

RaT-Newsletter



Dear members and friends of RaT,

We have successfully transitioned into the new funding period, and our team can now fully focus on our regular work once again. As always, this issue provides an overview of our members' latest research and the ongoing activities of the center.

We are pleased to open this edition by welcoming three new members to our center: **Narzissa Helfritsch, Tabea Ott, and Riza Yildirim**. A warm welcome to RaT! You can find more details about their research focuses below.

This newsletter features a wide range of publications, including recent works by **Isabella Bruckner, Daniel Kuran, Rüdiger Lohker, Milja Radović, and Hans Schelkshorn**. The topics they explore are wide-ranging—from theological reflections on Mary's role in Christianity and the question of how we can speak of God in the philosophies of Hegel and Derrida, to a study on contemporary shifts in religious authority in Islam, portrayals of ascetic female figures in modern cinema, and philosophical-religious reflections on early modern thought. **Scroll down to discover more!**

As usual, we also invite you to upcoming events organized by our members: Read on for details about the **Open House at the Fachbereich for Alevi Theology** on May 30, a **lecture by Doron Rabinovici** on June 15, or the **inaugural lecture of RaT member Susanne Schwarz** on July 3 - and much more!

On behalf of the Research Center, we would also like to highlight a past event that is particularly close to our hearts. On April 29, **RaT, in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA)**, organized a **conference on "Governance of Religious Diversity"**, which brought together a diverse

group of participants, including dignitaries from several Austrian religious communities and a large delegation from Indonesia. Further details can be found in the linked conference report below.

We wish all our readers a wonderful remainder of the current summer term!

Kurt Appel, Noemi Call, Jakob Deibl, Sofiiia-Olga Kungurtseva, Daniel Kuran, Astrid Mattes, Maximilian Stadler, 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](#).

(NEW) TEAM MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!

We are delighted to announce that [Daniel Kuran and Marian Weingartshofer have joined our team on permanent contracts](#) as of April 2026, taking on responsibilities for publication management and administration at the center. Their appointments guarantee the ongoing stability and continuity of RaT's operations.

We wish them all the best for their future work at RaT!



Daniel Kuran (© Universität Wien / Der Knopfdrücker)



Marian Weingartshofer (© Universität Wien / Der Knopfdrücker)

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!



Dr. Narzissa Helfritzsich, Privatdoz. B.A. M.A.

*Faculty of Philosophy and Education
Department of Philosophy*

I am Dr. habil. Narzissa Helfritzsich PD BA MA, currently I am holding a Post-Doc Position in Philosophy at the University of Vienna specialized in Ethics and the Didactic of Philosophy. My research areas include Social Philosophy, Queer Studies, Aesthetics and Theories of Inclusion, Justice as well as Emotions grounded in an Existentialistic point of view. Starting at this background I am working on two mayor projects: One faces the division in current philosophy between the so called areas of analytic and continental schools redescribing the history of this separation in terms of earnestness and ridiculousness.

The second project is focused on the question of 'How do we want to *live* together?' were the *we* is regarded broadly as the community of everything within an ecosystem. Both projects are linked through the urge to search for something connecting, something to overcome unnecessary forms of separation, something to understand the need for community; the need for unifying ceremonies of respect, generosity and courtesy. The main sources to overcome this urging need are – that is the hypothesis – routed within the ways of living together found in structural suppressed communities, there ways of spirituality, of community with others, animals, plants and the land.

To learn more about Narzissa Helfritzsich's research, [click here](#).



Ass.-Prof. Dr. Tabea Ott, B.A.

*Faculty of Protestant Theology
Department of Systematic Theology and the Study of Religions
Deputy Head of the Department for Ethics and Law in Medicine*

I serve as Assistant Professor of Medical Ethics and Diaconal Studies at Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna, where I also act as Deputy Head of the Department for Ethics and Law in Medicine.

My work engages ethical questions with a particular focus on theories of visibility, justice, intersectionality, recognition, and care, as well as on concepts such as autonomy, vulnerability, human dignity and memory. I am especially interested in how these perspectives shape and challenge contemporary debates across medicine, emerging technologies such as AI, and diaconia. Prior to joining the University of Vienna, I was a doctoral and postdoctoral researcher at the

Chair of Systematic Theology II (Ethics) at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany), where I contributed to the DFG-funded Collaborative Research Centre 1483 “EmpkinS.”

