



## RaT-Newsletter



### Dear members and friends of RaT,

We hope that all of you are having a wonderful and productive summer term so far. As usual, our members have been busy since our last update in March and so it's time for another presentation of the results of their work:

Concerning the centre's own publications, we are proud to announce that not one but **two new volumes in our RaT-Series** were published recently. Both books are published open access, so if you are curious you can find them [here](#). Other than that, this newsletter presents books and articles written or edited by our members, the current activities of the VDTR and, last but not least, information on upcoming and past events.

As to this last point, we especially want to draw your attention to an upcoming **panel discussion: "Secular/Religious Vienna: Sieglinde Rosenberger in Conversation on Secularity and the City "**, which is going to take place on **May 22, 18:00** at the Albert Schweitzer Haus in Vienna. We extend our invitation to all those who are interested, there is no need to register in advance. For more information, please

scroll down or click [here](#).

To finish this introduction, we want to mention **our latest blog post**: This time we are especially honored to present you an article on: ["Eine neue Sprache der Begegnung zwischen Religion und Welt: Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries"](#) by our guest author Sergio Massironi who works at the Holy See's [Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development](#).

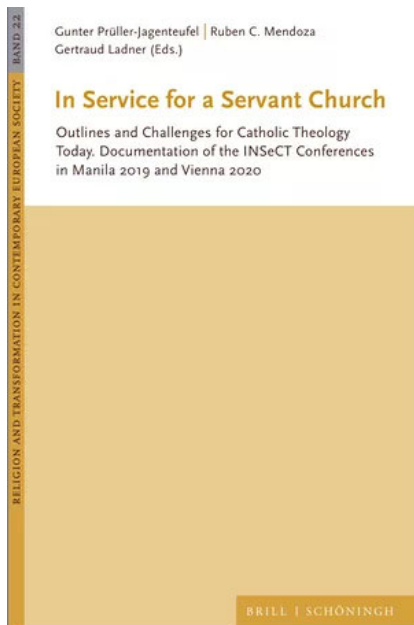
We wish you a pleasant reading and a wonderful rest of the current summer term!

Kurt Appel, Hannah Bleckenwegner, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Marco Fiorletta, Astrid Mattes, Marian Weingartshofer.

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

## PUBLICATIONS: JRAT and RaT Series

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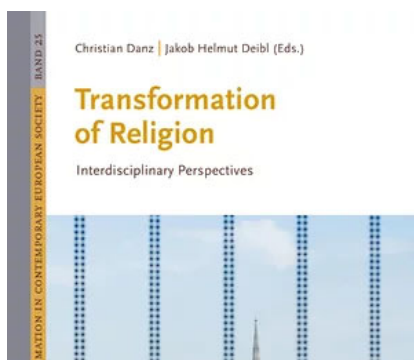


### Latest Issue(s):

**RaT Series (Volume 22): *In Service for a Servant Church. Outlines and Challenges for Catholic Theology Today*, edited by Gunter Prüller-Jagenteufel, Ruben C. Mendoza, and Gertraud Ladner**

This volume documents two international conferences held as part of the global theological research program „A Kairos for Catholic Theology: Serving the Church – Serving the World“ of the International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT). The 2019 intercontinental conference in Manila was dedicated to European-Asian dialogue and gathered contributions on peace, justice, democracy and political culture, ecology, family and gender justice. The 2020 European Conference in Vienna was dedicated to the contribution of multicultural and multi-religious experienced Europe to the solution of the current global challenges in church and society.

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



### Latest Issue(s):

**RaT Series (Volume 25): *Transformation of Religion. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Christian Danz, and Jakob Helmut Deibl.**



This volume presents different approaches to the concept of religion. Religion in modern societies is undergoing accelerated change. Traditional religious forms are dissolving and being overlaid with or replaced by new ones. This poses particular challenges for analyses of the current religious situation, which already presuppose an understanding of religion. But it is precisely this that is disputed in academic discourse about it. Against the background of this complex situation, this volume turns to the transformations of religion. It brings together inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to religion and its definition. In this way, it takes into account the fact that the transformations of religion can only be grasped by incorporating diverse methodological approaches.

