

Sessions and abstracts – *Religion and Spirituality as Sites of Learning*

Monday 15 May

11:00

Keynote - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Terhi Utriainen

Kim Knott - Lancaster University

The case for 'unlearning' in the study of religions: Pros and cons, interconnections and added value

In the popular and academic literature, the concept of 'unlearning' is overwhelmingly positive. It is posited as a necessary yet transformational process that allows for reflexivity, rejuvenation and radical change. But the concept has also been challenged by critics who question its definitional and theoretical clarity and empirical value.

Turning to the study of religions, would the addition of 'unlearning' to the conceptual and practical toolbox face similar problems or can a case be made for it? Is there any need for it in the crowded space of 'learning', 'socialization' and 'religious change', of biographical processes such as spiritual seeking and conversion careers, and of other concepts, such as 'deconversion', 'disaffiliation', 'leaving religion', and 'deprogramming'? Might 'unlearning' have a role to play in drawing together a cluster of ideas that have popular traction, such as loss of belief, forgetting, discarding old habits (rituals, dress, group-speak etc), erasing unhelpful thoughts, and withdrawing from groups or networks. Is it best seen as a developmental stage in the spiritual journey, a strategy for leaving or moving on from a religious commitment, or just a wellbeing practice designed to give the mind and body a deep-clean?

Within a broader context of social learning, I will make the case for 'unlearning' as the connective tissue linking several better-established concepts in the study of religion. I will then identify some of the motives for unlearning in religious/spiritual contexts, the language deployed, and the mental, practical and emotional tactics used by practitioners as they seek to 'unlearn'. The problems cited by critics do not disappear, but some interesting questions are nevertheless raised about religious/spiritual learning, agency and identity.

13:30

Session 1 - *Aud. Westermarck C101* - Chair: Ville Husgafvel

Reet Hiimäe - Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum

Hop-on hop-off spirituality: from consumerism and entertainment to learning

In contemporary spirituality-related behavior in Estonia (as well as in a number of other regions), a phenomenon can be observed that I call hop-on hop-off spirituality. This means testing and tasting of various forms of contemporary spirituality (via courses, lectures, books, etc.) out of curiosity or for fun or just because a friend said that this or that teaching has changed

their life. Such experimenting can sometimes result in deeper spiritual involvement or change in worldview but often doesn't bring along anything that could be defined as deeper spiritual or religious commitment or belonging. Based on interviews and written life-history narratives from Estonia from the period of 1990s to 2020s, I will analyze how such "non-serious" participation can be still seen as a process of learning that influences one's values, meaning-making, coping models and lifestyle.

Marcus Moberg & Tommy Ramstedt - Åbo Akademi University

Teaching Mindfulness in Church: The Case of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

During the past couple of decades, several well-being oriented practices mainly associated with the so-called holistic milieu have gradually started to become adopted within "mainline" Christian church settings. This has led to the development and gradual establishment of distinctively "Christian" versions of meditation techniques such as mindfulness and yoga. This paper focuses on recent, and currently still ongoing, efforts towards the adoption of mindfulness within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. These efforts contain a strong educational component, the main purpose of which is to educate church members and personnel in the practice of mindfulness and, by extension, to argue for its suitability as a supplement to conventional practices of Christian edification and pastoral care. The paper is based on an analysis of Christian mindfulness guidelines and instructions produced by various actors within the church during roughly the past decade.

Katarina Plank, Helene Egnell & Linnea Lundgren - Karlstad University, Sweden.

The new ritual specialists of the Swedish folk church - lived religion, new spiritual practices and theological legitimacy

Since the 1970s spiritual practices labelled as "New Age" have become more widespread and lately practices with a focus on "body-mind techniques" have especially been given more space within the Church of Sweden. Some of these practices are highly contested by other Christians on theological basis.

The presentation will highlight practices that traditionally have not been found within the Lutheran Church and how these are integrated in its activities. The presentation will focus on the new ritual specialists that are teaching meditation, yoga, qi gong and other new spiritual practices. Are these new communities of learning? What is being taught? Who are these teachers?

The presentation will draw on both quantitative and qualitative data from the ongoing research project *New Faces of the Folk Church*, that takes on the quest to investigate everyday spiritual activities laypeople engage in *within* ecclesial institutions.

