

Authenticity

Abstracts & Readings

Terje Stordalen (UiO)

Authenticity: An Introduction

In daily language “Authenticity” is associated with originality, honesty, and truthfulness – but also with representativity and self-fulfillment. Authenticity is highly valued, and so has the potential to secure (or loose) monetary, social, and moral capital for those who do (or do not) have access to it. This introduction recounts a few lexical and conceptual definitions of authenticity before reviewing actual use of the concept in academic writing. The review shows that the lexical and conceptual distinctions between different “types” of authenticity does not hold true in actual use of the concepts. Moreover, it is suggested that (also scientific) statements on authenticity are basically evaluative speech acts that engage also the values of the scientist (and her culture of science). Based on Charles Taylor’s view that the present is a “culture of authenticity”, the introduction attempts to explain why different dimensions of authenticity so easily blends in actual speech acts. Based on an article by Siân Jones the introduction briefly reflects on fundamentally different approaches to authenticity: objectivist, constructivist, and relational. If there is time, a brief “Afterword” will address the question of authenticity of sources in the age of Digital Humanities.

Required reading

Jones, S. 2010. “Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves: Beyond the Deconstruction of Authenticity.” *Journal of Material Culture* 15(2): 181–203.*

Årstein Justnes (UiA)

Authenticity, Provenance, and the Dead Sea Scrolls

The forgery of more than 80 so-called post-2002 Dead Sea Scrolls-like fragments, and the subsequent publishing of a majority of these, disclosed a crisis in the field of Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran studies. The fragments were promoted by leading scholars and published by some of the most reputable experts in the field, in leading journals or by major publishers. Many of the fragments also passed advanced physical testing and were authenticated by renowned manuscript experts. As a result, the fragments became—and in many ways still are—part of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls dataset, even though they are undocumented, unprovenanced, and forged.

This session will focus on the following questions: What exactly is a Dead Sea scroll in the twenty-first century? What are the scholarly and intellectual implications that most of the Dead Sea scrolls and fragments are unprovenanced? Is there a way to restore the authenticity and provenance of looted manuscripts and fragments? Can physical testing, paleographical analysis, textual or text-critical analysis, etc., alone or in combination, make unprovenanced and looted fragments “great” again?

Required reading

Mizzi, D. and J. Magness. 2019. “Provenance vs. Authenticity: An Archaeological Perspective on the Post-2002 ‘Dead Sea Scrolls-Like’ Fragments.” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 26: 135–69.*

Recommended reading

Justnes, Årstein, and Josephine M. Rasmussen. "Soli Deo Gloria? The Scholars, the Market, and the Dubious Post-2002 Dead Sea Scrolls-like Fragments." *The Bible and Interpretation*, November 2017.

<https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/2017/11/jus418014>

Trygve Wyller (UiO)

Authenticity and Ethics: Some Reflections on what it Means to Trust a Scholar

There is always an ethical dimension when discussing authenticity. The obvious ethical issue concerns, of course, the relation between the scholar and the manuscript/text/source. Is the scholar convinced that the manuscript/text/source is authentic, i.e. historically reliable and dating back to the time for which it claims to have its origin? Is the public convinced that the scholar is authentic, in the sense of being trustworthy?

Issues of authenticity become more complex, however, when the role of the scholar moves from being a neutral observer to an active participant in the scholar/text relation. In this perspective, questions concerning the otherness of the text and the ethical relation between something known and something foreign pops up. Is there an ethics of authenticity to pursue in such contexts? Is such an ethic more connected to the relationality in play than to the strict role of observing otherness?

This session will present positions of authenticity from Heidegger, via Taylor to contemporary phenomenology and some perspectives from studies on materiality in the humanities. Short reflection on some issues of self-experienced in-authenticity will also be added.

Required reading

Taylor, C. 1992. *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 1–12, 25–29, 43–54.*

"Authenticity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/>

Recommended reading

Wyller, T. 2021. "The sensory and the heterotopic. Traces of a decentering ecclesiology", pp. 144–55 in Roth, U. and A. Giley. *Die religiöse Positionierung der Dinge. Zur Materialität und Performativität religiöser Praxis*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.*

Raha Rafii (Exeter)

When Is a Manuscript Not a Manuscript?