To learn more about Tabea Ott's research, [click here](#).



Ass.-Prof. Riza Yildirim, PhD PhD

Faculty of Catholic Theology

Department of Islamic-Theological Studies

Fachbereich Alevi Theology

I am a scholar of religion and historian specializing in Alevi Theology, Sufism, Shi'ism, Islamic sectarianism, and the history of the Middle East. I hold two doctoral degrees: a PhD in the History of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires from Bilkent University and a PhD in Religious Studies from Emory University.

My research focuses primarily on the religious, intellectual, and social history of Alevi and Bektashi communities across Anatolia, Iran, Syria, the Balkans, and, more recently, the Alevi diaspora in Western Europe. Combining historical, theological, and anthropological approaches, my work explores the formation of Alevi religious traditions, Sufi networks, collective memory, ritual practice, sectarian identities, and the interaction between religion and politics in Turkey and Iran. I am particularly interested in the transmission of oral and written traditions, the transformation of “heterodox” Muslim communities, and the role of myth, ritual, and music in shaping communal identity.

In addition to numerous scholarly articles, I have authored six monographs on Alevi history, theology, religious practices, and textual traditions. My broader academic work seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of Islamic diversity and the historical development of non-normative Muslim communities in the Middle East and Europe.

To learn more about Riza Yildirim's research, [click here](#).

PUBLICATIONS: JRAT, JRAT Supplementa and RaT Series

Interdisciplinary Journal for
Religion and Transformation
in Contemporary Society



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

- **Elisa Klapheck:** [The Privilege of Paying Taxes. Talmudic Views on Taxation and the Creation of a Polity](#)

PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies



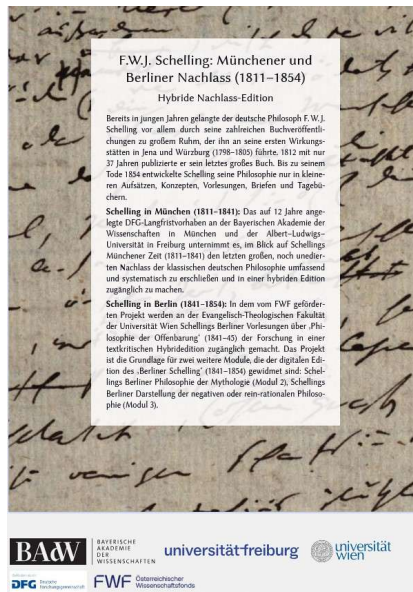
Isabella Bruckner (Hg.): L'altro volto del Divino. Immaginare Maria nell'Arte e nella Liturgia e Mistica femminile (Documenta Anselmiana 7), Roma: Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo 2026.

“There are things that only women can intuit, and theology needs their contribution. A theology composed solely of men is an incomplete theology. In this regard, there is still a long way to go.” This is Pope Francis’ observation, recalling the Old Testament prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:14–20), during his opening address at the international congress on the future of theology, organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education on December 9, 2024, in Rome.

This volume fits precisely the mandate and impetus that Pope Francis imparted to the audience of international theologians and, at the same time, documents two academic events organized by the Chair “Pensiero e forme dello Spirituale” (Christian Thought and Spiritual Practice) at the Pontificio Ateneo Sant’Anselmo in Rome. The first part of the volume offers perspectives more focused on women and their artistic representations, as well as on the veneration of the woman most frequently discussed in Christianity: Mary of Nazareth. The second part gives the floor directly to women, particularly those

recognized as mystics.

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

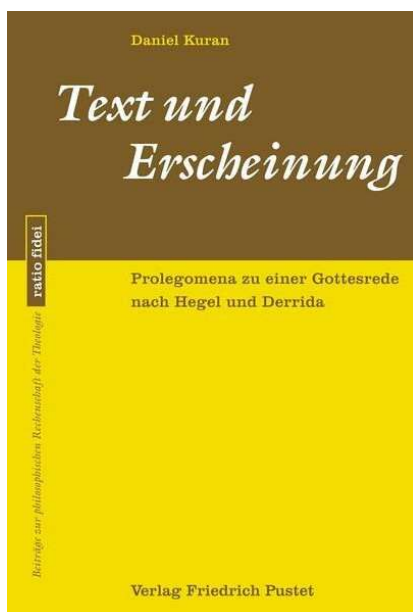


Christian Danz, C. Arnold, M. Hackl, B. Lasser, P. Schömann (eds.): Schellings Berliner Philosophie der Offenbarung. F.W.J. Schelling: Münchener und Berliner Nachlass (1811-1854). Hybride Nachlass-Edition.