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

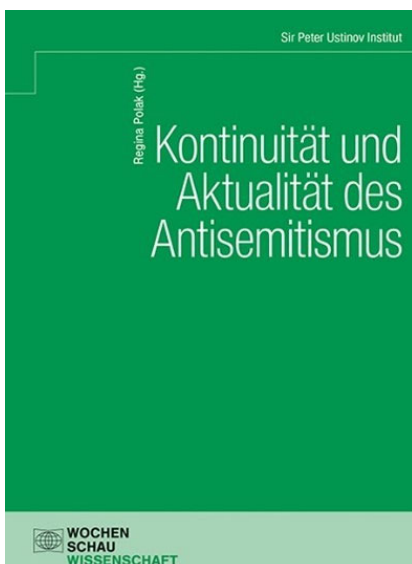


**Latest articles published online in advance (all our articles are published open access, just click the link on the title):**

- ["Complications in Defining the Presence of Tenrikyō in Europe While Discussing Its 'Community'",](#) by Margaret Brady
- ["Hare Krishna in the Czech Republic after Thirty Years: Success or Failure?",](#) by Dušan Lužný
- ["Chinese Families and Their Encounter with the Secular: An Ethnographic Study of Chinese Parents and Their Children in Edinburgh",](#) by Joseph Chadwin
- ["The Church's Extrincist Response to the Pandemic: Re-reading the Church's Acquiescence to Regulations in Agamben's Wake",](#) by Enrico Beltrami



## PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies

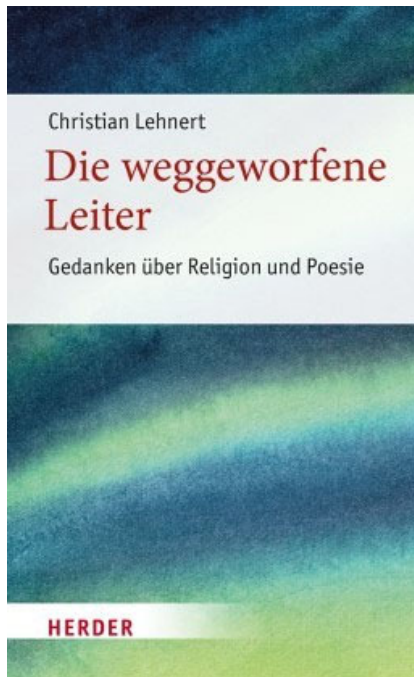


**Regina Polak (ed.): *Kontinuität und Aktualität des Antisemitismus*. Frankfurt a.M.: Wochenschau Verlag 2023.**

On the occasion of the commemoration of the Gesera 1421, this volume documents interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary analyses of contemporary anti-Semitism and presents perspectives for action to combat it. The findings of internationally renowned experts demonstrate the historical continuity as well as the democratic-political explosiveness of anti-Semitism, which threatens the Jewish population and social cohesion in Austria. The multi-perspective approach, the interweaving of theory and practice as well as the intergenerational discourse provide answers to the question why anti-Semitism still has to be dealt with almost 80 years after the end of the

Shoah.

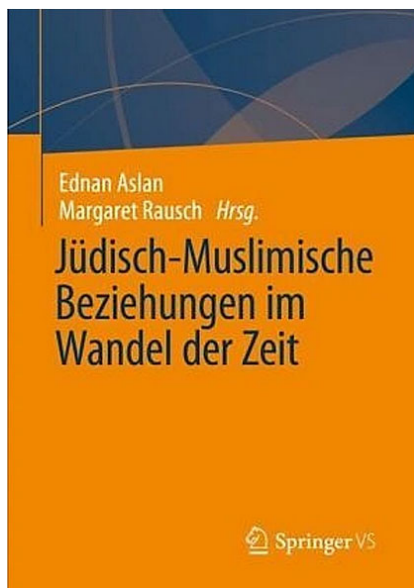
[Link to the publication.](#)



**Volume 7 of the series: "Poetics lectureship Literature and Religion": Christian Lehnert: *Die weggeworfene Leiter. Gedanken über Religion und Poesie.* With a foreword by Jan-Heiner Tück. Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 2023.**

The poet and theologian Christian Lehnert seeks out thresholds in his lectures for the Vienna Poetics Lectureship. Taking up Wittgenstein's speech of the discarded ladder, he explores the kinship of poetic and religious search movements into the unsaid at the boundaries of language. The falling silent of God on the cross and the opposing notion of creation as a speech event form the points of reference here. From this point of view, Christianity appears as a language power that can never remain in what is already said.

