



RaT-Newsletter



Dear members and friends of RaT,

This time, we welcome you to a festive end-of-the-year edition of our newsletter, which is, as usual packed full of news about our centre. This time, we'd like to start by announcing our newly appointed deputy speaker: We are proud that **Fabio Wolkenstein** has joined our management team! We also want to introduce **the researchers that have become members of our centre during the past year**: We are happy to welcome all of them and appreciate their expertise that encompasses many different fields of study. This once again underscores the interdisciplinary profile and scientific excellency that our members bring to the table.

The second point we want to highlight is a section in which we want to spread good news and congratulate **Regina Polak, Jakob Deibl, Julia Mourão Permoser** and **Caroline Berghammer** on their recent academic achievements! Lastly, we also want to mention a text published on our blog that we are especially proud of: **Piero Coda**, the current Secretary General of the Holy See's International Theological Commission, has shared his experiences concerning the "16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synods of Bishops", which took place in Rome from the 4th to the 29th of October, 2023.

Other than that, this edition also includes **recent publications** by our members, a look back at past events and conferences, a presentation of a newly acquired third party funded project by **Christian Danz**, a commentary on the current escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict following the recent massacre perpetrated by Hamas, written by **Gerhard Langer**, and much more...

We wish all of our readers a nice holiday season and a happy New Year!

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](#).

NEW DEPUTY SPEAKER: Welcome to the team, Fabio Wolkenstein!

We are proud to welcome Prof. Fabio Wolkenstein as new deputy speaker of RaT! Due to his appointment our management team will now profit from his valuable Expertise.

We are very happy that Fabio Wolkenstein has agreed to take on this task and wish him the best of luck!



Assoz. Prof. Fabio Wolkenstein, Ph.D.

*Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Fabio Wolkenstein is Associate Professor of Transformations of Democracy at the University of Vienna. He is first and foremost a democratic theorist, with special focus on issues such as partisanship, political representation, and the history and theory of political ideologies, notably Christian Democracy. Most of his work transcends disciplinary boundaries, however, connecting philosophy, history, empirical social science, and legal scholarship. Prior to joining the University of Vienna, Fabio was Associate Professor of Political Science at Aarhus University and Affiliated Researcher at the University of Amsterdam.

Fabio was educated at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he received his PhD in 2016, and spent a year as a post-doctoral researcher at *Justitia Amplificata*, a research centre for political and legal philosophy associated with the Goethe University Frankfurt and the Free University of Berlin. Thus far, Fabio has published two books, *Rethinking Party Reform* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and *Die dunkle Seite der Christdemokratie* (C.H. Beck, 2022). Two further books, *Political Representation as Communicative Practice* (Cambridge University Press) and *Democratic Regressions: Subversions of Popular Rule and Paths to Recovery* (Oxford University

Press) are in progress and will appear soon.

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

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to RaT!

As 2023 draws to a close, we want to seize the opportunity and present the new researchers that have joined our centre during the last twelve months. We are proud to unite such a high level of expertise under one roof. We wish all of our new members the very best on their academic journey!



Mag. Dr. Justin ARICKAL, MBA

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

Justin Arickal studied Economics and Business Management in Cologne, Bradford and Oxford and worked for a multinational company in various managerial roles. In 2013 he pursued his theological interests and studied Theology at the University of Bonn (Mag.theol.), where he also completed his doctorate at the Department of Fundamental Theology, Theology of Religions and Philosophy of Religion (Dr. theol.). In 2021 he conducted a research stay at Yale University with a focus on hermeneutics in contemporary Theology.

His research interests include interdisciplinary hermeneutics, (ambivalent) images of God ("Gottesbilder"), Christology, Pneumatology and more recently the intersection between theological anthropology and phenomenological philosophies of the human body. In September 2023 Justin joined the Institute of Systematic Theology and Ethics (Department of Dogmatics and History of Dogmatics) at the University of Vienna as Postdoctoral University Assistant.

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



Dr. Deniz COŞAN EKE, BSc MSc MA

*Department of Islamic-Theological Studies
Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies*

Deniz Coşan Eke (Dr. phil.) is currently working as a postdoc researcher in Alevi Theological Studies at the University of Vienna in Austria. She received her Ph.D. in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in Germany. She has been a visiting researcher on transnational migration, religious groups, and interreligious dialogue at the University of Roskilde, the University of Westminster, and the University of Cambridge. She is the author of "The Changing Leadership Roles of "Dedes" in the Alevi Movement: Ethnographic Studies

on Alevi Associations in Turkey and Germany from the 1990s to the Present" (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021). She is co-editor with Eric Trinka of Religion, Religious Groups and Migration (Transnational Press, London, 2023).

She is a co-leader of the Cost Action 20107 project "Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity" (COREnet). She is also co-leader with Handan Aksünger Kizil of a project at the University of Vienna entitled "Alevi Religious Education and Digitalization in Europe: Limits, Chances and Expectations."

To learn more about Deniz Coşan Eke's research, [visit her profile on our website.](#)



Mag. Dr. Sandra LEHMANN, Privatdoz.