Session 2 - *Aud. Voltaire M127* - Chair: Helena Kupari

Joanna Krotofil - Jagiellonian University, **Dagmara Mętel** - Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski University & **Dorota Wójciak** - Jagiellonian University

Learning to navigate the alliance between the Catholic ideal of a mother and the ideology of intensive mothering – the experiences of women attending a Catholic mother and child group

This paper focusses on a group for mothers with young children functioning in a local Catholic parish in southern Poland as a religious community of learning. Based on the analysis of data from two years of participant observation and interviews with members of the group, we describe how two distinctive sets of ideas about appropriate child rising, one rooted in the religion and another broadly corresponding to the intensive mothering ideology, reinforce each other in the experiences of group members and analyse how young mothers learn and navigate them. The ability of Catholic mothers to operate at the intersection of these demands challenges the binary opposition between religion and modernity, as irreconcilable. Our findings contribute to the debate on secularisation and marginalization of religion, as they demonstrate that religiously shaped ideas and discourses have the potential to enter the spheres of functioning seemingly dominated by secular ideologies and be modified and reinforced by the latter in everyday life of religious individuals.

Tiina Mahlamäki - University of Turku

Learning to knit

Knitting has been an indispensable skill (for women) in the past to make clothes and accessories for protection against the cold. Knitting was learned at home or at school. Today, most of the clothes are factory-made, so handicrafts have become a voluntary way of spending free time. But knitting can be much more than a hobby. For many western women (sometimes men too), knitting can be a form of self-expression, a peaceful moment in the midst of stressful everyday life, time for one's own self, a form of meditation. Knitting can also be seen as spiritual practice (religious practice as well, but that's another story). Based on several studies, knitting or learning to knit has been found to support coping with exhaustion, stress and traumatic experiences. This is a familiar idea for many women, who (re)start knitting, for example, while recovering from depression. One recent example is Michelle Obama, who in her recent work describes how she coped pandemic and depression by learning to knit. Knitting is a democratic hobby: it can be practiced by almost anyone and almost anywhere. But in order to learn to knit, a person still needs to have a certain, capable and functional body. In my paper, I look at knitting as a skill to be learned – in which it is possible to develop almost indefinitely – and as a spiritual practice, a form of meditation.

Mari Metso - University of Eastern Finland

Neo-Buddhist women transforming caste and gender boundaries through studying, learning, and teaching

Among contemporary Indian Neo-Buddhist women studying is a way to strengthen the Buddhist identity, but also an action of taking power and exceeding caste- and gender-based

boundaries. Majority of Neo-Buddhist come from a Mahar caste which is, from the orthodox Hindu perspective, considered to be ritually impure and polluting. Therefore, access to religious knowledge and religious practices was denied from Mahar and other unprivileged communities for centuries. According to my research data, Neo-Buddhist women experience religious studying and learning as a restorative and empowering action but also an obligation that arises from the hard work and struggles of past generations. Furthermore, sharing their gained knowledge with others is both an act of honoring the work of the ancestors and an implementation of Buddhism.

For this paper I analyze the data conducted during my fieldwork in Maharashtra among Neo-Buddhist women in autumn 2022. I investigate the act of studying, learning, and teaching in Neo-Buddhist context aiming to identify the ways these actions transform caste and gender boundaries. Additionally, I explore what this means for the religious agency of the women in my study. The theoretical background of the analysis is Sherry B. Ortner's practice theory combined with Dalit feminist theory.

Session 3 - *Aud. Goethe L104* - Chair: Ruth Illman

Hanoch Ben Pazi - Bar-Ilan University

Religion and Spirituality as Sites of Learning

Emmanuel Levinas is well-known as the philosopher of ethics and responsibility: he develops a new philosophical approach which places great significance on the meaning of the face-to-face meeting, as the idea of the other. Implicit in this is the 'ethical imperative': "Thou shalt not kill", and the responsibility imposed on one in relation to the otherness of the other. The ethical significance of teaching, as an idea but also as a practice, is the way in which the teacher is required to fulfil a responsibility towards others, and towards their students especially, in their role as 'learners'. An ethical position is required, so that the person can learn to relinquish their 'narcissism' in order to learn from fellow students, as well as, from the teacher.

In this lecture, I would like to propose the ethos of learning as the founding element of society, wherein it situates responsibility, partnership and listening, as the most important aspects that constitute society as fraternity. This partnership means that the idea of learning shifts from being an instrumental issue, to a partnership of infinite development in the realm of interpersonal and inter-communal relationships.