[Link to the publication.](#)



**Ednan Aslan/Margaret Rausch (eds.): *Jüdisch-Muslimische Beziehungen im Wandel der Zeit.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2023.**

This multidisciplinary volume brings together research on various aspects of Jewish-Muslim relations, exchange, and coexistence over time, including the enigma of the Abrahamic tradition, Jews in the Qur'an and the Hadith, Ibn al-'Arabi and the Kabbalah, comparative feminist theology, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and the Gospel of Barnabas, the harmonization of religion and philosophy in Andalusia, Jews and Muslims in Medieval Christian Spain, Israeli Jews and Muslim and Christian Arabs, Jewish-Muslim coexistence in Cyprus, Muslim-Jewish dialogues in Berlin and Barcelona, Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogues and teleology, Jewish and Muslim dietary laws, and Jewish and Muslim integration in Switzerland and Germany.

[Link to the publication.](#)

## **PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles**

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**Elisabeth Holzleithner: "*Religionsfreiheit und Geschlechtergleichheit: Konflikte, Kontroversen, Synergien*", in: *Die Freiheit der Menschenrechte. Festschrift für Heiner Bielefeldt zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Michael Krennerich, Michaela Lissowsky, Marco Schendel, pp. 102-119.**

Religious freedom and gender equality are two fundamental human rights. Yet their relationship is characterized by considerable tension: Invoking religious conventions,

gender equality is not infrequently called into question. Religiously inspired rigid gender roles and conventional notions of the legitimacy of sexual relations exclusively within marriage also lead to a rejection of sexual diversity. This article aims to show to what extent there can be synergies in the struggle for religious freedom and gender equality, in addition to the conflicts and controversies this triggers, and where these might lie.

[Link to the publication.](#)

**Eva Synek: „Der Krieg ist Böses“: orthodoxe Perspektiven, in: Österreichisches Archiv für Recht und Religion (öarr) 69 (1/2022, de facto 2023), pp. 131-186.**

This article deals with ethical and canonical discourses from the time before February 24, 2022, the Russian Orthodox Church and the aggression of the Russian state in Ukraine as well as with the reactions from the wider orthodox world.

[Link to the publication.](#)

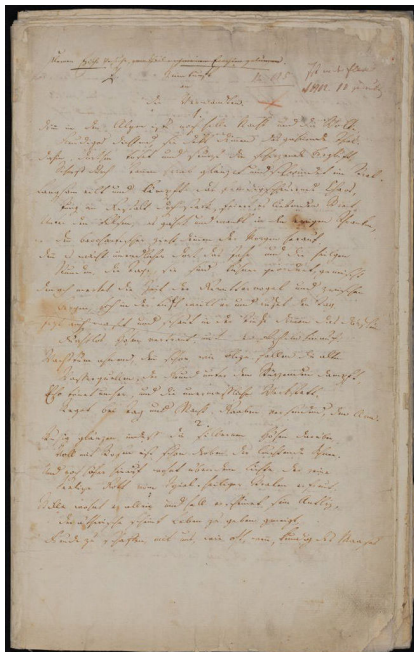
**Eva Synek: Gerechter Krieg, heiliger Krieg? Russische Perspektiven, in: Religionen unterwegs 29/2 (2023), pp. 4-10, forthcoming.**

This article continues the reflexions of Eva Syneks above mentioned text, but with a stronger focus on Russia.

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

## RESEARCH: Projects

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**Stand-Alone Project:  
„Gott in Anmuth“. A Reading of Hölderlin's  
Homburger Folioheft from an Aesthetic Point of  
View (Jakob Deibl, funded by the Austrian  
Science Fund (FWF) )**

Friedrich Hölderlin's work has been an important point of reference in philosophical and cultural debates of the 20th and 21st century, referenced in diverse and even controversial ways. In these discussions, the question of how Hölderlin deals with the concept of God plays an important role, stretching far beyond any disciplinary borders. Indeed, the question of God (Gottesfrage) is a central motif in Hölderlin's entire poetic and philosophical work.

The research project, located in the realm of religion and aesthetics, takes up this question and relates it to the Homburger Folioheft, a fragmentary text written between 1801–06 and highly debated in current research on Hölderlin. [hier noch: for more information...] The project starts from the observation that the concept of "God" can be found on almost every page of the volume. Remarkably often, it appears at the core of the author's vast changes to the text – a process that Johann Kreuzer has called "Sprachfindung". The project elaborates the thesis that this textual development is closely connected to dealing with the notion of God.