The project “Electronic Hybrid Edition ‘Schelling’s Berlin Philosophy of Revelation (1841-1844)’” addresses this serious desideratum of research and creates for the first time a digital text-critical and work-genetic edition of the Berlin Philosophy of Revelation. The scientific goal of the project is to break up the monolithic structure of the Philosophy of Revelation in the *Sämmtliche Werke* and to scientifically reconstruct its work- and text-historical development. Schelling’s late major work Philosophy of Revelation is still subject to further development during his time in Berlin from 1841 to 1844. This is precisely what the version of the *Sämmtliche Werke* hides, suggesting an inner closure of the text.

Only a text-genetic edition, which makes the work-historical development of the Philosophy of Revelation just as transparent as its complex debate-historical context, makes a precise decoding of his late philosophy possible, which leads to revising classical patterns of interpretation of the philosophical development of the 19th century. In this way, the Berlin Philosophy of Revelation can be used to show how Schelling not only initiated the historiographical thrusts in the sciences that began in the middle of the century, but also productively takes them up himself in his late work.

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



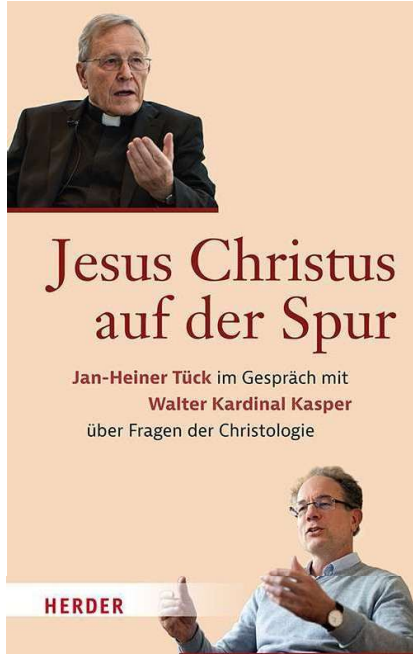
Daniel Kuran: Text und Erscheinung. Prolegomena zu einer Gottesrede nach Hegel und Derrida (ratio fidei 91), Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 2026.

Can the thought of Hegel and Derrida enable us to speak of God—and do their approaches share more in common than first meets the eye? What consequences arise for speaking of God when it takes seriously both Hegel’s speculative thinking and Derrida’s critical intervention against Hegel? This book connects theology with pivotal currents in philosophy, offering an introduction to the conceptual movements and foundational motifs of Hegel and Derrida.

It contributes to a more precise understanding of the complex relationship between their philosophical positions and uncovers the possibility of speaking of God within each. The concept of appearance

(*Erscheinung*) functions as a Leitmotiv, manifesting in Hegel's "God that appears" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as the concept of *text* that Derrida develops with precision and deepens in his reading of Hegel.

[Link to the publication.](#)



Jan-Heiner Tück, Walter Kasper: Jesus Christus auf der Spur. Jan-Heiner Tück im Gespräch mit Walter Kardinal Kasper über Fragen der Christologie, Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 2026.

In their wide-ranging conversation, Jan-Heiner Tück and Cardinal Walter Kasper explore the life and death of Jesus—and what they mean for Christology today. Beginning with Jesus' birth and ministry—key themes shaped by the early Christian councils—they trace a theological arc from his suffering, death, and resurrection to his ascension and promised return. Along the way, they outline a contemporary Christology that engages with questions of God, creation, and anthropology, as well as the doctrines of sin and redemption. A thought-provoking book for anyone seeking to understand Jesus' significance in the modern world.

[Link to the publication.](#)

PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

Elisabeth Holzleithner: Religionsfreiheit, Geschlecht und sexuelle Orientierung im säkularen Staat, in: Anna Katharina Mangold, Berit Völmann (eds.): *Gerechtigkeit als Thema der Rechtswissenschaft. Kontinuität und Wandel in intergenerationeller Betrachtung*. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2026, pp. 137-145.