Miriam Feldmann Kaye - Bar Ilan University & St Andrews University

Learning as an Idea: 'Hospitality' from a Philosophical Perspective

This paper will examine some modern and postmodern theories of the idea of spiritual learning as a process of philosophical awareness, understanding and reflection. The idea of 'hospitality' as originally developed by Emmanuel Levinas from a philosophical perspective, relates to understanding those who are different from ourselves through 'hosting' their views.

This paper will examine Jacques Derrida's development and critique of Levinas' claim, which includes an appreciation the idea of being 'hospitable' towards the one who is Other, but also

adds layers of inter-communal, inter-cultural and even international perspectives. This lecture will examine in particular the text ‘A-dieu’ written by Derrida and the ways in which he develops the idea of culture, language and translation in light of this philosophical interpretation of ‘hospitality’.

In this lecture I will propose that according to Derrida’s critique, the concept of ‘learning’, from this philosophical perspective, is actually re-defined as effectively a process of inculcating the idea of ‘difference’ between different cultures and groups. Derrida shows how a philosophy of hospitality is limited, given that ‘true’ understanding between individuals, groups and countries is never really possible. I will propose that this theory could be manifested through challenging individuals and communities to be ‘hospitable’ to ideas which are foreign to their own.

Ville Hämäläinen - Tampere University

Dangerous Dialogue: The Teacher, Learner, and Communication in Kierkegaardian Religious Learning

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) makes several remarks on learning’s role in becoming a Christian. Based on three writings—Johannes Climacus’ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Anti-Climacus’ *Practice in Christianity*, and Kierkegaard’s unpublished lectures on communication—this paper seeks to explain Kierkegaardian religious learning. My approach comes in three parts: 1) scrutinizing the key concepts and their vivid use, 2) approaching Kierkegaard’s combination of Christianity and the maieutic, and 3) discussing the potential dangerousness of dialogue in this communicational learning.

Kierkegaard has a critical stance toward teaching as merely academic knowledge-sharing (to which he refers with the Latin verb *docere*). By contrast, Kierkegaard considers learning as communication (*Meddelelse*), meaning literally ‘together sharing’. The communication between the teacher (*Lærere*) and the learner (*Lærende*) may still fail. As in Socratic maieutic, the teacher awakens the interlocutor’s desire to learn—and become a Christian. Therefore, the dialogical form may prove to be dangerous for delivering the religious truth. I still argue that certain openness separates religious learning from other types of learning.

15:30

Session 4 - *Aud. Westermarck C101* - Chair: Måns Broo

Teija Rantala - University of Turku & **Nella van den Brandt** - University of Coventry, UK

Embodiment and sensory unlearning of women disengaging from religious belonging

Women are often expected to embody the central values and practices of the religious community they belong to. Leaving their religious communities, women find a part of the ‘religious tapestry’ remaining with them long after their disengagement. Memories of past belonging are sensory and fleeting, affective moments which are difficult to put in words. In our presentation, we employ our various research projects in Finland and the UK to explore women’s attempts to forget and unlearn parts of their former religious culture. We will discuss embodied issues young formerly Laestadian women have to negotiate, such as bodily limits,

conduct and shame, as well as Mormon and Jehovah's Witnesses women's experiences of liminality in transitioning out of their faith and adapting themselves to a new life outside their communities. The questions we ask are the following: what is it like for women to leave their religious communities? What are the embodied implications of women's disengagement? How does their attempt to 'unlearn' shape their disengagement processes? Exploring women's cognitive and embodied experiences helps us understand why women leave their traditions, and more broadly, some of the reasons for the decline in membership Christian communities face today.

Päivi Salmesvuori – Åbo Akademi University

Trancepreacher Helena Konttinen (d. 1916) and her yearly performance of penance

In the beginning of 20th century a poor and uneducated woman from the Eastern Finland became a nationally known prophet and preacher. People came to listen to her preaching to get healed, to get to know God's secrets, or, for example, to be entertained. Konttinen's career lasted 11 years. Every year in August she had a gathering that grew from one day long to last for three days. During that gathering Konttinen viewed critically the past year and how she had succeeded. If she found she had failed in something she had to perform for the audience as a punishment and penance. I will examine how Konttinen's behaviour developed during the years. I will research her interaction both with her heavenly and earthly audience from the point of view of performance studies. I suggest, based on the sources, that Konttinen saw the performances useful for the point of view of the spectators, she would not have needed them for herself. The yearly gathering became a ritual, in which she used her body and preaching in order to engage her audience emotionally.