*Deputy Head of the Department of Intercultural Philosophy of Religion
Faculty of Catholic Theology*

Sandra Lehmann is a postdoctoral associate and deputy head of the Institute for Intercultural Philosophy of Religion at the University of Vienna. She habilitated in 2023 with a thesis on what she calls the hyperbolic character of being. Her background is in the philosophy of existence and phenomenology. She wrote her dissertation on the Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka, whose work she also translated into German. Sandra Lehmann has held a number of fellowships, including the APART fellowship of the Aistrian Academy of Sciences, and fellowships at the Centre for Theoretical Studies in Prague, the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center in Jerusalem, and the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.

She has taught at several universities, including Charles University in Prague, the University of Seville, and the Catholic University of Linz. In addition to her metaphysical project, Sandra Lehmann's research is concerned with the development of a different economy of time (from the primacy of the future to the primacy of an intensified present) and the transformative quality of violence in religious systems, for example in religious initiation rites.

To learn more about Sandra Lehmann's research, [visit her profile on our website.](#)



Mag. Dr. David NOVAKOVITS, BA MA

*Department of Practical Theology
Faculty of Catholic Theology*

My name is David Novakovits and I work at the Institute for Practical Theology at the Faculty of Catholic Theology in the field of religious education



as a post-doctoral assistant. My research interests focus on the relationship between religion and education generally and the possibility of collective educational processes in particular. The confrontation with educational, sociological and (religious) philosophical discourses is a research focus of mine.

In my dissertation, I have attempted to characterize the question of failure as a fundamental question about being human in the current cultural constellation and to make theological resources fruitful for religious learning processes in this confrontation with "failure". As a next step, I would like to explore a learning arrangement designed in the doctoral thesis in the course of an empirical project in the classroom and thereby pursue the question of to what extent and how students make use of the theological resources offered in order to deal with questions about being human in the context of failure.

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



Univ.-Prof. Dr. Kirsten RÜTHER

*Head of the Department of African Studies
Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies*

As I recently joined the RaT network it is a pleasure for me to introduce my current lines of research on religion to you. I am looking forward to discussing with you how my work on a short-lived Lutheran radio station proceeds. It is a work that derives its concern from a set of photographs kept in a Norwegian mission archive. I am developing that research as part of a social and cultural history on entanglements between religion, empire and technology, but – going beyond the immediate scope of that project – I am also always interested in reflecting on health- and religion-seekers demands from healing entrepreneurs. Geographically my research is connected to social and political transformations in either South Africa or Zambia.

What I have learnt so far from colleagues in the RaT network has inspired me. I hope we can enter many conversations along a joint academic path.

To learn more about Kirsten Rüter's research, [visit her profile on our website.](#)



Mag. Dr. Thomas SCHMIDINGER

*Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences*

Thomas Schmidinger studied Political Science and Social Anthropology at the University of Vienna. He is a lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria (Linz) and Associate



Professor at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) in Erbil (Iraq). His research focuses on Iraq, Syria and Sudan as well as religious extremism, religious and ethnic minorities, transnational conflicts and state and religion. He has published on political Islam and Jihadism and most recently on Catholic traditionalism.

He is currently writing a book about the cultural remains of the Jewish communities in Kurdistan, which is being funded by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria. Schmidinger also advises several Austrian members of the EU and parliament on Iraq, Syria and the Kurdish regions. Together with Alicia Allgäuer, curates the socio-political event series "Neue Spielräume" at Spielboden Dornbirn.

He is co-editor of the Vienna Yearbook for Kurdish Studies, which has been published since 2013.

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



Dr. Julian STRUBE, M.A.

*Department of Religious Studies
Faculty of Catholic Theology*

Julian Strube has been a postdoctoral assistant at the Institute for Religious Studies since 2021 and a RaT member since 2023. Prior to this, he worked at the Universities of Hamburg, Heidelberg and Amsterdam (including as a substitute professor). His research focuses on the global history of religion, especially on the study of Indian religions, the question of the relationship between religion and politics and the role of esotericism and alternative religiosity. Among many other publications, this has already resulted in three monographs: "Global Tantra: Religion, Science, and Nationalism in Colonial Modernity" (Oxford University Press 2022), "Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Genealogie der Schriften von Eliphas Lévi" (De Gruyter 2016) and "Vril. Eine okkulte Urkraft in Theosophie und esoterischem Neonazismus" (Fink 2013). Julian Strube is also able to expand on his research in a project currently funded by the FWF entitled "Socialist Mysticism, Mystical Socialism".

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



Dr. Fabian VÖLKER

*Department of Intercultural Philosophy of Religion
Faculty of Catholic Theology*

Fabian Völker studied philosophy and religious studies at the Universities of Münster and Oslo. He was Erasmus Visiting Scholar at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (ACCORD: Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Cultural and Religious Diversity) in 2013,



where he taught seminars on the philosophy of Vedānta. After a research stay (Sanskrit and Vedānta) in India in 2014, he was research assistant in the project “Interreligious Theology” at the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” and board member of the Center for Religious Studies (CRS) at the University of Münster. From 2016 to 2020, he was a research assistant at the Department of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology at the University of Münster, where he completed his doctorate under Prof. Dr. Perry Schmidt-Leukel in 2019. His thesis was published in 2020 as “Philosophie der Nondualität” in the series “Welten der Philosophie” by Karl Alber. Since 2021 he is Lecturer (Post-doc University Assistant) at the Department of Intercultural Philosophy of Religion at the University of Vienna.