It involves a close reading of the text, paying

particular attention to its transitions, ruptures and gaps, as well as to the process of re-elaboration and the finding of new linguistic expressions. Rather than identifying the ultimate version of certain text segments and constituting a final text, the idea is to capture the text in its evolving dimension as an open artwork (Umberto Eco) – a work of art whose process-like character calls for the reader's active cooperation since no finished text of the Homburger Folioheft exists.

(Photocredit: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

**New Project: What does Austria believe in? An interdisciplinary mixed-methods project about values and beliefs**  
(Regina Polak and Astrid Mattes, funded by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria)



"WAS GLAUBT ÖSTERREICH" is an interdisciplinary mixed methods project that intertwines research and media work in order to pursue innovative paths in the conceptualization of questioning on faith topics and at the same time to redesign research communication.

Led by Regina Polak and Astrid Mattes, in cooperation with the religion department of the Austrian Broadcasting Company ORF, a scientifically accompanied broadcast format is created in which qualitative data on beliefs and values are collected.

In different mobile interview settings for TV, radio and online formats, "WAS GLAUBT ÖSTERREICH" talks to people in Austria about existential questions, such as dealing with guilt, death and dying, but also about hope, happiness and love. These interviews are accompanied scientifically and form the basis for the development of innovative survey items.

A representative study derived from this will research the emerging questions for all of Austria. The results of this study will be disseminated scientifically as well as on ORF television, radio and online. Viewers, readers and listeners are thus invited to become acquainted with a wide variety of religious and non-religious lifestyles and beliefs throughout the whole of Austria, and perhaps discover some commonalities in the process.

## **Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion**

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## **VDTR Open Research Day May 22, 2023**

- **Venue: Albert Schweitzer Haus,  
Garnisongasse 14-16, 1090 Vienna**

At the invitation of the [ASH Forum der Zivilgesellschaft](#), the third VDTR Open Research Day will take place at [Albert Schweitzer Haus](#) (Garnisongasse 14-16, 1090 Wien).

The day offers all VDTR members - doctoral students as well as supervisors - the opportunity for stimulating discussions on current research topics. In front of an interdisciplinary audience of peers and supervisors, PhD students can present their research results in the morning, improve their presentation skills and receive feedback on their research.

**NEW:** In the afternoon, [six workshops](#) (three in parallel in two time slots each) offered by VDTR doctoral students provide the opportunity to exchange ideas on various PhD-related topics in a smaller group.

## **VDTR Public Lecture with [Joe Moshenska](#) (University of Oxford): “Iconoclasm as Child’s Play: Dolls and Idols in the Reformation” June 9, 2023, 18:15**

- **Venue: Dekanatssaal of the Faculty of  
Catholic Theology, Universitätsring 1,  
second floor, staircase 8, 1010 Vienna**

The word 'iconoclasm' conjures to mind acts of burning and breaking, grim-faced figures wielding hammer and flame. In the sixteenth century, however, the desecration of formerly holy things could take a very different form: such objects were periodically placed in the hands of playing children. This lecture will argue that while this made a certain polemical sense - as a way of implying that traditional religion was inane and childish - such play was also a complex and volatile process. Once we understand the array of forces and discourses that coincided on such objects as they became toys, they can be seen as both fascinating anomalies, and exemplary of the competing values that playthings embody as they fluctuate between idol and doll.

The public lecture will be followed by a panel discussion including [Fabio Gygi](#) (SOAS), [Lisa Zingerle](#) (Schubert Theater Wien) and [VDTR member Alisha Saikia](#) (University of Vienna) and will delve into the enigmatic prominence of dolls across various historical and cultural contexts. Our panelists will share their insights and knowledge on the beliefs they inspire, the rituals and performances they evoke, and

the significance of their creation and destruction for their makers and owners.

The event is organized in cooperation with RaT. For more information, please visit [vdtr.univie.ac.at](http://vdtr.univie.ac.at).

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## EVENTS

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### UPCOMING EVENTS



#### **"Secular/Religious Vienna: Sieglinde Rosenberger in Conversation on Secularity and the City "** **May 22, 2023, 18:00**

- **Venue: Albert Schweitzer Haus, Garnisongasse 14-16, 1090 Vienna**

Questions about the relationship between politics and religion have shaped the work of political scientist Sieglinde Rosenberger in many ways. Through the analytical lens of inclusion and exclusion, she has researched the relationship between religious and state actors, headscarf debates, religious law, and the politicization of religion. The longtime speaker for the Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society Research Center bids farewell to her role with a thematic evening of conversation on secularity in the city.

Discussing: Sieglinde Rosenberger, Omar Al-Rawi, Regina Polak and Fabio Wolkenstein. Moderation: Johannes Modeß.

