



## RaT-Newsletter



Dear members and friends of RaT,

Before the days are getting longer again after Winter solstice, we can find comfort in lit candles and warming fireplaces to escape the darkness outside. The festive days can be a time of contemplation, where we - at least partially - renounce the stress of the outside world and devote some time to our inner landscape.

Prior to approaching the end of the year, we would like to report in this newsletter on new publications, current research projects and upcoming events of RaT members.

Further down, you will find our latest JRAT article which has recently been published in advance on the website of Brill, as well as the newly published volume of the RaT print series, "Doing Climate Justice". Furthermore, we are happy to report on our presentation at the Reception of the Vienna University Press at the American Academy of Religion, where we could give an insight into all the publishing activities of RaT, and where the newly established VDTR (Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion) was introduced as well. We would also like to take this opportunity to

introduce to you three visiting scholars who are currently staying with us. Moreover, we would like to invite you to read our most recent [blog entries](#) where we discuss societal issues and present topics that currently influence the work of our members: Read about climate change denial which is discussed by Peter Prinesdom using the example of the film "Don't look up". Last but not least, we would like to congratulate Isabella Bruckner, a former employee at our research centre, for her new position as professor (chair for "Pensiero e forme dello spirituale") at Sant'Anselmo in Rome.

We wish you a pleasant reading and a wonderful festive season!

Lisa Achathaler, Kurt Appel, Hannah Bleckenwegner, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Daniel Kuran, Astrid Mattes, Marian Schäffner, Marian Weingartshofer.

Please consider forwarding our newsletter to those interested in the topics we work on!

## JRAT

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### **Latest Contribution published online "in advance":**

**"It Is (Not) All Theosophy: 'Hybridity' and 'Hybridization' in Robert T. Browne's *The Mystery of Space*", by Yves Mühlematter**

The theoretical framework presented in this article makes it possible to understand religions as constantly changing networks of actors and infrastructures that incorporate, modify, discard, and reformulate numerous "elements" in terms of specific conceptualizations often rooted in concrete contexts of application, and "structures," i.e., larger conceptual contexts such as evolution, cosmogonies, or anthropological views of humanity, in a necessary ongoing creative process.

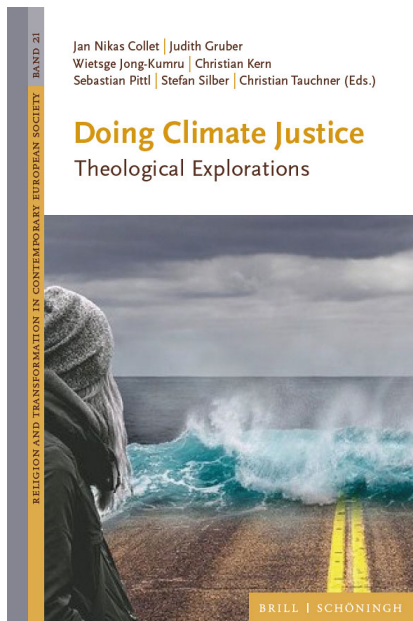
Such a process, and the usefulness of the tool, will be illustrated in this article through discussion of the work of Robert T. Browne, particularly his book *The Mystery of Space*. To date, research has assumed that Browne derives all of his theory from Theosophy. By applying the above theoretical framework and situating Browne's work within a broader network of discourses, the article challenges this conclusion and is able to paint a more complete picture. This illustrates the usefulness of the analytical tool presented.

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

This contribution will later be integrated in the JRAT issue "From Syncretism to Hybridity", edited by Bettina Schmidt and Gerald Hödl.

## RAT PRINT SERIES

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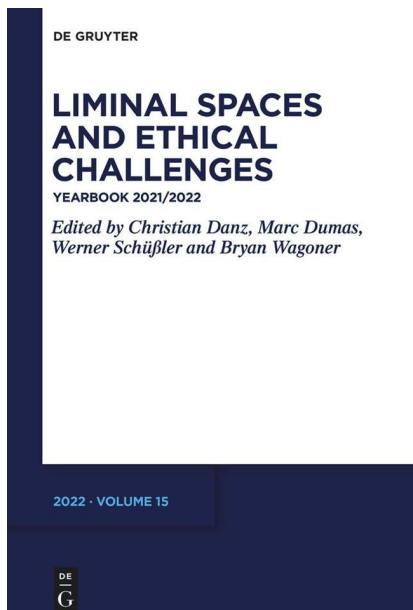
**Volume 21: "Doing Climate Justice",  
edited by Sebastian Pittl / Jan Niklas Collet  
/ Judith Gruber / Wietske de Jong-Kumru /  
Christian Kern / Stefan Silber / Christian  
Tauchner**