Emine Neval - University of Helsinki

Where are the women? The Gulen movement in Finland

The Islam-inspired Gulen movement was established in 1966 in Turkey and spread to more than 150 countries by utilizing education and dialogue. After the 2016 coup attempt, the movement was declared the responsible organization and some members became refugees. Current studies on female members are not enough to explain the recent changes, especially in Finland where the movement has not been discovered. I demonstrate the women's roles, activities, and aspirations; also, how being a member of a religious-based community shapes their daily lives in Finland. This ethnographic research consists of in-depth semi-structured interviews with the members and the field notes collected from several meetings. In the fieldwork, I focused on spiritual gatherings which also operate like a peer support group. Overall, the data underlines not only migration but also the desire for piety affects the members. Moreover, there is a triple change involving its members, the movement, and Gulen's thoughts.

Session 5 - *Aud. Goethe L104* - Chair: Sofia Sjö

Ada Elgabsi - Åbo Akademi University

Religious (il)literacy? An investigation of the relationship between religion and culture in the school culture in Swedish-speaking lower secondary schools in Finland

The status of religion in the comprehensive school education in Finland is a highly debated issue. In my PhD project I analyze grey areas between religion and culture in the school culture in Swedish-speaking lower secondary schools in Finland. My primary sources are interviews with teachers and headmasters, the curriculum, and the law. I use a qualitative research interview method for the interviews, and I conduct a thematic analysis of the material. The primary sources will be investigated through the concepts of religious literacy and cultural heritage. My main research question is: in what circumstances do grey areas between religion and culture arise in the school culture? This question will be discussed on three different levels: (1) On a descriptive level to understand which grey areas exist based on the interviews, the law, and the curriculum. (2) On an experienced-based and emotional level to understand the thoughts, feelings, and further experiences of the interviewees. (3) On an ethical level to understand how the interviewees have thought of and handled these grey areas on their own or together with others, for example while considering questions of responsibility. I expect to offer a better understanding of grey areas between religion and culture in the school culture, as well as the interviewees own experiences of them.

Lise Eriksson - Uppsala University/Åbo Akademi University (presenting author), **Victor Dudas** - Uppsala University, **Aje Carlbon** - Malmö University, **Birgitta Essén** - Uppsala University

Religious Literacy in Healthcare: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Perceived Religious Discrimination

This paper explores what characterises patients' and their relatives' expectations in healthcare encounters perceived as religiously discriminatory. It analyses perceived religious discrimination in Swedish healthcare through the interpretative phenomenological analysis of complaints submitted to the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden from 2012 to 2021. Religious literacy is increasingly important in diverse societies because it includes learning about of how religious beliefs and practices shape political, cultural and social expressions. The complaints addressed unfulfilled expectations related to cultural and religious literacy, equal treatment in relation to religious symbols or medical records, affirmative action in medical treatment while accounting for beliefs, and a secular environment that forbids religious symbols in healthcare encounters. Several complaints concerned healthcare providers' reactions to patients wearing hijabs or other ethnic or religious attributes. The study indicates that healthcare providers face difficulties in conforming to the partially contradictory ideals of equal treatment and cultural sensitivity.

Nina Maskulin - University of Helsinki

An apocalyptic film as a site for learning equality

Learning religion in primary socialization is studied especially when the process involves transmission in the family. However, in the societies such as Finland, the adherence to the confessional rituals of the minor members of mainstream Christian Churches have declined since 2010's. Moreover, the compulsory religious education of Christianity persists and the leisure time in popular media increases. Popular culture is one of the contemporary spaces for learning values and solutions in the era of climate change. My paper discusses cultural learning as complex social practice among young people. I interviewed secondary upper school and Evangelical Lutheran confirmation school pupils in the specific context of film screening of an end-of-the-world film 2012 (Emmerich 2009) combining the aspects of religious myth, climate change crisis and global inequality in the narrative. The analysis draws on the concept of attitude in the interpretation of the film and approaches cultural learning in the primary frames of beliefs and values.

Session 6 - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Linda Annunen

Jaana Kouri - Åbo Akademi University

Learning in contemporary shamanism

Shamanism is often seen as a technique to journey to the spirit world, where shamans meet their spirit teachers and seek healing, guidance, and knowledge for those in need. It is also much more, a spiritual practice, a way to be connected to one's environment, and a life path. The shaman's path could be seen as an outcome of an ongoing and reciprocal relationship with the spirits.