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

Karsten Lehmann: Säkulare Sozialformen religiös-weltanschaulicher Vielfalt in der Zwischenkriegszeit: Anmerkungen auf der Basis eines Oral-History-Projekts aus Wien, in: Thomas Großbölting, Karin Körber, Anne Körs (eds.): *Zwischen Pluralisierung und Regulierung, Urbane Sozialformen des Religiösen*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus 2026, pp. 33-50.

Based on the oral history data collected by the ZwiKrie project on religious diversity in Vienna's interwar schools, Karsten Lehmann develops an argument that may initially seem counterintuitive: The interviewees of the ZwiKrie project recall religiously plural situations from the interwar period in strikingly different ways. What stands out, however, is that they associate religious diversity primarily with social contexts that were not explicitly framed as religious—such as schools, family life, or their immediate neighborhood (the so-called *Grätzel*). Put provocatively, one could argue that when reflecting on the interwar years, the witnesses remember religious and ideological diversity *most vividly* in secular settings.

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

Rüdiger Lohker, Soleh Hasan Wahid: The Transformation of Islamic Religious Authority, in: *Religions* 2026, 17(4), p. 493.

The transformation of religious authority in the digital age is shaped by the interactions between human actors, digital media and algorithmic systems. This study uses digital ethnography to examine how religious authority is constructed and negotiated on digital platforms used by Muslims in Indonesia and globally. This study focuses on seven authoritative figures in the digital Islamic landscape, representing different spectra of authority, from traditional pesantren in Indonesia to transnational apologetics and urban liberalism. The findings reveal patterns of authority delegation in which digital platforms replace human roles in da'wah and Islamic institutions.

Religious authority is formed through articulative work that connects the Sunnah, intermediaries (religious scholars), and congregations. Public search data show that digital spaces function as a medium of distribution, where religious authority is shaped by audience responses, message repetition, symbolic affiliation, and the dynamics of debate. This study highlights the role of algorithmic culture and authority representation aesthetics in mediating religious authority in the digital age. Algorithms shape exposure and reach audiences, and representational aesthetics are crucial for disseminating religious content. The study concludes that clerical authority in the digital era results from technocultural mediation, in which the cleric becomes both a figure and representation calculated by machines and validated by the audience's participation.

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

Milja Radovic: Cinema of the Desert: The Fight of the Ascetic Women, in: *Religions* 2026, 17(2), p. 264.

Through the analysis of film language, this paper aims to shed new light on the ways in which iconographic language has been translated into cinematic language, assessing the ways in which women ascetics have been depicted from a contemporary perspective. The film's representation of a woman ascetic offers valuable insights into the conceptualisations of the notion of gender as a virtue—embodying sanctity—and potential site of desecration—representing iniquity—as these are experienced as both embodied and spiritual realities. The study offers an analysis of how cinematic language operates, focusing on the visual techniques used to depict the intersection of gender, holiness, and spiritual discipline, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how film functions as a medium for engaging with complex religious and gendered identities. The analysis of film will provide novel understandings of how cinema depicts and challenges gender within the context of asceticism, exploring how these representations influence contemporary perceptions of women's spirituality.

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

Hans Schelkshorn, Lubomír Dunaj, Peter Wagner, Hans-Herbert Kögler, and William Outhwaite: Rethinking European Modernity: Reason, Power and Coloniality in Early Modern Thought, in: *European Journal of Social Theory* 2026, pp. 1-34.

In his book *Rethinking European Modernity. Reason, Power and Coloniality*, Schelkshorn lays the foundation for a new philosophical interpretation of European modernity, which critically responds to intra-European debates (Critical Theory, Heidegger, Blumenberg, Frankfurt discourse theory, Civilization theory) on the one hand, and the critique of modernity by postcolonial philosophies in Latin America on the other hand. In the light of the metatheory of 'de-limitations' (*Entgrenzungen*), cultural upheavals triggered by the astronomical revolution and Europe's transoceanic expansion are reinterpreted in detailed studies of philosophies of the Renaissance and seventeenth century rationalist thought. From this perspective, European modernity appears as an amalgam of rational achievements, power syndromes and particular cultural dimensions. This forum examines several aspects of Schelkshorn's outstanding contribution, especially those related to modernity, coloniality, social theory and intercultural philosophy.

[Link to the publication.](#)

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 30, 2026: Open House - Alevi Theology

The poster features a background image of the University of Vienna building with banners. A circular graphic on the right contains a portrait of a man and the text 'Einblicke. Gespräche. Gemeinschaft.' with a small leaf icon below it.