The struggle against the climate crisis and for a livable future on earth raises profound questions of justice that call for theological engagement. Anchored in concrete situations of climate vulnerability and responsibility, this volume investigates the theological epistemologies, practices and imaginaries that have profoundly shaped climate politics in the past and explores possible theological reformulations that can open up sustainable and just futures. With these critical and constructive theological reflections inspired by Liberation Theology, it seeks to contribute to practices of climate justice by inspiring the development of socially and economically just ways of living in global, interspecial community.

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

## PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies

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**Danz, Christian / Dumas, Marc / Schüßler,  
Werner / Wagoner, Bryan. *Liminal Spaces  
and Ethical Challenges: Yearbook  
2021/2022*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2022.**

This collection moves from COVID to *Kairos*, engaged with the legacy of Paul Tillich. Liminal spaces reflect ambiguous transitional moments in human consciousness and culture. In early 2020, cultures and states turned inward for protection, exacerbating intertwined health, political, racial justice, and economic crises. Tillich would have understood these overlapping challenges to be heralding a kairotic moment, reflecting simultaneous crises and opportunities. The collected essays reflect on the intersections of COVID and *Kairos*. Authors engage numerous ethical challenges precipitated by the current Kairos moment, thinking through and with Tillich. Other essays offer reflections on our cultural moment, engaging topics from public health to video games to hate speech. Reflecting on the cultural moment, this collection offers unique insight into the Tillichian legacy for the present and future.

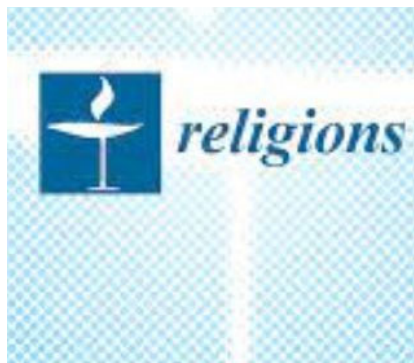
[Link to the contribution.](#)

## PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

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**Danz, Christian: *God and Evil: Systematic-  
Theological Reflections on the Doctrine of***



## God, in: *Religions* 13 (11/2022).

Against the background of the current debates about God and evil, the article elaborates in three stages of argumentation the thesis that statements about God must not be understood as factual or representational statements, but as descriptive elements of the reflexive structure of the Christian religious communication. On this basis, a new perspective on God's relationship to evil in the world emerges, which, in contrast to the so-called theodicy debates, includes the self-view of the religious practitioners.

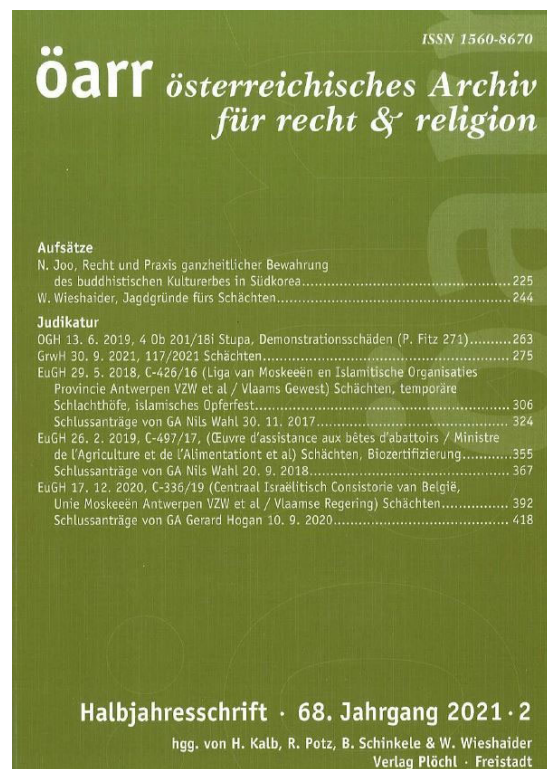
[Link to the publication \(full access\).](#)



**Holzleithner, Elisabeth:** *Islamische Bedeckung in rechtlicher Perspektive.* In: Biele Mefebue, A. / Bührmann, A. / Grenz, S. (eds.): *Handbuch Intersektionalitätsforschung.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2022.

