:30 p.m. Lecture Hall 1. Department of Jewi

Lecture Hall 1, Department of Jewish Studies, Campus of the University of Vienna, Spitalgasse 2-4, court 7.3

From ancient times onward, the Temple of Jerusalem served as a central focus of national identity. Even a er its destruction in 70 CE by the Romans, a yearning for the destroyed Temple and a hope for its reconstruction in eschatological times continued to beat in the hearts of Jewish believers for centuries until modern times. From the 19th century onwards, belief in the "Third Temple" underwent a fundamental mutation. While in secular Zionist circles this belief, while still significant and relevant, was emptied of its sacred-religious nature, in religious-nationalist circles it went from being an eschatological hope to an immediate and concrete one.





Those interested in the event, are asked to register until June 18 at judaistik@univie.ac.at.

#### **RAT-BLOG**

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

- Immanuel Kant und die protestantische Theologie. Eine Erinnerung anlässlich seines 300. Geburtstags, by Christian Danz
  - Immanuel Kant has shaped a modern understanding of God more than almost any other thinker. On the occasion of the 300th birthday of the Königsberg philosopher, Christian Danz recalls the fundamental importance of Kant's work for Protestant theology in his article.
  - Click here to read the full article.
- Das Leben Jesu, kritikkritisch bearbeitet von Friedell. Teil 1, by Andreas Burri
  - Egon Friedell (1878-1938) is one of the best-known cultural historians of the early 20th century. In the first part of his article, Andreas Burri introduces his examination of Protestant research into the life of Jesus.
  - Click here to read the full article.
- Das Leben Jesu, kritikkritisch bearbeitet von Friedell. Teil 2, by Andreas Burri
  - In the second part of his article, Andreas Burri explores with Egon Friedell the constantly topical question of what it actually means to pursue cultural history.
  - Click here to read the full article.

#### 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:

 On the occasion of Immanuel Kant's 300th birthday on April 22, Rudolf Langthaler has written a text about Kants Philosophy of Religion: <u>Kant über "Religion und Aufklärung"</u>

#### **Notable Media Appearences**

**Hüseyin Çiçek** has given an interview on the topic of religious life in Germany, with a particular focus on the neutrality of politics in religious matters, by the international portal of the German Federal Foreign Office, deutschland.de

Link to the interview (full access).

#### **Impressum**

Research Centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society" | Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Wien | religionandtransformation.at | Unsubscribe here

<u>Datenschutz</u>