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ALEVITISCH-THEOLOGISCHE STUDIEN
OPEN HOUSE

30. MAI 2026 **13:00 UHR**

UNIVERSITÄTSRING 1, 1010 WIEN
HÖRSAAL 6 (VIA HOF 3)

Einblicke in den Fachbereich
Lerne Inhalte, Ziele und Möglichkeiten unserer Studien kennen.

Gespräche in lockerer Atmosphäre
Studierende, Lehrende und Mitarbeitende stehen für den Austausch bereit.

Verpflegung (Essen & Trinken)
Für das leibliche Wohl ist gesorgt.

Neue Leute kennenlernen
Knüpfe Kontakte und werde Teil unserer Gemeinschaft.

Deine Fragen, deine Themen
Wir nehmen uns Zeit für deine Anliegen.

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Unser Open House bietet dir die Gelegenheit, unseren Fachbereich hautnah zu erleben – informativ, persönlich und einladend.

iits.univie.ac.at/fachbereiche/alevitische-theologie/

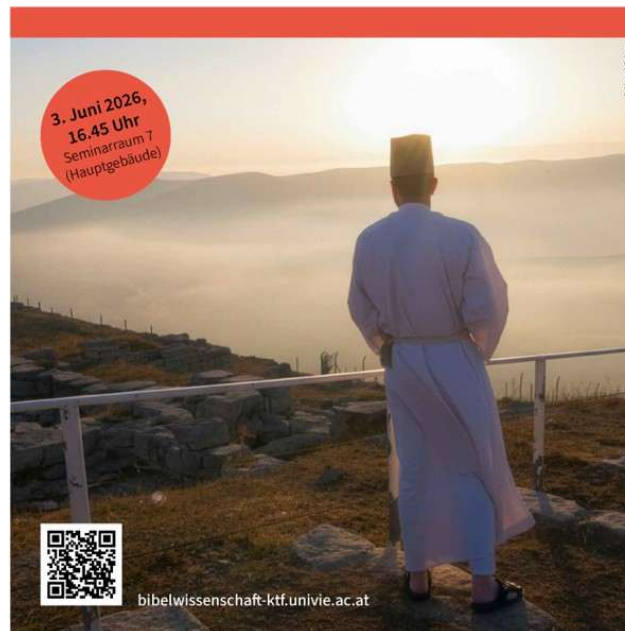
[For more information on the event, click here.](#)

June 3, 2026, 4:45 p.m.: Guest Lecture by Abood Cohen: The Samaritans Today - History, Identity, and Cultural Continuity



The Samaritans Today – History, Identity, and Cultural Continuity

Gastvortrag Abood Cohen



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

June 15, 2026, 6-8 p.m.: Lecture by Doron Rabinovici: "Es war einmal nie wieder. Angesichts der Ausbreitung des neuen Antisemitismus"

Sky Lounge of the University of Vienna (Oskar-Morgenstern-Platz 1, 1090 Vienna)

Since the massacres of October 7, 2023, the rise of a new antisemitism can no longer be denied. When violence erupts in the Middle East, Jews worldwide become targets. The existence of Israel—both as a state and as the people of Israel in the biblical sense—has, from the very beginning, been shaped by being negated. Almost no one openly admits to being antisemitic. Whether far-right, Islamist, left-wing, or from the mainstream of society—all agree on one thing: *the antisemite is always the other*. The alliances against racism, against sexism, and against antisemitism have collapsed. We are witnessing the failure of remembrance culture. The "after"—the era in which the descendants of survivors lived—is over. Today's Jewish youth are growing up in the midst of a new threat.

Registration is required. If you are interested, please contact monika.mannsbarth@univie.ac.at.

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

June 17-18, 2026: Lecture and Workshop with Itzhak Benyamini: Reason and Enigma - Two faces of monotheism following Freud's "Moses and Monotheism" and Lacan's "The ethics of psychoanalysis"

RELIGION UND PSYCHOANALYSE

Itzhak Benyamini

Reason and Enigma –
Two faces of monotheism following
Freud's "Moses and Monotheism" and
Lacan's "The ethics of psychoanalysis"
A key to the current violent spirituality?

Wednesday,
June 17th 2026
18:30-20:00
Hs. 3D
(Universitätsstraße 7,
NIG, 3. Stock,
1010 Wien)

Workshop on the book
*Der Moses-Komplex
bei Freud und Lacan*

With responses by Amanda Holmes
and Christoph Rogers.