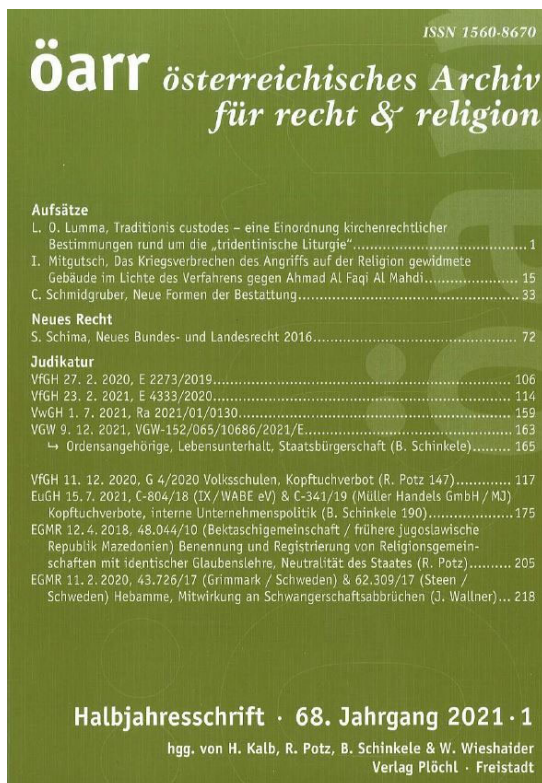
A major strand of intersectionality theory and method stems from the critique of the failure of US anti-discrimination law to address the synergistic interaction of multiple grounds of discrimination. Based on this, it is shown how discrimination based on religiously motivated headscarf wearing by Muslim women is treated reductionistically in the law by focusing exclusively on religion, while gender and ethnicity are left out. An appropriate analysis is attempted along the lines of the proposal to interpret categories normatively and to take them seriously in their intersectional enrichment.

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



[Link to the publication](#)





Edited, a.o., by RaT member Richard Potz  
[Link to the publication](#)

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

## RESEARCH

### PROJECTS

**Andreas Kowatsch:**  
**Platform rechtundreligion.at**

Since June 2021, the staff of the Institute for Canon Law and Religious Law at the University of Vienna have been running the online platform [rechtundreligion.at](https://rechtundreligion.at), which regularly presents current topics in religious law and canon law to a broad public beyond the university context.

The current issue (11/2022) is dedicated to the topic "Islam and Alevism in Austria". The focus is on a series of interviews with authoritative representatives of Islam and Alevism in Austria. Here the interview partners were given the opportunity to present their own faith community from their own perspective. The respective statements therefore do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Institute for Canon Law and Religious Law. In the interviews, the question of the representation of a part of the Muslim or Alevis population was raised in each case against the background of the "exclusivity right" under religious law, and questions of constitution and legal recognition were discussed. An introductory article by Univ.-Prof. Andreas Kowatsch accompanies this series and offers an overview of the interview series in terms of religious law and deals with the current status quo according to the applicable legal situation in Austria.

## (ONLINE) EVENTS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Guest Lecture by Prof. Dr. Myriam Wijlens, University of Erfurt 12 December 2022, 4:45 pm to 6:15 pm**

**Venue:** University of Vienna, main building, lecture hall 6

The Institute for Canon Law and Religious Law cordially invites you to the guest lecture with Prof. Mirjam Wijlens (University of Erfurt).

The current "mega topic" of synodality has many different aspects. However, there is hardly any other area where theological knowledge is so dependent on reliable structures. Prof. Wijlens, as canonical advisor (consultor) of the Synod of Bishops, is very close to the current synodal process of the universal Church and to the Pope. We therefore hope for a profound insight into this process and for as wide a discussion as possible. We would therefore be very pleased about your participation!