In this presentation I examine the nature of learning in contemporary shamanism. I present that one's spiritual path could be seen as practiced and experience-based knowledge. It is more like learning/knowing 'with' and 'how' than 'that'. I examine how learning is about realization, choices, and co-working with spirits and how this relationship is practiced in everyday life for the wellbeing of all living creatures.

Katri Ratia - Fribourg University

(Re-)Appropriated Practices for Radical Democracy in European Rainbow Gatherings

Rainbow Gatherings create temporary countercultural societies that offer radical alternatives to the cultural institutions of the mainstream world, and an inclusive social reality. The Gathering culture shifts the participants from a world conditioned by things like nation-states with centralized power, market logic and institutionalized religious forms into alternate one which operates with sharing economy, non-hierarchical egalitarianism, and open and participatory religious and political traditions. The alternative organizational practices are anchored by extensive ritualization, and the main political model, known as the Talking Circle, is based on Native American ritual traditions.

This contribution presents the cultural background and functioning of the Talking Circle, and focuses on the significance of both ritualization and the event-community in learning and employing the model. It also discusses the apparent controversy between undeniable cultural appropriation and the actual outcomes of these rituals, re-interpreted and re-purposed to serve as a practical model for egalitarian, de-centralized and participatory collective communication and decision-making, in a radically democratic manner.

Linda Woodhead - King's College London

What They Don't Teach You in School: Spirituality, Paganism and Alternative Learning

Taking post-1970s England as a case study, this paper argues that post-Christian 'alternative' forms of religiosity have offered spaces for learning about things not taught by schools or churches. For 'spirituality' this includes feminism, meditation, holistic healing, self-assertion and self-care. For paganism it includes environmentalism, natural and planetary cycles, folklore, magical practices, and edgy science. Some of these alternative knowledges are eventually assimilated into mainstream education, whereas others become more deeply counter-cultural and subversive (for example, feeding into conspiracy theories). Perspectives from science studies and the sociology of knowledge are employed to make sense of this late-modern epistemic landscape.

17:15

Panel Discussion - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Ruth Illman

Nina Kokkinen - The Donner Institute, **Linda Annunen** - Åbo Akademi University, **Måns Broo** - Åbo Akademi University & **Ville Hushafvel** - University of Helsinki

'Eastern Spirituality' in Arts: Inspiration, Appropriation, Conversation

The starting point of the panel discussion are the ideas about Eastern spirituality constructed in the Finnish art scene through the 20th century. An art exhibition called Eastern Spirituality will be on display at the museum Villa Gyllenberg (Helsinki) during the conference and will provide the themes for the panel discussion. What kind of ideas Finnish artists had about 'Eastern spirituality' and how did they express these ideas in their art? What are the challenges, problems and learning opportunities associated with such constructed images? How should dialogue between cultures and religions be studied, or represented in an art exhibition popularizing scientific research? The discussion includes research doctor Nina Kokkinen, who has curated Eastern Spirituality exhibition based on her current research project, post-doctoral researcher Linda Annunen, who edits a forthcoming thematic issue on religious appropriation, university lecturer Måns Broo, who is an expert on Indian religiosity, and doctoral researcher Ville Hushafvel, who is finishing his dissertation on recontextualization of Buddhist meditation practices in contemporary mindfulness-based programmes. Each expert will have a short presentation at the beginning of the panel, after which the panel will proceed on the basis of questions posed by moderator Ruth Illman (research director at the Donner Institute) and the audience.

Tuesday 16 May

09:00

Panel Discussion - *Aud. Armfelt A102* – Chair: Terhi Utriainen

Linda Annunen - Åbo Akademi University, **Maija Butters** - University of Helsinki, **Ville Husgafvel** - University of Helsinki, **Helena Kupari** - University of Eastern Finland/ University of Helsinki, **Tiina Mällinen** - University of Helsinki, **Terhi Utriainen** - University of Helsinki & **Siiri Virta** - University of Helsinki

What did we learn about religion and learning in the LeNeRe project?

Learning is one of the most esteemed and supported values of contemporary society. The ethos and rhetoric of continuous and life-long learning can also be found in the sphere of religion and particularly individual religiosity. The objective of the LeNeRe project is to produce new knowledge on contemporary religious and spiritual milieus as sites of learning and to identify and understand processes through which people integrate their religious or spiritual learning to other spheres of life. To approach this objective, we have conducted ethnographically informed research on adult individuals in Finland who have embarked on (for them) new religious and spiritual paths.