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



Univ.-Prof. Dr. Aysun YAŞAR

*Department of Islamic-Theological Studies
Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies*

I studied Islamic Studies as main subject, Political Sciences and Communication Sciences as minor subjects at the Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg/Germany. My doctoral thesis „The DITIB between Turkey and Germany. An analysis of the Turkish-Islamic Union.” has become an international standard work, which can be tracked in international reference books and articles. In my interdisciplinary dissertation, relevant in theological and socio-political fields, I examined the foundation and development of the Turkish Religious Affairs, Diyanet, and its European branch, DITIB, from the past to the present.

My working, conducting research and teaching in Germany, Turkey, Switzerland and Austria in Islamic Theology and Islamic Studies, enabled me an outstanding internationality; my research contents and methods are broad in Islamic History, Islam and Muslim (Lives) in Present, Hadith and Quran Studies. I have expertise in academic and grassroots interreligious encounters, especially through my coordination of the project Interreligious Women's Initiative Bamberg, funded by the European Social Fund. My research concentrates on three fields: a) Islam and Muslims in History and Present b) Entanglements between Religion, Politics and (Social) Life c) Interreligious Dialogue.

To learn more about Dr. Aysun Yaşar's research, [visit her profile on our website.](#)

NEW VISITING SCHOLARS: Welcome to RaT!



Dennis Beach, OSB, Ph.D.

Dennis Beach earned his BA in English at Saint John's University in Minnesota and his doctorate in Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University, with a dissertation that examined otherness in Hegel and Levinas: *The Infinite Passion of Responsibility: A Critique of Absolute Knowing*. He is an Associate Professor at Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict in Minnesota (USA). His research interests have focused on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, sometimes within phenomenology, but also in the contexts of liberation theology and solidarity work in Latin America and social ethics generally. Teaching interests include the history of philosophy, Heidegger, Philosophy in Literature, as well as Martha Nussbaum's work on the importance of emotional intelligence and compassion in modern democratic societies. His current project involves Hans-Dieter Bahr's philosophy of the guest. Beach is a Benedictine monk of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, USA, and has long worked with undergraduate residential life at its college.

Dennis Beach will be a RaT Senior Research Fellow from January 8th to June 30th, 2024.



Dr. Katerina Koci

Katerina Koci has recently completed her Lise Meitner Fellowship funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) for the project titled "Woman without a Name: Gender Identity in Sacrificial Stories (M2947-G)" at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. During this fellowship, Katerina published numerous peer-reviewed open-access articles and contributed to volumes. She also organized workshops and public lectures, all focused on her research topic: gendered sacrifice. Katerina is the author of "The Land without Promise: The Roots and Afterlife of One Biblical Allusion" (T&T Clark, 2021).

She resides in Vienna with her husband, Martin, who is also a theologian/philosopher, and their three small children. Her research interests include biblical, feminist, and philosophical-theological hermeneutics, the afterlife of biblical motifs in Christian culture, existentialism, and the phenomenology of sacrificial experience. Katerina draws inspiration from intellectual figures such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Søren Kierkegaard, Jan Patočka, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Sarah Coakley. Her research delves into topics such as sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of women, feminine and post-colonial aspects, and violence among subalterns, as well as violence perpetrated by women against women.

Katerina Koci will be a RaT Senior Research Fellow from January 1st to June 30th, 2024.

CONGRATULATIONS



Mag. Mag. Dr. Dr. Helmut Jakob Deibl: Newly appointed Associate Professor for Religion and Aesthetics

We are very happy to announce that RaT-tenure-track professor and long time scientific manager Helmut Jakob Deibl has been promoted to the position of Associate Professor for Religion and Aesthetics at the Faculty of Catholic Theology.

We, the whole team here at RaT, consider ourselves lucky to be able to work for and with someone as competent, committed and kind as him and are glad that the University has recognized his many academic achievements and innumerable contributions.

We wish him the very best for his personal and professional future!

To learn more about Jakob Deibl's research, [visit his profile on our website](#) or the page of the [RaT research group Religion and Aesthetics](#).

November 20, 2023: Assoc.-Prof. Dr. Regina Polak: Honored as “Ambassador of Social Peace” by Dr. Michael Ludwig, Mayor of Vienna

On November 20, 2023, Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister, Imam Ramazan Demir and Associate Professor Dr. **Regina Polak** received honors ‘for the implementation of the school project ‘Ambassadors of Social Peace’ and the associated promotion of interreligious dialogue and constant coexistence across religious boundaries’ in the Senate Meeting Room of the Vienna Major City Hall. Mayor Dr. Michael Ludwig recognised their commitment to interreligious dialogue in the city of Vienna and explicitly emphasized the importance of religious communities and their coexistence for social and peaceful coexistence in times of crises.





Julia Mourão Permoser: Newly appointed Professor for Migration and Integration

The centre wants to congratulate **Julia Mourão Permoser**: Since September 1st, 2023, she has taken over the Professorship for Migration and Integration at the University for Continuing Education Krems (Lower Austria). An interview on her appointment can be read [at the University's website](#).

From 2013 to 2015, Prof. Permoser has worked in the Scientific Management Team of RaT.

We wish her all the best in her new position!