### **Guest Lecture by Paolo Costa: "The Postsecular City" 13 December 2022, 6:30 to 8 pm**

**Venue:** SE room 5 (1st floor, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Vienna) as well as via Zoom: [click here to access the meeting](#) (Meeting ID: 892 1249 5738, ID code: 5Y342Z)

"The Post-Secular City" is the first attempt to systematically map and assess the recent debate about secularization. It examines the alleged shift from a "secular" to a "post-secular" dispensation from the perspective of the ongoing de-construction of the secularization "theorem" (as Hans Blumenberg called it). Accordingly, the new secularization debate is described as being polarized between the "de-constructors" and the "maintainers" of the standard thesis of secularization. This is the assumption underlying an ambitious effort to map the field, which consists of a long introduction where "secularization" is analyzed as a deeply problematic concept-of-process and of eight chapters in which several protagonists of the recent debate are discussed as crucial junctions of a multidisciplinary conversation.

### **Workshops with Martin Crowley: "Opacity" and "Recognition and its Discontents"**

**9-11 January 2023**

**Venue:** University of Vienna,

From 9-11 January 2023, we welcome Martin Crowley, Head of the Department for French Studies at the University of Cambridge, as a guest in Vienna. Together with him, we will hold workshops on the topics of "Opacity" and "Recognition and its Discontents". The topics will be addressed in a dialogue of postcolonial, deconstructive and classical philosophical discourses with references to Eduard Glissant, Glen Sean Coulthard, Herman Gray, Catherine Malabou and Hegel.

### **YouBeOn Map Release**

**26 January 2023, 6 pm**

**Venue:** Brick-15, Herklotzgasse 21, 1150 Vienna

Release-party of the digital YouBeOn Map, developed by the research project Young Believers Online – mapping on- and offline identifications of urban religious youth (Astrid Mattes, Christoph Novak, Miriam Haselbacher, Katharina Limacher). During the evening, the digital map, representing religious lifeworlds on- and offline, will be officially presented. Additionally, the researchers will give a brief overview on selected findings from the project. Afterwards, there will be a chance to socialise during live music, snacks and drinks.

For more information click [here](#).

Please register at [yubeon@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:yubeon@oeaw.ac.at).

### **RaT Workshop "Religious Exits: Transformative Trajectories and Transitions into Alternative Worlds"**

**31 January 2023**

The members of the RaT research centre organise an internal workshop entitled "Religious Exits: Transformative Trajectories and Transitions into Alternative Worlds" on 31 January 2023. The topic is currently the research focus of the centre.

Our point of departure is the consideration that religions claim to transcend immanent world orders, i.e. experiences that can be classified in the individually and collectively determinable spatiotemporal categories of the everyday world. By means of leaving immanent orders, however, not only everyday experiences are transcended, but also exits from world orders are found that include the religious subject in existing symbolic and social world orders. In this way, religion can contain an exit strategy in which the subject creates alternative places (of refuge), thereby overcoming firmly established limitations and opening up new worlds of imagination. Of course, religious practices are themselves ambivalent in this respect: on the one hand, they can prevent possible creative exits from established orders, but on the other hand, they can also radically open them up, insofar as the world of transcendence neither contains a definitively fixed territory nor an immovable order of time.

## **Interdisciplinary Symposium "Spaces of Memory"** **16-17 March 2023**

**Venue:** Dekanatssitzungssaal, Universitätsring 1, Stiege 8, 2nd floor, 1010 Vienna

The speakers at the symposium will include professors and researchers of various disciplines both from Vienna and internationally, as well as the world filmmakers, most significantly Amos Gitai. We will begin by reflecting on the meanings of memory and space, in political, theological, political, historical and cinematic contexts. The presentations will be followed by the Q&A and the panel discussion. The second day of the symposium, "In conversation with...", will host primarily the prominent filmmakers, including Andrei A. Tarkovskij, and the experts from the field of film, media and religion, who will continue to explore the relationship between filmic space, memory, time and the "cinema prayer". The second day will be an opportunity for a lively discussion with the filmmakers.