Our case studies include examples from traditional religion as well as contemporary spirituality. The cases include: 1) *Singing bowl healing*, 2) *Finnish Muslims learning from Ramadan*; 3) *Participation in the catechumen courses organized by the Orthodox church*; 3) *Mindfulness meditation*, 4) *Indian guru and her followers*; 5) *Highly educated Finns investing in spiritual learning*. As our focus is on informal learning, on adults familiarizing themselves with previously unknown practices, and on the transferability of the skills and notions thus adopted, the project significantly expands the scope of existing anthropological and sociological research on religious learning that has so far very much focused on the transmission of one's own religious tradition.

Our panel presents some key findings of the project and opens the discussion on their relevance to the study of religion and the potential wider social significance.

Responses by **Kim Knott** and **Linda Woodhead**

11:00

Session 7 - *Aud. Westermarck C101* - Chair: Sofia Sjö

Elisa Mikkola - University of Helsinki

Women learning a new profession in the field of New Spirituality

In my presentation, I will discuss how angel services are produced in the field of New Spirituality in Finland, how the producers of new spiritual services describe their work, how they started to deliver these services, and how they collect their customer base.

The research material consists of six interviews with women practicing angel therapy or other spiritual services. The interviewees described the turning point when they became interested in new spirituality. The transition to users and later producers of spiritual services seems to be related to a crisis in personal or professional life.

Courses and various certificates give them the confidence to work in their profession and the opportunity to identify themselves as professionals in the new spirituality. There is no contradiction between spirituality and entrepreneurship, as they see entrepreneurship as part of a spiritual path, the strengthening of personal skills and qualities.

Emilia Plichta - Åbo Akademi University

Impact of Catholic Church's teachings on childless women in Poland

The decision to have offspring is influenced by the context in which a person is situated. Women who decide to remain childless are at a higher risk of social exclusion than men. Poland provides a unique context for analysis of childlessness in relation to religion – the country is considered religiously homogeneous with low birth rates but a relatively low level of childlessness. For my master's thesis, I analysed a document of the Polish Episcopal Conference *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie* (Eng. Serving the Truth about Marriage and Family) to uncover language that may contribute to the social exclusion of childless women. The document is written with the intent to be a pastoral inspiration. The arguments from the text, when used to teach the members of the Catholic Church in Poland about living according to God's will, may have a negative impact on the people who cannot or do not want to have children and contribute to their social exclusion.

Ella Poutiainen - University of Turku

Sacred feminine leadership? Teaching and learning gender within feminine spiritualities

Women's spiritual retreats, feminine 'mystery schools' and other women-only events are flourishing within the field of holistic spirituality. These 'feminine spiritualities' invite women to cultivate and heal 'the feminine' in order to gain personal empowerment and to bring about change in what is considered a masculine world. Scholars of holistic spiritualities have been concerned about the fields emphasis on individual empowerment over structural change and the possible naturalisation and reinforcement of binary gender roles. By both drawing on and challenging this critique, this presentation explores feminine spiritualities as a site for learning both gender and social action. I suggest that the feminine appears both as natural to women and as something that must actively be (re-)learned by modern women 'living in a man's world'. Furthermore, by looking at the idea of 'sacred feminine leadership', I will consider how women are invited to channel their inner growth toward outward action.

Session 8 - *Aud. Voltaire M127* - Chair: Marcus Moberg

Anders Aschim - Høgskolen i Innlandet

First language Catholic catechesis in Norway: Learning (religion) for the diaspora?

In recent years, the Catholic Church in Norway has seen a considerable growth, mainly due to migration. Today, it is both one of the most numerous and one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse religious minorities in the country.

Many children and young people take part in catechesis, the faith education programme of the Catholic Church. In principle, this education is offered in Norwegian language for all participants. However, in several parishes, catechesis is also offered in the first language of certain migrant groups, e.g. Polish, Vietnamese, Tamil or Lithuanian. The main objective of this education is of course the religious socialization of children and youth. From the point of view of socio-cultural learning theories, however, one may also search for other more or less visible learning outcomes, in terms of e.g. language skills, cultural heritage, specific religious traditions, or even social control. Data consist of interviews with migrant chaplains in addition to diocesan statistics and Vatican and diocesan documents.

