

ATTR Members and Guests, PhD Projects

Abercrombie, Lloyd Gregory. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

“Continuity and Change in an Age of Transition: Biblical Reception and Manuscript Culture in Coptic Literature in Early Islamic Egypt”

My project will look at Coptic literature around the time of the Arab conquest of Egypt. The project has two aims: (1) to document how, and toward what ends, biblical and extra-biblical motifs were employed in this period in comparison to the Byzantine period (continuity and change in biblical reception); (2) to document and analyze how manuscript patronage, production, and dissemination occurred in this period in comparison with the Byzantine period (continuity and change in manuscript culture).

Berg, Andreas I. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

“Same sex marriage as assimilation or equality through difference: A Queer Theological discourse on intimate relationships.”

Generally, in western society, and specifically, in theology, the discourse on intimate relationship is predominantly formed by what Judith Butler names a heterosexual matrix. i.e. a system that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. When met with humans that deviates in a significantly way from this heterosexual matrix, such as LGBTIQ+ persons, the theological discourse strikes a problem: How can one discuss a theology of intimate relationship, without assimilating LGBTIQ+ persons in to a heterosexual matrix? My dissertation will explore this possibility through two main lines. First I will collect qualitative data by interviewing people who personally define themselves as LGBTIQ+ persons. I will examine in what space my informants construct and construe intimate relationships. Second I will use this data in a theological discourse to figure out how a heterosexual matrix can be deconstructed as space for theological construction of intimate relationships, thus constructing a queer space, liberated from a heterosexual matrix on intimate relationships.

Bretfeld-Wolf, Ann-Kathrin. Department of Philosophy and Religious studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

“A Story of Space. Theravāda Buddhist Historiography and the Construction of Sacred Spaces in South- and Southeast Asia”

The project takes the Theravāda Buddhist historiographical literature (vaṃsa genre) as a point of departure in order to investigate the question how Buddhist communities have been constituted through spatial interrelations in South- and Southeast Asia. The exploration of shared identities is executed with the focus on Buddhist relics and the construction of sacred sites, described in these historiographical texts.

Costa, Bruno. Department of archaeology, history, cultural studies and religion, Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen.

„Insular Inquisition. The Holy Office in the Atlantic Islands (16th – 17th centuries)”

This project will evaluate the activity of the Spanish and the Portuguese Inquisition in the Atlantic archipelagos (Azores, Canaries, Cape Verde, Madeira, and São Tomé and Príncipe). By resorting to the comparative method, it will analyze the agents of the Holy Office and its activity (trials, visitations, and visits to the ships), trying to establish concordance and discordance between those spaces.

Eriksen, Evelyn. University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway

"The Principle of the Best Interests of the Child in kindergarten context"

The PhD-project investigate how the Principle of the Best interests of the Child is concretized, understood, and practiced in a kindergarten context, by analysing different authoritative texts, and interviewing kindergarten teachers. Texts being analysed, is various expert, political and legal documents relating to both Norwegian kindergarten and the principle of the best interests. The study is conducted through the lens of social constructionism and apply a hermeneutic understanding.

Folkestad, Ragnhild Schiager. Department of Philosophy and Religious studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

"Musical understanding, meaning-relations and the grammar of aesthetical language games. – New perspectives on the later Wittgenstein and the relation of music and language."

My research project will look closely into some of the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), with a main focus on his writings and remarks about music in relation to philosophy. In the vast commentary literature on Wittgenstein, commentators have barely started to pay attention to Wittgenstein combined enquiry of aesthetics and language. It is my aim to explore and to bring out this aspect of Wittgenstein's texts.

Heesch, Jon Petter. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

"Deconstructing die Sichtungszeit- understanding Zinzendorfs Blood and Wounds theology"

Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760): founder of Herrnhut, visionary, "count without borders", world wide traveller, missionary and mystic. Die Sichtungszeit (the Sifting Period has, almost without exception, been interpreted as the period between 1743 and 1750, widely accepted since Hermann Plitts three volume work on the life of Zinzendorf (1871), and to this day. Why is one scientific interpretation regarded as normative for such a long time? My thesis is a reading of texts spanning the whole literary production of Zinzendorf. My aim is to convey that the key features of die Sichtungszeit are present throughout his works, also the ones preceding 1743. Furthermore, I will widen the scope by showing that his theology carries influences from a much wider Christian tradition. Constructing a certain timeframe has been a nice and tidy approach, but it is flawed.

Kloster, Sven Thore. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

“Text and Tradition: A critical study of interpretations of historical continuity in a contemporary Protestant theology“

The overall research question of the project is “how can the relation between historical continuity and change be interpreted and conceptualized within contemporary Lutheranism?” From a Protestant point of view this question concerns hermeneutical topics such as authority, tradition and textual interpretation. The project explores constructions of history and tradition in the theologies of Gerhard Ebeling and Christine Helmer and subsequently brings these interpretations into dialogue with Michel Foucault’s critical thinking and Aleida Assmann’s concept of cultural memory. Thus, in a wider sense, the project also elaborates on the relation between systematic theology and contemporary intellectual thinking.