The expansion of digital humanities in the last decade has led to a widespread increase in manuscript digitization projects by libraries, universities, and other organizations. But what does it mean to digitally manipulate a manuscript, and how does digitization predetermine how a manuscript is accessed and analyzed? Using the example of US/Europe-based university projects digitizing Islamic manuscripts in Southwest Asia, we will discuss how questions of authenticity regarding objects circumvent larger questions of colonialism, inequitable resource distribution, and the rights of origin communities.

Required reading

E. C. Kropf. 2017. "Will that Surrogate Do?: Reflections on Material Manuscript Literacy in the Digital Environment from Islamic Manuscripts at the University of Michigan Library," *Manuscript Studies*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 4 (Spring).*

Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/mss_sims/vol1/iss1/4

Recommended reading

O. Akkerman. 2019. "The Bohra Manuscript Treasury as a Sacred Site of Philology: A Study in Social Codicology," *Philological Encounters* 4: 182-201.*

S. Alexie, "My Mother Was a Dictionary," *Literary Hub* (May 12, 2017).

<https://lithub.com/eulogy-a-poem-by-sherman-alexie/>

(This reading is a poem tying into issues concerning the rights of origin communities and notions of authority and preservation.)

Preserving the Iraqi Jewish Archive (PIJA), <https://ijarchive.org/>

(I would like students to explore the website and note how PIJA presents the history of the archive materials, the method of their digitization, the use of the digitized materials, and the identified origin community at face value.)

Morten Beckmann (UiA)

Bible Translation as Authentication of Protestant Orthodoxy

The early Christians identified truth with origin, purity, and essence. For both Irenaeus and Tertullian, the essential truth was given by Jesus to the apostles. The apostles, in turn, passed on the truth ("the rule of faith") to their successors, the bishops. The essential truth of orthodox origins was encapsulated in the rule of faith, which guaranteed its purity through apostolic succession (King 2003: 36). All who rejected or denied this notion were heretics. The unbroken chain of male apostolic succession authenticated and preserved orthodoxy. This strategy to define orthodoxy and heresy are alive and well today, especially in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church, which still rely on this genealogical understanding to affirm the authentic truth of their Church. Due to their different ecclesiological understanding, most Protestant churches have a rather different way of authenticating orthodoxy. To them, the Bible is the final authority for orthodoxy. This lecture will focus on the way in which Bible translations function as authentications of Protestant Orthodoxy, and how they serve as a means of illustrating the true, authentic version of Christianity. The lecture will take the Bible translation *Bibel 2011* (Norwegian Bible Society) as a point of departure and will focus on a media debate that took place between 2017–2020. It analyzes how *Bibel 2011* became embedded in the discourse of orthodoxy and heresy, and how the publishers reinscribed and reproduced the ancient discourse of orthodoxy and heresy, albeit in a modified Protestant fashion.

Required reading

A. Cameron. 2008. "The Violence of Orthodoxy", in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, p. 102–114. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

K. King (2003). *What is Gnosticism?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pages: 22–38.

Recommended reading

M. Beckmann. 2019. *Jesus i oversettelsen*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk. Pages: 417–427.

Nils H. Korsvoll (UiA)

Authenticity All the Way: What Does Authenticity Mean at the Many Stages from Origin to Scholar?

New philology and the material turn have taught us to also take a manuscript's material features and history into account when we study historical sources. As philological scholars we have certain notions and criteria for assessing a source's authenticity, but what about the various agents and offices involved in bringing the manuscript to our desks and microscopes? This session discusses what authenticity means in archaeology, antiquities trading, national and international law, criminal networks and police agencies – all disciplines or arenas that direct the selection and flow of historical manuscripts from their various origins to the attention of scholars.

Required reading

Korsvoll, Nils H. In press. "Disciplinary Pitfalls: How Good Philology Can Mask Bad Provenance." In N. Brodie, M. M. Kersel and J. M. Rasmussen (eds.), *Variant Scholarship: Ancient Texts in Modern Contexts*. Sidestone Press.