Dmytro Markov - A.Yu. Krymskyi Institute of Oriental Studies, Kyiv, Ukraine (online)

An education and the revival of Nepalese (Newar) Mahayana Buddhism: to educate an old Buddhist priest and a young Buddhist scholar

Nepalese Buddhism (also known as Newar Buddhism) represents an ancient surviving tradition of Sanskrit Buddhism, originating from Indian Mahayana/ Vajrayana; it has been uninterruptedly practiced in Nepal for at least 1500 years. The political, social, cultural challenges which the Nepalese Buddhists faced in 20 and 21 c. caused the crisis of a traditional institutions of Nepalese Buddhism and affected the life of the sangha and laity. An education became one of the central lines to help the Nepalese Buddhism to begin reforms and adapt. Thus, esp. since 1980-s young intellectuals and traditional teachers started different activities (classes, study of texts; rituals for priests; study of Buddhist philosophy etc.). Such institutions as Aksheshwar Mahavihar, the Lotus Research Center, Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies (NIBS), later also Sugata Buddhist College etc. emerged as centers for study of Buddhism. They are combining modernist and traditional elements and methods in their educating work; work for reviving of Nepalese Mahayana.

Teemu Toivonen - University of Eastern Finland

Communal life as a context of learning

The number of conversions to the Orthodox Church of Finland grew since the 1970s. By the early 21st century, most parishes in Finland offered some organized teaching for potential converts. However, the ways in which the converts are trained or educated before and after joining formally the Orthodox Church are little studied, in Finland as well as in other Orthodox contexts. My presentation outlines some results of a survey conducted for those who had participated in catechumen courses in the Orthodox Parish of Helsinki. The answers reflect

participants' experiences of socialization to a new religious community on different levels. Due to the time of the survey, the effects of Covid-19 are visible in part of the results and they seem to reveal strengths and weaknesses in the communal life of the converts.

Session 9 - *Aud. Källan C201* - Chair: Maija Butters

Elad Ben David - Bar-Ilan University

Social Media as a Platform for Religious Spirituality during Covid-19: The Case of Jewish Israeli Preachers on YouTube

The Covid-19 pandemic has appeared while the proliferation of new media technology is dominant and affects mediated communication in the public sphere, where religion has become a prominent online factor. The paper focuses on the case of popular Jewish Israeli preachers, who use the YouTube platform for teaching Judaism, as a tool to boost spirituality among the viewers. Through the Covid-19 case, I argue that although the pandemic has harmed daily religious routines, it also played a significant spiritual role, thanks to the advancement of religious activity on social media platforms. In an era where individuals and communities were forced to limit their physical religious rituals, the engagement of a 'virtual Judaism' as an independent religious form, preserved a communication channel between the preachers and the audience. The paper applies a range of examples used by those YouTuber preachers, highlighting the importance of social media as a platform to acquire religion and spirituality, especially during the unprecedented era of Covid-19.

Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska - SGH Warsaw School of Economics & **Joanna Krotofil** - Jagiellonian University

Polish Islamic Internet as a Site of Learning

Polish Islamic Internet is a unique place for converts to learn about Islam. The tiny local Muslim community that does not exceed 0.3% of the general population is geographically dispersed – thus naturally Internet might provide a space where Polish speaking Muslims can connect, interact and learn. At the same time small number of Muslims and low-profile Islamic leadership puts them more in a position of receivers rather than producers of Islamic knowledge online. The paper aims to unpack the variety of challenges related to studying Internet as a site of learning in the Polish Muslim context. We will use the concept of religion focused internet space as a site of learning to analyse the blurred boundaries between different levels of religious content and the complex power dynamics related to the extension of religious authority afforded by online space.

Robin Isomaa - Åbo Akademi University

How to Think like an Atheist: Analyzing Atheist-Produced Educational Content on YouTube

One central element of deconversion processes is replacing old ways of thinking with new ones. The resocialization into a new (non)religious identity involves processes of learning and

unlearning, and deconverts who exit the religious field altogether can utilize a variety of resources in their journey, including books, documentaries, and social media.

Atheism has had a strong presence on YouTube since its founding, and this paper views YouTube videos as educational resources for atheists. Drawing from a sample of 63 atheist YouTubers, and taking a discourse-analytic approach, it investigates different types of educational videos and ways of thinking about subjects like religion, science, and philosophy that atheist content creators utilize and promote. Together, they construct an idea of what an atheist is expected to know and a normative 'atheistic' approach to acquiring knowledge and interpreting the world.