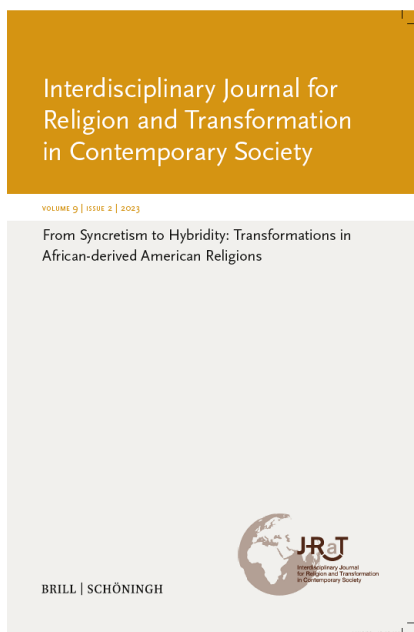


ERC Consolidator Grant for Prof. Caroline Berghammer:

The research centre is delighted to congratulate **Caroline Berghammer** on the ERC Consolidator Grant for her project "FLIN, investigating the dynamics of families juggling work-life balance in the contemporary era of flexible work arrangements"! More information about the project can be found in [the official press release by the University of Vienna](#).

Caroline Berghammer is Deputy Head and assistant professor at the Department of Sociology at the University of Vienna and her research into the sociology of religion has greatly enriched the beginnings of the research centre.

PUBLICATIONS: JRAT and RaT Series



JRAT 9 (2/2023): *From Syncretism to Hybridity: Transformations in African-derived American Religions*, edited by **Hans Gerald Hödl and Bettina Schmidt**

In this volume, we bring together research on African derived Religions in Latin America and African American Religions in the USA. Theoretically, the concepts of hybridity and syncretism are discussed in the introduction as well as in the papers included. The papers featured deal with Brazilian Umbanda, Cuban Santería, US African Black Hebrew Israelites, the Five Percenter movement (an offspring of the Nation of Islam), and one single person, Robert T. Browne, an activist in the Black Nationalist movement. In the religions covered – that are an outcome of the historical circumstances of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – elements taken from West and Central African traditions, European Christianity, and Kardecian Spiritism blend to new forms of religious movements. This being the “fundamental” transformation of religion addressed here, some essays in the volume also look at the further transformation of those traditions in a “glocalized” world.

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



RaT Series (Volume 26): *Zeiten wenden?! Konstellationen von Gottesreden nach der Postmoderne*, edited by **Anne-Kathrin Fischbach and Stephan Tautz**

"Zeitenwende" was voted "Word of the year 2022". There was much ridicule that the proclamation of the "turn of an era" was always an expression of an overestimation of one's own epoch. In fact, every era has a need to actively turn its own times around - to help build the future. On the occasion of his 60th birthday, this anthology brings together contributions by companions of the philosopher of religion and dogmatist Karlheinz Ruhstorfer, whose topological approach is particularly committed to the task of productive construction: his intuition - the order of the day is "constellation". By putting together different elements, creative processes emerge that enable productive change - a new identity. This volume explores the question of what such an identity can look like in relation to previous identities from a methodological, theological-philosophical, historical and spiritual perspective.

[Link to the publication.](#)

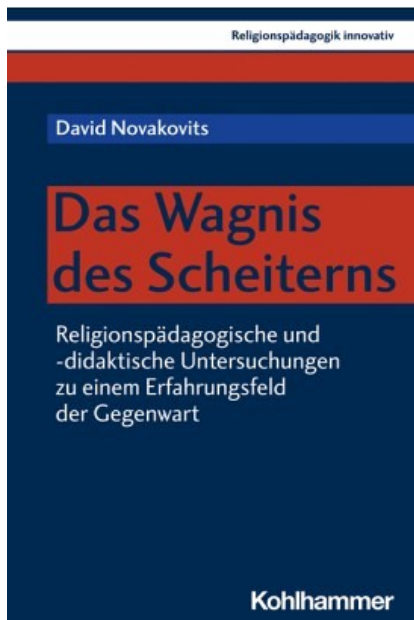
PUBLICATIONS: Monographs & Anthologies



H. Kalb, R. Potz, B. Schinkele, W. Wieshaider (eds.): Österreichisches Archiv für Recht & Religion 69 (2/2022), Freistadt: Plöchl Verlag.

With articles by the following RaT members:

- **Andreas Kowatsch:** "Die freie Religionsausübung in Zeiten der Pandemie - ein religionsrechtlicher und kanonistischer Zwischenbericht" (225-297)
- **R. Potz, B. Schinkele:** "Zur Eintragung der Frei-Alevitischen Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich" (301-345)
- **Eva Synek:** "Die Errichtung eines Patriarchalexarchats der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche in Afrika" (359-391)



David Novakovits: Das Wagnis des Scheiterns: Religionspädagogische und -didaktische Untersuchungen zu einem Erfahrungsfeld der Gegenwart. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2023.