The event is a cooperation of the ASH Forum of Civil Society, the Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society and the Vienna Doctoral School of Theology and Research on Religion.

#### **Commentaries on Psalms. Workshop of the working group "Reception of the Old Testament" ("Arbeitskreis Rezeption des Alten Testaments" (AKRAT))** **June 5, 2023, 09:30-16:00**

- **Venue: Schenkenstr. 8-10, A-1010 Vienna (+ Zoom)**

The interdisciplinary workshop is dedicated to different conceptions of writing commentaries about the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible: Jewish and Christian, historic and contemporary. Inputs and discussion will deal with example texts, considering the following themes and questions:

- the relationship between the concepts of the Commentaries and realization in the concrete examples;
- explanations for the duplicity of Psalms
- Is historic and literary research on the Psalm a "neutral" ground?

- How does the Jewish and Christian reception history influence the interpretation?
- What role does reflection on the interpreters' contexts play in their interpretations?
- Which new or critical perspectives can the reception history offer for today's interpretations?

A detailed program can be found [here](#).

Contact for registration and zoom-link: [elisabeth.oberleitner@univie.ac.at](mailto:elisabeth.oberleitner@univie.ac.at)

## **International Symposium "Religious Education at Schools in Europe and International KnowledgeTransfer: Looking Back and Looking Ahead"** **June 15–16, 2023**

- **Venue: University of Vienna**

The conference will be chaired by Prof. Dr. Martin Rothgangel and Prof Dr. Friedrich Schweitzer (University of Vienna). The aim of the conference is to connect and continue the two international projects "Religious Education at Schools in Europe" and "International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education".

The detailed program can be found [here](#).



## **„Neutral State? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Autonomy of Religion, Art and Science” Conference of the RaT-Cluster "Transformations of Law between Religion and Society":** **June 19–20, 2023**

- **Venue: June 19: University of Vienna, Main Building, Dekanatssaal of the Faculty of Catholic Theology; June 20: University of Vienna, Juridicum, Dachgeschoss**

Religion, sciences and art share a claim to autonomy shaped by their respective self-conception. The state takes institutional arrangements for protecting the specific autonomies of these spheres. This also implies normative requirements of neutral state conduct vis-à-vis these areas.

A broader public awareness is focussed on the religious-ideological neutrality of the state. But what are the structural differences and similarities as compared to preventing the state from judging science and art? After introductory reflections on the possibility of state neutrality, the conference turns to the internal self-conceptions of each of these areas protected by constitutional guarantees (freedom of religion, science, and art).

A philosophical synthesis leads to a discussion of the different legal understandings of autonomy and state neutrality. An empirical analysis of political discourses on neutrality will precede the concluding discussion with experts in science, cultural, and religious governance.

A detailed program can be found [here](#).

## **COREnet PhD Summer School: "Religious and Non-Religious Narratives on Migration"**

**July 12-16, 2023**

The Summer School, organized in cooperation between the international COST action "Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity" and the Vienna Doctoral School for Theology and Research on Religio will be conducted at the University of Vienna under the direction of Regina Polak (Department for Practical Theology, Catholic Theological Faculty, University of Vienna).

The Summer School aims to provide early career researchers (PhDs and postdocs, and researchers up to 40 years old) with the opportunity to discuss and deepen their knowledge and understanding of interdisciplinary research on religious and non-religious narratives on migration. International academic teachers will present both Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and interfaith perspectives on migration as well as religious and social science approaches to the politicization of religion in migration narratives, migration narratives in literature and, last but not least, narratives of refugees and migrants themselves. The PhD Summer School also offers the students the opportunity to discuss, get feedback and further develop their own research projects within the framework of reflecting migration narratives.

Places are still available for students at the University of Vienna.

Contact: [regina.polak@univie.ac.at](mailto:regina.polak@univie.ac.at).

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

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

**September 15-17, 2023**

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

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

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

**Call for papers:** Papers can be handed in until 22 May, 2023.

More information on the symposium and the call of papers can be found [here](#).

## **PAST EVENTS**



**Conference: Resurrection of the Body**  
**December 16, 2022**



*This past event was supposed to be presented in our last newsletter but was unfortunately forgotten about. We apologize to the organizers for this inconvenience.*

On 16.12.2022 the Department of Fundamental Theological Research (organization: Martin Eleven) organized a workshop in cooperation with the Research Centre RaT on the topic "Resurrection of the Body - Theological-Religious-Philosophical Perspectives".