Niangwujia, Xxx. Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo.

"Rituals to Sacred Mountains and Religious Authority in Amdo"

My research focus will be on a sacred mountain in the Tibetan region, in Qinghai Province, PRC. Its supernatural ruler is revered as a guardian deity. The objective is the documentation, systematization and analysis of rituals to this cult. Research questions are what is the cosmological logic of local religious cults and their relation to the social and cultural contexts, how they change and relate to local religious authorities.

Seljeseth, Ida. Department of linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo

"Clear Language and Citizenship "

The main goal for this project is to develop a method for clear language work, based on classic and modern rhetorical insights into language, text and communication. The project will include an exploration of the term clear language - both how it is used in Norway today, and in light of rhetoric, social semiotic and pragmatic theory

Sætre, Per Kristian Hovden. Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo.

“Solomon Between the Lines. Meanings Made by the Memories of Solomon in the Gospel of Matthew.”

The project investigates how diverse first century traditions connected to Israel’s king Solomon may have informed the first readers of the Gospel of Matthew and influenced their interpretation of the text and their image of Jesus.

Tutty, Paula. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

“The monks of Nag Hammadi: contextualising a monastic community in late antique Egypt”

Amongst the cartonnage material of the Nag Hammadi Codices were discovered a group of letters belonging to a community of fourth century monks. The main objective of my research is to contextualise this community in order answer important questions regarding our present understanding of the monastic manuscript culture of the period and the production of surviving literary texts.

Røren, Anastasia K., Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo.

"Documenting the nation: Documentaries as discursive nation-building Tools."

The project Documenting the nation: Documentaries as discursive nation-building tools aims to investigate how the nation-building in Russia is visually documented, to investigate to which extent images and texts have been appropriated by different stakeholders (state, church, authorities, society and media) and interpreted in the documentaries.

Woker, Hilde University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway

"The interaction between law, science and technology within the law of the sea"

The law of the sea is destined to be troubled by interactions between law, science and technology. It is, after all, a legal convention regulating the physical and technical use of the oceans and their resources. This forces lawyers and Judges to delve into scientific questions, which they are not qualified to do. My thesis aims to provide an analysis on the philosophical interaction between law, science and technology, and what this means for international adjudication.

Zakariassen, Kari. The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

"Trees of Knowledge"

My PhD project "Trees of Knowledge" is within the field of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies. I am interested in trees that are related to knowledge and can be interpreted as oracle trees. In addition to examination of texts from the Hebrew Bible, I will investigate comparative textual material and iconographic material from the ancient Near East.

Guests

Breu, Clarissa. Universität Wien, Evangelisch-theologische Fakultät, Institut für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, Wien, Austria.

"John and Revelation. A postmodern analysis of the relation between text and author"

In my dissertation, I analyze John in Revelation as an author from the point of view of postmodern literary theories focusing on the question of how authorship affects the text's authority. John is seen as part of the text, as a function attributed to the text. The text of Revelation and its reception in exegetical literature and other interpretational processes are being analyzed and compared to other apocalyptic texts.

Linjamaa, Paul

“Tripartite Tractate and Early Christian Ethics”

In my dissertation I deal with a text that has received unduly little attention. The Tripartite Tractate is the longest text in the Nag Hammadi-library (not counting the severely fragmented Zostrianos-text). I engage the ethics of the text and discuss some previously unstudied aspects of early Christian ethics. For example, I discuss the question of early Christian determinism and the possibility of creating a viable ethical system even though one rejected the theory of free will. The reception of Platonism is often noticed in discussion of this text but I argue that we also need to pay close attention to the reception of Stoic and Peripatetic philosophy in studies of early Christian ethics. I also engage questions that deal with the category Valentinianism. For example I scrutinize the category "School of Valentinus" and how we should understand the categories material, psychic and pneumatic which are often presented as typical Valentinian characteristics.

Winterberg, Alberto Alfredo

„The authority of memory: Cultural semiotics and mnemohistorical traces of Ancient Egypt in Late Antique Hermetism“

The investigation of textual authority is a fundamental tenet of my dissertation project in a twofold way. While the texts I deal with are to be understood as philosophical and religious authorities for the reader of Antiquity, their peculiar Egyptianizing elements can be explained as mnemohistorical representations stemming from the Graeco-Roman fascination for Egypt. Thus, the current investigation is concerned about the dominance of a certain discourse, which in turn moulds a certain genre of philosophical and religious speculation due to its mnemohistorical representation of Egypt as a source and origin of the Hermetic doctrine. The approach towards this project is by its very own nature interdisciplinary, as its theoretical tenets are to be found in the sociology of Maurice Halbwachs, the investigations of Ancient History, Classical Philology and Egyptology. A further exchange of theory and methodology with further fields of research will surely be of benefit for all participants.