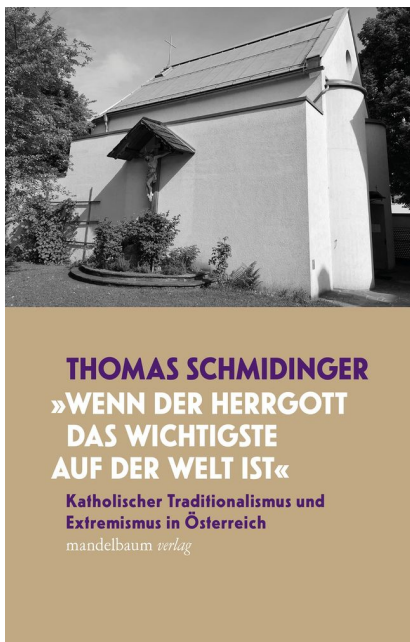
'Failure' is an iridescent term: it can cause anxiety, but it can also somehow express a particular appeal. At what point do we think that a thing (or a person) has failed, and what exactly do we associate with this expression?

The book tries to describe the social atmosphere of our present more precisely in order to be able to give an answer to these questions. What people understand by 'fail' is different at each time; but what exactly is understood by failure today? What fears are associated with this term? With the help of sociological and philosophical perspectives, the book shows that people today are strongly influenced by the fact that they have to constantly optimize themselves and at the same time they also have to perform and achieve more and more. At the same time, we are thrown back on ourselves in the question

of how to shape our lives: There are no longer any religious or cultural grand 'narratives' that answer the question of a successful life per se. The pressure on the individual to create a successful life is thus increasing - and yet at the same time there are also social conditions that significantly shape this seemingly completely individual and private project.

The work tries to work out this tension in the concept of failure. On the one hand, it tries to show that only where a risk of failure is taken, something like new meanings can be found; on the other hand, it elaborates that failure is never just a purely individual experience (or worse: a completely individual guilt). For this very reason, it is particularly interesting who a society perceives as 'failed' and who not.

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



Thomas Schmidinger: *»Wenn der Herrgott das Wichtigste auf der Welt ist«*. Katholischer Traditionalismus und Extremismus in Österreich. Wien/Berlin: Mandelbaum Verlag 2023.

Catholic traditionalists and extremists regularly take part in rallies against pride parades and the right to abortion, as well as in protests against coronavirus measures. In this, they are much less noticed by the public than Islamist extremists, for example. At the same time, numerous groups are organizing to return Austria to a supposedly ideal world of unity between religion and the state. In terms of church politics, they want to turn back the clock to before the Vatican Council, read Latin masses according to the pre-conciliar rite and consider the Vatican to be infiltrated by a conspiracy of Freemasons and Jews. While some of these currents are trying to infiltrate the Roman Catholic Church from within and bring it back to the "right path", others have completely abandoned the official church and some have even appointed antipopes.

However, this is not just about issues within the church, but also about socio-political ideas. They propagate a rigid gender hierarchy and spread anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim and homophobic resentment. The political scientist and social and cultural anthropologist Thomas Schmidinger has visited masses and events, conducted interviews with priests and believers and thus provides an overview of this scene in Austria for the first time. To this end, he interviewed protagonists and attended masses of the Pius Brothers, St. Peter's Brothers, sedisvacantist and conclavist groups. This field research, in addition

to writings by these groups, forms the basis of this monograph.

[Link to the publication.](#)

PUBLICATIONS: Selected Articles

Kurt Appel, in collaboration with Jakob Deibl, Isabella Guanzini, and Marcello Neri: *Catholic Theology, Church and Global Culture Today. Crises, Perspectives, Tasks*, in: ET-Studies 14/2 (2023), 223-240. DOI: 10.2143/ETS.14.2.3292208

This article addresses the challenges Catholic theology is facing today. The first chapter analyses current global cultural and social developments, specifically, the increasing megacities, the individualisation and virtualisation of our lives and living environments, questions of migration and neoliberalism, the ecological crisis and, in addition, the search for new narratives that assign meaning to history. The second chapter examines the ecclesial challenges arising from these changes. In particular, the changed roles of women, the necessity to establish a dialogue with other religions and the secular world, the extensive collapse experienced by the clergy in its traditional capacity as the backbone of the Church and the task of an option for the poor. In light of these analyses an attempt is made to define the current role of theology today and to identify possible tasks. These challenges consist not least of giving a voice to the vulnerability of our being and the possible failure of existence. Contemporary theology is required to discern the meaning of history precisely in the untold and silenced (hi)stories of our world at the margins of society.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Kurt Appel: *La gioiosa anticipazione. La Maddalena e l'incontro con il risorto*, in: il Regno. attualità e documenti, Anno LXVIII - N. 1400 - 15 novembre 2023, 667-674.

This article explores the contingency of the encounter between Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene that occurs at Jesus's tomb. This article interprets two important passages from the Gospel of Mark (Mk 16:1-8) and the Gospel of John (Jn 20:11-18) to reflect more deeply on this encounter. In Mark's Gospel, the result of the encounter is reference to a never-derivable and unrepresentable beginning, on which the text of Mark is built. The Gospel of John, which refers to Mark, concretizes this as the beginning of love and the covenant partnership between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, which becomes representative for all those who encounter Jesus. It is a contingent encounter because there is no external necessity. We can never realistically expect to meet a dead person again in this world, but the encounter between Mary and the risen Jesus exemplifies a contingency that ends in the freedom of love.

[Link to the publication.](#)

Hüseyin Çiçek, Jan-Markus Vömel: *The Milli Görüş Movement in Europe: Context, Activities and Strategies*, in: Thomas Jäger, Ralph Thiele (eds.): "Handbook of Political Islam in Europe". Berlin: Springer Nature 2023 (forthcoming).