The background of the event was the question of the genuine place of the body in contemporary theology: Is there not a certain body oblivion? Which concepts of the body, if it becomes a topic in its own right, are primarily used to interpret the Christian message of the resurrection? What can be said about the body of the resurrection?

The contributions of the speakers have tried to give answers from different angles - philosophical, aesthetic and political - to the question of the body of resurrection and to rethink traditional concepts and terms.

Speakers:

- Kurt Appel
- Isabella Bruckner
- Martin Eleven
- Sandra Lehmann
- Marcello Neri
- Sibylle Trawöger

A detailed conference report can be found [here](#).

## **"Into the Open" - Performance and Art Talk with Karlheinz Essl April 24, 2023**

On Monday, April 24, 2023, the composer and performer Karlheinz Essl was a guest at the seminar "[The Question of Beauty](#)" in cooperation with the RaT-cluster "Transformations in Religion and Aesthetics". Since 2007, the internationally renowned artist has also been a [composition professor for electro-acoustic and experimental music at the mdw](#) (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna).

Be it the examination of the work of art as an [open work](#) (Umberto Eco), be it the necessity to constantly reflect and reinvent one's own work as a composer and performer, Hölderlin's invitation "Komm! [Ins Offene!](#)" ("Come! Into the Open!") is a leitmotif of Karlheinz Essl's work. In doing so he combines music with other art forms such as poetry, painting and dance, seeks to give artistic expression to new technical achievements (cf. project [K.O.P.F.](#)), and above all engages in an open-ended outcome of the artistic process, in which composition, performance and improvisation merge.

At the beginning of the event, Essl gave insights into his current work with analogue synthesizers via a sound performance of [Coastlines](#). This was followed by a discussion that took its starting point from the question of what significance chance plays in the process of composing and performance. This led to the question of the resistance that the instrument (in this case the synthesizer) offers to the performer in the act of playing.

Via the question of the importance of listening in contrast to the dominance of the visual register, we finally arrived at fundamental questions of aesthetics, philosophy and theology: what is beauty and what is the sacred? Essl succinctly commented: "The sacred

is sacred to me. The beautiful has to be earned. It grows from within. It is connected with the un-disposable ("Unverfügbare").

## **Conference: "Politics of Dis-Enclosure. Religion - Community - Violence"**

### **April 26-27, 2023**

The conference "Politics of Dis-Enclosure. Religion - Community - Violence" was organized by RaT and supported by the Faculty of Philosophy and Education. We were especially honoured to have one of the currently most important thinkers in postcolonial discourse, historian and philosopher Achille Mbembe, give the opening lecture of the conference.

On the first day of the event we welcomed about 50 guests in the meeting room of the Dean's Office of the KTF at the main building and on the second day we were warmly welcomed by the magnificent Melk Abbey, where we enjoyed a guided tour through one of the most beautiful libraries in Austria at the end of the day.

Thematically, the conference was centred around the term "dis-enclosure", coined by the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in his 2005 book "La Déclosion, Déconstruction du christianisme I". The term stands, generally speaking, for the tense and never reducible to simple answers relationship of openness and inclusion, the always ambivalent relationship to the – external as well as internal – Other.

The six lectures by Achille Mbembe, Louise du Toit, Nabil Echchaibi, Petra Carlsson, Hans Schelkshorn and Anke Graneß approached the idea of dis-enclosure from different perspectives. However, the unifying element was the confrontation with the (European) history of violence and exclusion and the search for a more just world in which difference is no longer constantly silenced.

A more detailed report as well as the abstracts of all presentations can be found [on the RaT-homepage](#).

## **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**

#### ***Eine neue Sprache der Begegnung zwischen Religion und Welt: Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries***

How can one talk about God today? How can one leave the center to turn to the periphery? How can the religious meet the everyday? In his contribution, Sergio Massironi presents his project in the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, "Doing Theology from the Existential Peripheries", starting from a diptych by Giovanni Chiaramonte.

The full article can be read [here](#).

### **RAT GOES TELEVISION**

#### ***Jung und gläubig: Das Leben religiöser Jugendlicher***

The Austrian public television (ORF) reported on the recently concluded FWF-project

["Young Believers Online"](#) as part of the program "Orientierung" on April 09, 2023.

The video is still online and can be watched [here](#).

**Coverfoto** by [Aniket Bhattacharya](#) on [Unsplash](#)

#### Impressum

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