## **PAST EVENTS**

### **Celebration in honor of Univ.-Prof. emeritus Sieglinde Rosenberger** **13 October 2022**

Sieglinde Rosenberger co-founded the research centre RaT in 2010. This fall, the University of Vienna hosted an evening in honor of her recent retirement. Sieglinde Rosenbergers achievements as a scholar and university teacher were acclaimed in both witty and wistful speeches by colleagues and companions, among them Kurt Appel, who had been her counterpart in interdisciplinary research on religion over the past 12 years. The panel discussion "Austrian Politics in a 'Postmigrant' Society: Past Developments and Future Perspectives" that brought together scholars and practitioners from the field of immigrant integration, put the spotlight to another focus of Sieglinde Rosenbergers broad research interests. The recent emeritus professor also gave a speech herself, sharing both professional and personal thoughts about a work life in dedication to academia and the challenges and opportunities of what is yet to come. The evening was rounded off by gifts and anecdotes from former students and members of the research group "IN:EX Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion".

### **Martin Mosebach: What is a Catholic Novel?** **Poetics Lectureship "Literature and Religion"** **8 November 2022**

Narration within the framework of a novel is something profoundly Catholic, as it seems to follow a larger order, to fit into a structuring framework that is presupposed, even believed - otherwise literature would not "function". Therefore, according to Martin Mosebach at his Vienna Poetry Lecture in November of this year, narrative literature in the classical sense can even be called "Catholic", even if it is not Catholic "material" that it processes. The occurrence of Catholic motifs or religious elements in literature is also of only limited interest to the Büchner Prize winner Mosebach and actually plays no role in his own work.

In his poetics lecture entitled "What is the Catholic Novel?", in which he spanned a large arc of literary history, Mosebach rather made a writer's confession of literary secularity: the man Martin Mosebach is indeed as "naturally" Catholic as the tree is green, but as an author he feels downright repelled by religious feelings and views processed in literature. Conclusion: Mosebach's lecture was exceptionally knowledgeable, rhetorically brilliant, entertaining and, last but not least, rich in clever theses and references. That's why a sympathetic auditorium could easily forgive him for the (only in a small subordinate clause dropped) point against the liberalisation of Catholicism after Vatican II. (Original text in German by Tobias Mayer)

[Link to the video.](#)

## **The Beginning of the Truly Grand Narratives. Serial Identity(ies) and Serial Existence 11-12 November 2022**

Organised by SAB member Cornelia Richter (Bonn Institute for Hermeneutics) in cooperation with Kurt Appel (RaT) and the German Society for Philosophy of Religion. Based on the life-world observation of the increased enthusiasm for new media formats, the role of series in the formation of the recipient's identity was discussed using the phenomenon of series as an example.

## **Lecture Series "Religion - Aesthetics - Public Space" 15 November 2022**

Within the framework of the Lecture Series Religion - Aesthetics - Public Space, jointly organised by RaT and the Vienna Doctoral School for Theology and Research on Religion (VDTR), the second of three events took place on 15 November 2022. After a first event on the presence of art in public (urban) space, this time the question was whether art exhibitions can also be considered as "public spaces". With art historian Andrea Hubin, we went on a moderated tour through the exhibition at the Kunsthalle Wien to see the works of Sanja Iveković (\*1949 in Zagreb, Yugoslavia), which are both direct and subtle and conscious of vulnerability(ies) – „Works of Heart“. With specific methods, Andrea Hubin invited us to explore vulnerability as a permeable membrane within a topography of inside&outside, private&public, presence&representation, self&other.

## **Maimonides Lectures, 15th Symposium: The Practice of Denominational Faith and its Limits 23-24 November 2022**

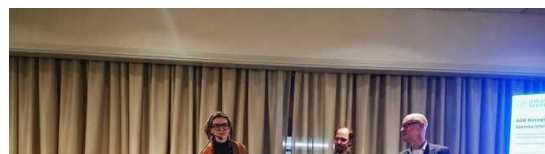
With a lecture by RaT member Gerhard Langer:  
Thoughts and conclusions on dealing with anti-Semitism from the perspective of the dialogue of religions.

[Link to the programme.](#)

## **Reception of the Vienna University Press, American Academy of Religion 20 November 2022**

Some representatives of RaT were present at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in Denver/Colorado from 18-22 November. Among other things, we organised a reception together with the "Vienna Doctoral School for Theology and Research on Religion" (VDTR) on 20 November. Christian Danz presented the concept of "Vienna University Press", Jakob Deibl specifically the Open Access "Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society" (JRAT) and Noemi Call the new opportunities for doctoral programmes in the field of religious research through the VDTR.