[Link to the publication.](#)

Esther Heinrich-Ramharter: *Ein Denken der zweiten Potenz. Religion und Mathematik bei Simone Weil*, in: weiter. denken. Journal für Philosophie 1/2023.

Religion and mathematics are consistently present in the thinking of the French philosopher Simone Weil (1909-1943). The concept of deuxième puissance, which connects these two spheres, may be overlooked or dismissed as marginal. However, it brings together various figures and movements of mediation and makes it valuable for understanding Weil's work.

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

Katharina Limacher, Astrid Mattes, and Barbara Urbanic: *The Christian Right in Europe: Austria*, in: Gionathan Lo Mascolo (ed.): "The Christian Right in Europe. Movements, Networks, and Denominations". Bielefeld: transcript 2023, 129-146.

Austria is defined by the dominant position of the Roman Catholic Church and a traditionally inclusive approach toward religious minorities. Previously often perceived as a model for religious inclusiveness, the success of right-wing populism and power shifts within the Austrian religious landscape have clouded this positive image. In recent years, Christian-Right activism in Austria has increased significantly and has become more vocal. This article discusses the religious protagonists of the Christian Right, aspects of their narrative and ideology and the impact on their political target audience in two areas that are central to the activities of the Christian Right in Austria: Anti-genderism/anti-abortion and Christian nationalism.

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

David Novakovits: *Eine religionsphilosophische Religionspädagogik?*, in: Österreichisches Religionspädagogisches Forum, 31/2 (2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25364/10.31:2023.2.5>

The article explores the question of what potential can be discovered for the formation of students and the work in RE if philosophy of religion is increasingly used as a theological reference discipline in religious education. Where religious education initiates and shapes educational learning processes, philosophy of religion can become an interesting interlocutor: For critical inspirations and readings of religious traditions in their current social significance, as a seismograph for relevant questions and, last but not least, as a touchstone for questioning one's own theological concepts of knowledge for their probation in a post-secular public.

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

Andreas Telser: *Zwischen Misfit und plant turn. Theologie in unbekanntem Terrain*, in: LIMINA. Grazer theologische Perspektiven 6/2 (2023), 159–179. DOI: [10.25364/17.6:2023.2.11](https://doi.org/10.25364/17.6:2023.2.11)

Between misfit and plant turn. Theology in unknown territory: Theology(ies) of the future are 'projected' in the present. Theologians are increasingly seen or see themselves as misfits in academia, the church, and the wider public. This article explores the social figure of the misfit on the example of three women who occupy very different spaces but each

embody the creative potential and the 'fool's freedom' in their unique way. Theology(ies) of the future are not least determined by how well they – misfittingly! – succeed in highlighting what diversified mainstreams overlook and what is yet the basis of all human life: plants. After all, they make up 99.7 per cent of the total biomass, this is where we unearth the genuine 'root problem' ...

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

[Discover more publications by our members](#)

RESEARCH: Projects

THIRD PARTY FUNDED PROJECTS



New FWF Project: Edition of Paul Tillich's Lectures on Religion and Culture (1955/56) (P 37167-G)

Project lead: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christian Danz

Project staff: J.J. Warren

Cooperations: Austrian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society, Prof. Dr. Werner Schüßler (Trier)

In October 2023, the FWF approved the individual project *Edition of Paul Tillich's Lectures on Religion and Culture (1955/56)* (P 37167-G). In the open-access hybrid edition project, which will be carried out from January 2024 to December 2026 at the Department of Systematic Theology and the Study of Religions of the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Vienna under the direction of Prof. Danz in cooperation with the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society of the University of Vienna, Paul Tillich's lectures, which he gave at Harvard University in Cambridge/Mass. in 1955 and 1956, will be edited digitally and as a print edition. This edition of Tillich's late lectures 'Religion and Culture', which bring together his lifelong reflections on the subject of religion and culture, makes his cultural theology accessible to researchers for the first time in a summarized presentation. The edition of the new sources makes it possible to reconstruct Tillich's cultural theology in his late work phase in the USA and to place it in the context of the development of his work.

EVENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS


Research Day: "Schelling und die Folgen"

January 9, 2024, 09 a.m. - 04 p.m.


Morning session: Deans Office of the Faculty of Catholic Theology (Main Building, 2nd floor); afternoon session: seminar room 5 (Schenkenstraße 8-10)

- Presentations at the Deans Office of the Faculty of Catholic Theology (Main Building of the University of Vienna, 2nd floor, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien)
 - 09 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. JULIUS GÜNTHER: Untersuchungen zur religiösen Dimension des Unbewussten und unbewussten Dimension der Religion bei F.W.J. von Schelling
 - 10.15 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. MATTIA COSER: Das Böse in Gott? Ontologie des Bösen und des Leidens in der Philosophie Pareysons
 - 11.30 a.m. -12.30 p.m. CHRISTIAN DANZ: Über tote Hunde, Gespenster und Nichtse. Schelling und Jacobi im Streit über Gott
- Presentations at seminar room 5 (1st floor, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Wien)
 - 02 p.m. - 03 p.m. ALESSANDRO DE CESARE: Die Theorie der Formativität und die anthropologische Frage
 - 03 p.m. - 04 p.m. MALTE KRÜGER: Existiert Gott? Und wenn ja, wozu? Ein Plakat

Interested? Please register until January 8 at: marian.weingartshofer@univie.ac.at.