Recommended reading

Kersel, Morag M. 2006. "From the Ground to the Buyer: A Market Analysis of the Trade in Illegal Antiquities." In N. Brodie, M. M. Kersel, C. Luke and K. Walker Tubb (eds.), *Archaeology, Heritage and the Antiquities Trade*. University of Florida Press, pp. 188-205.

Kersel, Morag M. 2019. "Pots from the City of Sin: The Consequences of Buying Holy Land Antiquities." *The Oriental Institute*. Video lecture. Published March 7th, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWHOIW0ih3Q>

Mackenzie, Simon. 2011. "Illicit Deals in Cultural Objects as Crimes of the Powerful." *Crime Law and Social Change* 56: 133-153.

Josephine Munch Rasmussen (NIKU)

Making a Case for the Authenticity of Forgeries

Any research on ancient objects and manuscripts must deal with the provenance of its sources. Sometimes the provenance is clear and documented, but for some researchers, complex provenance issues disrupt their research agenda. Illicitly sourced, disputed, dubious, or forged objects represent serious challenge to scholarship, but also provide a fertile context for discussions of authenticity, validity, and integrity.

My contribution to this PhD seminar is based on experiences of doing research and academic work across disciplines that put different, competing, and sometimes mutually exclusive values on material and textual heritage.

In this session, we will be leaning into possible value of forgeries in research. The methodological (and ethical) implications of potential forgeries in scholarly datasets are used to address a fundamental issue: What is the authenticity of our data?

Required reading

Benjamin, W. [1935] 2008. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." Available online: <https://raley.english.ucsb.edu/wp-content/uploads/Benjamin-art.pdf>

Recommended reading

Chapman, R. and Wylie, A. 2016. *Evidential Reasoning in Archaeology*. Chapter 3. Working with Old Evidence. Bloomsbury: London. 93-141.*

Jones, S. 2010. "Negotiating Authentic Objects and Authentic Selves." *Journal of Material Culture* 15 (2): 181–203.*

Birgit Meyer (Utrecht University)

Politics of Authentication

Authenticity has a value that should not be taken at face-value in scholarly research. Rather than allowing to be summoned into authenticating certain persons, things, or performances on the basis of scientific authority, scholars are to take a step back and pay detailed attention to unfolding politics of authentication, and the projects of identity and belonging to which they speak. Our contemporary world is characterized by a dynamic of repetition, reproduction and imitation which fuels the quest for authenticity. Against this backdrop, it is important to grasp how authenticity is produced as a value which can be mobilized against the spectre of "fake" and in favour of exclusivist identity politics. The point here is not a mere deconstruction that reveals how what is taken as authentic is actually made up, but a deeper understanding of the quest behind the striving for authenticity – the presumed congruence of appearance and essence – in our contemporary world. I will exemplify these points by drawing examples from recent research on cultural heritage and religion, which both form privileged fields for the cultural production of the real framed as authentic.

Required reading

Van de Port, Mattijs & Birgit Meyer, 2018, "Introduction. Heritage Dynamics: Politics of Authentication, Aesthetics of Persuasion and the Cultural Production of the Real." In: B. Meyer and M. Van de Port (eds), *Sense and Essence. Heritage and the Cultural Production of the Real*, New York & Oxford: Berghahn, Material Mediations Series. Pp. 1-39. <http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/MeyerSense>
PDF: https://www.berghahnbooks.com/downloads/intros/MeyerSense_intro.pdf

Recommended reading

Duane Jethro, 2013, An African Story of Creation: Heritage Formation at Freedom Park, South Africa. *Material Religion* 9 (3): 370-393.*

Andreas Reckwitz, 2018, The Creativity Dispositif and the Social Regimes of the New. In: W. Rammert et al (eds), *Innovation Society Today*. Wiesbaden: Springer. Pp. 127-145.
https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-658-19269-3_6.pdf

[Items marked with an asterisk (*) are available from the ATTR administration.]