

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
12TH BIENNIAL EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
ON THE
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Evangelische Akademie Hofgeismar
27-30 August 1998

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Zürich 1998

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THURSDAY 27 August

- 3.00-5.00 pm Arrivals and Registration
6.00 pm Dinner
7.30 pm **SESSION I:** Historical Religion and Human Religiosity:
The Legacy of Schleiermacher in Today's Pluralist Culture
Chairperson: Prof. Dr. Reijo Työrinoja
Speakers: First paper: Prof. Dr. Eilert Herms (Tübingen)
Second paper: Dr. Wessel Stoker (Amsterdam)

FRIDAY 28 August

- 8.15-9.00 am Breakfast
9.15 am **SESSION II:** The Epistemology of Religion:
Understanding Religion(s) and Religious Understanding
Chairperson: Dr. Michael Durrant
Speakers: First paper: Prof. Dr. Ilse Bulhof (Notre Dame/Leiden)
Second paper: Dr. Catharina Stenqvist (Uppsala)
10.45 am Coffee
11.15 am Group discussions
12.30 pm Lunch
1.15 pm Excursion to Kassel
6.00 pm **SESSION III:** Contemporary Philosophy of Religion
in the German Speaking Countries
Chairperson: Prof. Dr. Ingolf U. Dalferth
Speaker: Prof. Dr. Hartmut Rosenau (Duisburg)
7.30 pm Conference Dinner

SATURDAY 29 August

- 8.15-9.00 am Breakfast
9.15 am **SESSION IV:** Religious Pluralism and Commitment:
Religion, Superstition, Ideology and the Limits of Faith
Chairperson: Prof. Dr. Henk Vroom
Speakers: First paper: Prof. Dr. John Clayton (Boston)
Second paper: PD Dr. Matthias Jung (Frankfurt/Chemnitz)
10.45 am Coffee
11.15 am Group discussions
12.30 pm Lunch
2.30 pm **SESSION V:** Imagination and Truth:
Religious Truth-Claims and the Aesthetics of Religious Symbolisms
Chairperson: Prof. Dr. Vincent Brümmer
Speakers: First paper: Dr. Ola Sigurdson (Lund)
Second paper: Dr. Patrick Sherry (Lancaster)
4.30 pm Tea
5.00 pm General meeting of the Society
6.00 pm Dinner
8.00 pm **Final plenary discussion**
Chairperson: Prof. Dr. Ann Loades

SUNDAY 30 August

- 8.15 am Breakfast
9.00 am Departure

EUROPEAN SOCIETY
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THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION

1. HISTORICAL RELIGION AND HUMAN RELIGIOSITY:
THE LEGACY OF SCHLEIERMACHER IN TODAY'S PLURALIST CULTURE

Suggested Subthemes: Is religion a contingent historical fact of our cultural past and present or a necessary requirement of human life? Is it possible not to be religious? Is feeling a proper basis for describing and evaluating religion(s)? Are there natural (biological) and/or cultural (social) roots of religion? Can religion be grounded in human subjectivity? Can societies exist without (organized) religion? Is religion necessarily a socially identifiable tradition or common form of life? Do religions need public rites and forms of common worship or can they be lived purely privately? Can societies be without a civil religion? What, if any, are the religious dimensions of everyday life? Are there serious functional equivalents of religion? Do religions need (functional equivalents to) a concept of God?

1ST SPEAKER: EILERT HERMS (TÜBINGEN)

2ND SPEAKER: WESSEL STOKER (AMSTERDAM)

2. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF RELIGION:
UNDERSTANDING RELIGION(S) AND RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING

Suggested Subthemes: What does it mean to understand a religion, a religious belief or a religious conviction? Is it possible to understand the religious convictions of somebody else? Is sharing a belief a condition for understanding it? How can we compare religious traditions? What is the relation between cognitive, psychological, esthetic, moral functions and aspects of religion? In which sense, if any, can we speak of religious understanding or knowledge? What do we understand in religion? How does religious insight and understanding compare to scientific explanation? How far can sociology explain the phenomena of religion?

1ST SPEAKER: ILSE BULHOF (NOTRE DAME/LEIDEN)

2ND SPEAKER: CATHARINA STENQVIST (UPPSALA)

3. CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
IN THE GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRIES

HARTMUT ROSENAU (DUISBURG)

4. RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND COMMITMENT:
RELIGION, SUPERSTITION, IDEOLOGY AND THE LIMITS OF FAITH

Suggested Subthemes: Are there criteria for the acceptability or inacceptability of a religious faith? On which grounds can religions be criticized? Do the varieties of religious belief and commitment allow for a unifying view of religion? Is it possible to distinguish between serious and non-serious religions or faiths? What, if any, are the limits of true or authentic religion or faith? Is it seriously possible to adhere to more than one religion or to avoid to choose between religions? What is the difference between living a faith and knowing about (other) faiths? Is it possible not to be absolutist about one's own religion or religious convictions? What, if any, are the alternatives to syncretism?

1ST SPEAKER: JOHN CLAYTON (BOSTON)

2ND SPEAKER: MATTHIAS JUNG (FRANKFURT A.M./CHEMNITZ)

5. IMAGINATION AND TRUTH: RELIGIOUS TRUTH-CLAIMS
AND THE AESTHETICS OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISMS

Suggested Subthemes: What is the role of narratives, myths, metaphors and ineffability in religion? Can religious attitudes be compared to or even be reduced to aesthetic attitudes? Is religion grounded in imagination? What is the role of transcendence, mystery and ultimacy in religion and aesthetics? Does it make sense to speak of truth in religion and/or in art? In which sense, if any, are religious notions such as god, sin or salvation aesthetic categories? How can religious insights be communicated?

1ST SPEAKER: OLA SIGURDSON (LUND)

2ND SPEAKER: PATRICK SHERRY (LANCASTER)