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FWF
Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

**Schellings Berliner Vorlesungen
über Philosophie der Offenbarung**

Workshop

1.-3. Februar 2024
Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät
1010 Wien, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 6OG, HS 3



Entwerfungszeichnungen an Schellings Vorlesungen in Berlin 1801/02

Schellings Berliner Vorlesungen über Philosophie der Offenbarung

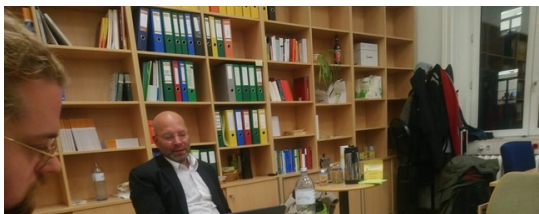
February 01-03, 2024

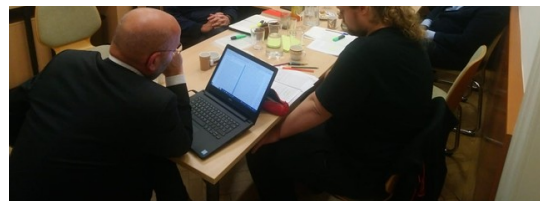
Faculty of Protestant Theology, Schenkenstraße 8-10, 1010 Vienna, 6th floor, lecture hall 3

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

PAST EVENTS

November 09, 2023: Workshop with Prof. Alexander Schnell „Marc Richirs phenomenological Metaphysics”





Prof. Alexander Schnell (Bergische Universität Wuppertal), leading scholar in research on the Belgian philosopher Marc Richir (1943-2015) and one of the most renowned philosophers of the German speaking world, held a workshop on Marc Richir's phenomenological metaphysics at the Research Centre RaT on 09. Nov. 2023. Initially Martin Eleven opened the session by presenting the role of Richir in debates related to the theological turn in phenomenology, the phenomenology of the body (Leib) and connections between Richir and, among others, Merleau-Ponty. Subsequently Prof. Schnell introduced the audience to Richir's highly complex style of thought, major milestones in his development and the ambitious project of a renewal of phenomenology.

Central themes were the fundamental role of fantasy that characterizes Richir's approach to phenomenology, the role of the body within his transcendental phenomenology and his highly demanding transformation of the philosopheme of "chôra", famously introduced in Plato and innovatively re-read by Derrida. Prof. Schnell's remarks lead to a joint reading of the text "Chôra – Topos – Raum. Die transitionale Sphäre als Grundelement der Leiblichkeit" by Richir. The workshop was part of the research network "Transcendental Philosophy, Dialectics and Phenomenology" that was founded in March 2023 in Wuppertal as an ongoing research network between Prof. Schnell's "Department of Transcendental Philosophy and Phenomenology" and RaT.

November 24, 2023: RaT Research Day: Religious Exits: Transitions and Transformations into Alternative Worlds



On November 24, another RaT Research Day took place in Melk. Special thanks go to

Noemi Call and Marian Weingartshofer for organizing and moderating the event, as well as to Jakob Deibl and the Abbey of Melk for being our hosts.

Like the last meeting on January 31 of this year, the event was held under the motto "Religious Exits: Transitions and Transformations into Alternative Worlds", the current research focus of the Centre, presented by Kurt Appel in his opening statement. This time it was important for us to offer our new members the opportunity to give an insight into their current religion-related research.

With presentations by: Fabio Wolkenstein, Regina Polak, Kirsten Rüther, Fabian Völker, Uta Heil, Katharina Ivanyi, Deniz Cosan Eke, Wolfgang Treitler, Andrea Lehner-Hartmann, and Martin Fieder.

The long day, characterized by exciting lectures and discussions, was concluded with a guided tour of the monastery led by Jakob Deibl and a joint dinner.

A detailed report on all presentations can be read on [our website](#).

Transdisciplinary Conference 'The Crisis of Democracy – The Role of Religion', 28. November 2023, Mayor City Hall, Vienna/Austria



Based on the results of the interdisciplinary study 'Values - Politics - Religion: The European Values Study. In-depth Analysis - Interdisciplinary Perspectives - Future Prospects' (ed. Regina Polak/Patrick Rohs, July 2023) and the latest COVID special editions of the European Values Study for Austria 2021/22, the transdisciplinary conference 'The Crisis of Democracy – The Role of Religion' took place under the direction of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Regina Polak (Catholic-Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna) on November 28, 2023, in the Mayor City Hall of Vienna. The conference is a project of the 'Interdisciplinary Values Research Network' at the University of Vienna.