Since its first modern scientific investigations by the so-called Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, the Late Ancient, only literary proven, thought stream called Hermetism gave rise to a series of heated debate. Due to its apparently paradoxical nature – a mixture of Greek philosophy, Hellenistic Judaic thought and a narrative framework consisting of several Ancient Egyptian motifs and mythologumena – the investigation of its possible Egyptian origins became a very controversial concern. While the proponents of an Egyptian genealogy mainly tried to prove their claims by the comparison of mythological parallels in the Hermetic texts with Egyptian sources, their opponents devalued the Egyptian component by reducing it to a mere stylistic device or façade without attaching too much meaning to it.

The aim of this dissertation project is to explore the Egyptian motifs in Hermetic literature from another point of view. Rooted in the theory of mnemohistory of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs – which in turn was received and deepened to a specific context of Egyptian Antiquity by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann – the form and function of the reception of Ancient Egyptian motifs shall be investigated from this point of view. While this notion does not strive toward the discovery of an Urtext which was trans- and deformed in later stages of development, it values every textual stage as it is. Mnemohistory acknowledges that every act of remembering is accomplished in a certain moment – right now – and is therefore highly dependent on the circumstances in which the memory is processed. Moreover, the memory of the remembered object is not the object itself, but a mental representation, as mentioned, conditioned by many factors.

With this underlying theory, the form, context and function of the received Egyptian mythologumena shall be investigated and proven as meaningful sources of legitimation and authority, which derive their sense from the previous Greek historiographical and philosophical discourse about Egypt. In this sense, the mentioned extreme approaches of “pure comparison” and “pure fiction” shall be avoided and the cultural semiotics of the Egyptian Hermes shall be made clear.

The analytical framework for this project is derived from a branch of German historians of Classical Antiquity (Westermann, Rosenberger), who have investigated its reception in other contexts. This fourfold model consists of the base of reception, the objects of reception, the method of reception and the interest of reception.

The base of reception consists of the totality of all available information about a certain subject

which enables the process of reception itself, which in this case consists of the discourse about Egypt. The objects of reception, in this project, are the Egyptian motifs and mythologumena. The method of reception consists of the analysis of how the received objects are treated and what function they do accomplish on an intratextual level. Finally, the interest of reception will be derived from the contextualization of the previous analytical steps and shall demonstrate how the mnemohistorical authority in the fields of metaphysics of Ancient Egypt serves as a legitimation strategy for the genre of the philosophical Hermetic literature.

Calhoun, Allen

“History of Taxation in Christian Theological Thought”

My research seeks to excavate the narrative of the law of taxation as it has developed in the Christian tradition, examining particularly what tax is, and what it is for, through the history of Christian theology. A further purpose of my study is to determine how and when distributive justice was formalized and became connected to the practice of taxation.

My PhD research project seeks to excavate the theological narrative of taxation in western history. Although political and cultural developments connect the highlights, the project is primarily a text-based study.

The project’s starting point is to identify the contemporary problems in tax philosophy. These problems include (1) the fragmentation of law into areas that support market forces and areas—like tax—that are thought to promote justice and equity, and (2) the lack of a substantive norm of justice to enable tax law to meet its supposed goal. The project then asks whether these problems came about historically. The overarching question is whether there is a theological component—now missing—in the history of western tax philosophy that can explain the contemporary problems. That is, did theological commitments once order the ideas in tax philosophy that continue to operate but now seem unrelated and contradictory?

The project’s specific research questions include the following:

- Which thinkers in the western Christian tradition provided political theologies in which tax philosophies were integrated? The institution of taxation itself operates as authoritative and operates through authoritative texts. The writers discussed in the project accept the authority of

tax laws in various ways, but they had to labor to square that authority with the authority of scripture and other theological authorities.

- What concerns and issues (e.g., private versus communal property, concern for the poor, conceptions of justice and the common good) informed what those theological thinkers said about taxation? One goal of the project is to document how biblical and patristic texts were employed, especially from the 13th century onward, to justify and explain the institution of taxation.
- What, if any, coherent narrative of the theology of taxation can be traced through the history of the western church? Some of the texts that the project engages—Aquinas' Summa, for example—became authoritative. The project seeks to determine to what extent these authoritative texts influenced later tax philosophy.
- Are there strands of political theology as focused on taxation that can be traced historically to viewpoints engaged in contemporary discussions of tax philosophy? For instance, the current debate between adherents of tax optimality and proponents of deontological tax philosophies reflects the long-standing philosophical disagreements between utilitarians and Kantians. Can aspects of that dialog be followed farther back, to the Reformation and the Middle Ages?
- If so, can a contribution to the contemporary discussion be made by recovering the theological concerns that originally structured views and justifications of taxation and of particular tax systems? Are the options for thinking about tax in our age the residue of theological conceptions of taxation that lost their theological content?

The project is cross-disciplinary, supervised by faculty in theological ethics and legal history. It is historical in structure, focusing on salient moments of relevant intellectual history (Aquinas, Ockham, Luther, and Calvin so far), but connecting those moments with political, economic, and social history to place intellectual developments in context.