Thursday, June 18th 2026
9:45-11:00

If you are interested in participating, please
send an email to: esther.heinrich@univie.ac.at

Organised by Martin Eieven and Esther Heinrich.

In Kooperation mit:

 KATHOLISCHE
PRIVATUNIVERSITÄT LINZ

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

July 3, 2026, 4 p.m.: Inaugural Lecture by Prof. Susanne Schwarz: „Die paar Prozent...?“ Über religiöse Bildung zwischen Irritation und Imagination aus evangelischer Perspektive



Einladung zur Antrittsvorlesung

„Die paar Prozent...?“ Über religiöse Bildung zwischen Irritation und Imagination aus evangelischer Perspektive



[Please register by Friday, June 12, 2026](#)

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

October 8-9, 2026: Workshop: Myth and the More-than-Human.

Community in the Twenty-First Century:



Call for papers: Please submit proposals to: myth.community@lists.univie.ac.at until the 17.7.2026.

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

PAST EVENTS



April 24, 2026: Conference: Feiertag – freier Tag?

The conference 'Public Holiday – A Day Off?', organised by Robert Wurzrainer, Dirk Schuster (both from the Department of Religious Studies), Astrid Schweighofer (University of Heidelberg) and Leonhard Jungwirth (ASH Forum), examined on 24 April the role of religious public holidays in Austria amidst the shifting dynamics of tradition, pluralisation and state neutrality. In the morning, scientific presentations by Lucile Dreidemy, Stefan Schima, Dirk Schuster, Astrid Mattes-Zippenfenig and Kerstin Tretina addressed the topic of public holidays from historical, legal, sociological and media policy perspectives. The second part in the afternoon focused on intra-religious perceptions of public holidays, for example from Catholic, Islamic and Jewish perspectives. The concluding panel discussion also addressed issues of equal treatment, such as time off for pupils and employees on non-Christian public holidays. There was agreement that state-designated public holidays, beyond their actual – mostly religious – content, foster a sense of

community at various levels and continue to hold great social relevance. A collection of papers from the conference is currently in preparation.

Photocredit: (C) GGPrÖ/Schelander

April 29, 2026: International Conference on Governance of Religious Diversity



On 29 April 2026, the international conference "Governance of Religious Diversity: Comparing Models, Sharing Best Practices, and Deepening Bilateral and International Cooperation for Peaceful Coexistence" took place in the Sky Lounge of the University of Vienna. The event, jointly organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA) and the Research Centre Religion and Transformation (RaT), brought together international experts from academia, civil society, and religious communities. Throughout the various contributions, participants presented best practice examples for the governance of religious diversity. The focus of the event was the exchange of experiences between Austria and Indonesia, as the conference was organised within the framework of the 9th Austria-Indonesia Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue.

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

Photocredit: (C) *Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät/Helene Ziegler*

THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES

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

RaT-Blog@DerStandard

- **Martin Dürnberger:** [Ein Anwalt der Vernunft, so unaufgeregt wie engagiert. Zum Vermächtnis von Jürgen Habermas zwischen Kritik, Lernbereitschaft und öffentlichem Engagement](#)

Contributions to the Press

- [Ein Experte des interreligiösen Dialogs](#) - Podcast "Perspektiven" von Radio Klassik Stephansdom mit **Stefan Hammer**
- **Hans Schelkshorn**: [Die Ära der Nihilisten: Über die Rückkehr und Perversion der Religion](#) (Die Furche)
- **Jan-Heiner Tück**: [Papst Leo und die Piusbruderschaft: Droht der katholischen Kirche ein neuer Bruch?](#) (Die Presse)
- **Jan-Heiner Tück**: [Ist die Säkularisierung unaufhaltsam?](#) (Podcast-Auftritt bei Communio)

RAT-BLOG

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

- **Adrian Fleisch** and **Hannah Zipser**: [Deleuze oder wie man Gott los wird](#)
- **Rüdiger Lohlker**: [The Great Mosque of Xi'an](#)
- **Hannah Zipser**: ["Der Glaube ist der Markt" – Der immanente Gott des Kapitalismus nach Lacan, Deleuze und Guattari](#)
- **Milja Radovic**: [One Failure After Another. 'Imagining the Americas'\[1\] at the Oscars 2026](#)

Impressum

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