100 participants from academia, politics, business, the education system and religious

communities spent a day discussing the ambivalent effects of subjective religiosity on attitudes that are relevant to the stability of the liberal, human rights-based democracy. Despite a high level of formal approval of democracy, fractures in the foundations of democracy became evident throughout Europe and also in Austria, as presented in the key-lectures of Susanne Pickel (University of Duisburg Essen) and Gert Pickel (University of Leipzig). Among people with an 'uninformed understanding of democracy' autocratic ideas can also be found in democratic self-images, which results in a hidden crisis of the legitimacy of democracy. In addition to social inequality, materialistic values, nationalism and racism, this result can also be explained by religiosity in some sections of the population. The impact of religious attitudes and practises on democratic values turned out to be ambivalent. However, while an active, socially committed membership and a religiosity open to plurality can even promote democratic attitudes, exclusivist religiosities are significantly more frequently associated with anti-democratic attitudes. According to the empirical results, the bridge between anti-democratic and religious attitudes is primarily formed by prejudices against minorities, in particular against Muslims, Jews and same-sex people. In dealing with these findings, the conference participants developed concrete ideas and perspectives for action on how the role of religion in promoting democracy can be strengthened by both religious communities and political actors.

Publikation (open access): Regina Polak/Patrick Rohs (eds.): Values – Politics – Religion: The European Values Study. Philosophy and Politics - Critical Explorations Volume 26. Springer, Cham. Open Access 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31364-6>.

RAT-BLOG

During the last months we published articles by our members and guest authors that cover a broad range of topics. This time, we especially want to highlight one guest contribution which we are especially proud of:

- [AM RANDE – der ersten Versammlungssitzung der Bischofssynode \(Oktober 2023\)](#), by **Piero Coda**
 - The "16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops" of the Catholic Church took place in Rome from October 4-29. Piero Coda, Secretary General of the [International Theological Commission](#), reports on his impressions and describes the numerous challenges the Church is facing today.

Check out the other recently published contributions as well:

- [Ein Standpunkt zu Israel](#), by **Gerhard Langer**
 - Since the massacre perpetrated by Hamas on October 7 and Israel's subsequent military response, the Middle East has once again become the focus of international attention. So-called "West" too, anti-Semitic attacks, often fueled by hate campaigns spread via social media, have risen sharply again since then. In his article, RaT member Gerhard Langer attempts to place the current wave of anti-Jewish hatred in today's cultural and academic context. His text is also a strong plea to take the threat seriously and to counter it with education and relentless critical reflection.
- [Das ‚Göttliche‘ im Homburger Folioheft. Über den Beginn eines partizipativen Forschungsprojektes zu Hölderlin](#), by **Jakob Deibl**, **Marco Fiorletta**, and **Andreas Telser**
 - A current FWF project on Friedrich Hölderlin's "Homburger Folioheft" explores the question of the relationship to the divine in the poet's work. In their joint contribution, the members of the project team, Jakob Deibl, Andreas Telser and Marco Fiorletta, provide an insight into the topic.
- [Das christliche Mönchtum in Ost und West: Die dauerhafte Herausforderung einer](#)

Verweltlichung, by **Vasilios N. Makrides**

- Where does Christian monasticism stand today? In his article, [Vasilios N. Makrides](#), Professor of Religious Studies (with a focus on Orthodox Christianity) at the University of Erfurt, sheds light on both the historical development and the current situation of monasticism in the East and West. His text also argues for a balance between opening up to the world and deepening spirituality.
- [The Wind Blows from Indonesia: The Emerging Global Role of Indonesian Islam](#), by **Rüdiger Lohlker**
 - Taking the ASEAN Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Conference 2023 as his starting point, RaT member Rüdiger Lohlker sheds light on the organization Nahdlatul Ulama. With its millions of members, the Indonesian organisation is, under the heading of „Humanitarian Islam“, engaged in combatting Islamic extremism in South East Asia and beyond.

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, one moew article has recently been published on their website:

- A text by **Wolfgang Treitler** on the novel "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh" by the Austrian author Franz Werfel (1890-1945), written in the wake of the Armenian Genocide: [Die Aktualität von Franz Werfels Roman "Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh"](#)

Notable Media Appearances

Hüseyin Çiçek: Analysis of the meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and German Chancellor Scholz in November 2023:

- I am excited to announce that I recently had the opportunity to share my expertise and perspectives on the upcoming meeting between Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with newspapers. In these interviews, I discussed my views on the potential impacts and expectations of this significant diplomatic event.
 - <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/.../hamas-israel-fluchtlinge...>
 - <https://www.kleinezeitung.at/.../erdogans-heikler-besuch...>
 - <https://www.schwaebische.de/.../vor-besuch-in-deutschland...>
 - <https://www.rundschau-online.de/.../besuch-in-berlin...>
 - <https://www.oz-online.de/.../Erdogan-will-Klartext-reden...>

Hüseyin Çiçek has written a commentary for the Austrian daily "derStandard": *Die Zerrissenheit der türkisch-israelischen Beziehungen* ("The rifts in Turkish-Israeli relations"). The article has been published in the print edition of November 21, 2023 and can be read online [here](#).

Rüdiger Lohlker and **Thomas Schmidinger** both gave their expert opinion on the so called "Operation Luxor", a highly controversial counter terrorism operation, originally conducted by the Austrian police in 2020, which has yielded not a single conviction in the three years since:

- [ORF \(Austrian public service broadcast\): Praxis – Religion und Gesellschaft 15.11.2023: Anamnese der „Operation Luxor“](#)

Julian Strube was interviewed for the ORF (Austrian public service broadcast) program "Kreuz und Quer" for a feature about spiritism in Austria in the early 20th century:

- [Kreuz und Quer: Wilma spukt - Auf den Spuren des Spukphänomens.](#)

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Impressum

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