JRAT and VDTR are already very international: 63% of the students at the Doctoral School are not from Austria, and authors from 28 different countries have published at JRAT. The presence at the AAR as the largest international conference for the study of religions is a place to point out and further promote this internationality.







## THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES

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RaT members contribute to public discourse by writing in newspapers, giving statements in television and podcasts, and by publishing on our blog. This is our most recent blog entry:

### RAT BLOG

***"Just as the statement 'Don't look up' is a simple solution to an issue that is not at all simple, climate change denial and hostility to science are ways of marginalizing complex and difficult-to-understand problem areas and challenges."***

Peter Prinesdom (PhD student at the Department of Fundamental Theology and member of the VDTR) writes [in this contribution](#) about climate change denial using the example of the film "Don't look up".

### PRESS FEATURES

#### ORF

Wolfram Reiss & Robert Wurzrainer

Under the title "[Website 'Interreligious Dialogue in Austria' online](#)", the ORF announced the launch of this project: "The website was initiated and conceptualized by Wolfram Reiss, Professor of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna, and Robert Wurzrainer. It was implemented as a joint project with students from different disciplines."

### VISITING SCHOLARS



#### WELCOME TO RAT, MATTIA VICENTINI!

Mattia Vicentini is a doctoral student in Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University with a research project entitled "Sacramentality as a form of a hermeneutic of history". He has a master's degree in Philosophy at the Università degli Studi di Trento, a master's degree in Philosophy at the TU Dresden as well as in Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He is currently at the research centre RaT in order to do research for his doctoral project.

His research is a fundamental theological work within the context of the theology of history starting from



some of its aporias. By taking into consideration some classic categories of reflection, he wants to re-elaborate them in a historical-hermeneutic key with particular attention to their practicability. The field of the reworked questions is identified as sacramentality. It is sacramentality, thanks to its theoretical and practical, concrete and transcendental being, a unitary dimension of the human and the divine, that represents the religious fact in history. A particular attention is paid to the method, which is intimately connected to the purpose of the work. The primary bibliography has an interdisciplinary character. Among others, Maurice Blondel, Pierre Bourdieu, Henri-Irénée Marrou and Christoph Theobald are considered.

We wish Mattia all the best for his dissertation!



## **WELCOME TO RAT, FRANCESCO PORCHIA!**

Francesco Porchia is a PhD student in Ethics of Communication, Scientific Research and Technological Innovation at the University of Perugia and is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Vienna.

In his research project, he investigates the theme of existence starting from F.W.J. Schelling, dwelling on the concepts of life and death in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*: these concepts are not contradictory, but can be useful for rediscovering the relationship between the human being and the foundation. According to this approach, death does not only constitute the end of life, and so it is not possible to consider life as a determination of the individual's will to dominate the world.

Through the concept of revelation, the most personal act of God, it is possible to rediscover a new sense of these concepts in which death is understood as a possibility and in which life is re-evaluated thanks to the reflections conducted on the relationship between the human being and the foundation. The research aims to propose possible contributions to an ethics of communication from a theoretically oriented perspective. Thus, starting from the search for God as a person, the common personal side of human beings can be rediscovered.

We wish Francesco all the best for his dissertation!

## **WELCOME TO RAT, MARCO FIORLETTA!**

Marco Fiorletta is a master's degree student at the University of Rome La Sapienza and is writing his master's thesis in collaboration with RaT thanks to a scholarship for master's thesis research abroad. The title of his project is: "What is grounding?. The problem of the Ground in the early writings of Gilles Deleuze".

In his work, he will focus on an analysis of the

concept of ground in the early thought of Gilles Deleuze. At the centre of this analysis is the Hypokhâgne course "Qu'est-ce que fonder?" that Deleuze gave at the Lycée Louis le Grande in 1956/57. Of the many philosophical perspectives from which Deleuze approaches the topic of ground, Heidegger's philosophy seems to be the most influencing. The transcripts of this course seem to be a very useful document, both to "fill the hole of eight years" between the book on Hume and the one on Nietzsche, and to understand how Heidegger's philosophy entered France and how it decisively shaped Deleuze's thought.

We wish Marco all the best for his master's thesis!

#### **Impressum**

**Research Centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society"** | Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Wien

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