14:00

Keynote - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Helena Kupari

Daniel Winchester - Purdue University

Let Us Attend: Religion, Spirituality, and the Education of Attention

What do people learn when involved in religion or spirituality? The most obvious (and correct) answer is “a lot of things,” ranging from, say, the particulars of how to properly engage in a ritual to abstract notions of the very structure of existence. In this keynote address, I only focus on one thing I think people learn when engaged in religious or spiritual practices and communities: to pay attention. Drawing from my own research projects on religious recruitment, conversion, and subject formation as well as the insights of several others, I wish to demonstrate how and to what ends religion and spirituality cultivate peoples' attentional habits and capacities. I go on to suggest what this argument about the education of attention might mean for how scholars of religion and spirituality approach more complex questions of experience, belief, power, and secularization.

15:30

Session 10 - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Terhi Utriainen

Yael Dansac - Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Somatic Pedagogy in Contemporary Spiritual Practices

In France's and Belgium's megalithic sites, New Age and contemporary Pagan-inspired practices are held on a regular basis and, from an emic point of view, their aim is to access the local megalith's 'healing powers'. Participants use their body to elaborate a meaningful experience of the practice while also experiencing themselves. The body is the place where participants register their sensitive and emotional experiences. Drawing on ethnographic data, this paper reconstructs the somatic pedagogy implemented during these practices. Attention will be given to the individual and collective learning of another sensory language, the relationships between bodily techniques and somatic imagery, and the importance of verbalizing bodily attention.

Nataliia Pavlyk - H. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

The Bodily Practices in Jain Yoga: Learning the Steps to Liberation

Unlike other philosophical approaches, the path of yoga in Śvētāmbara Jainism is not only rooted in theoretical constructs but also uses a system of practices to verify them. The post-canonical period in the history of Jainism (c. 6-12th centuries CE) presents yoga as a psychotechnique – a system of physical and mental exercises aimed at achieving transcendental states of consciousness, mystical self-knowledge and spiritual liberation of a person.

The Jain authors (especially Haribhadra and Hemacandra) claim that further contemplation aiming at mokṣa requires yogic postures (āṣana) and breath control (prāṇāyāma). Thus, a turn to bodily-oriented techniques as an essential part of the soteriological way occurs in Jainism. However, the attitude to corporeal methods of yoga is quite cautious and speaks about the external influences of other religious traditions on Jainism.

Iiona Raunola - Freelance researcher

A Process of Spiritual Nutrition

I discuss a case-study of living on light. I have interviewed spiritually committed person who has experienced a phase in her life when she did not eat physical food. Instead she describes how she was completely nourished through light or prana. In the aspect of learning I am interested about the interaction she had with angels and the spiritual realm. Yet she needed to learn the material conditions of everyday life when she chose to eat food again. My interpretation are based on Actor-Network Theory and close reading. There are three clusters that I will pay attention: the beginning when the transition happened, the middle when she tries to adjust the material needs and the phase when she wanted to start eat again. What kind of learning she has encountered and what remained still to be learnt? What kind of knowledge she gained both individually and universally in the process of this spiritual understanding?

Session 11 - *Aud. Westermarck C101* - Chair: Sofia Sjö

Sawsan Kheir - Åbo Akademi University/University of Haifa

Secularization Among Young Adult Minority Students in Israel: Processes of Learning and Unlearning Religious Worldviews

This paper aims to explore the interplay between religion and secularization among minority groups using psychological and comparative approaches. It explores the ways young adult religious minority students in Israel, Muslims and Druze, integrate their religious worldviews within modernity, separately for each group and comparatively for both, with special emphasis the implications of their conflictual position as religious and ethnic minorities, who are natives to Israel, on these worldviews.

The main research question is: How do individuals with multiple minority positions integrate their religious worldviews in light of the secularization processes of modernity?

The findings reflect the various ways in which modernization processes can alter minority students' religious worldviews through processes of learning and unlearning about their own religion as well as other religions, and they confirm previous findings on the multifaceted manifestations of religiosity and secularization. Furthermore, the findings highlight the indirect and implicit ways in which "religious/ethnic minority" status may influence these learning processes.

Igor Mikeshin - University of Helsinki

Humility and Obedience: Russian Baptist Conversion as Unlearning

My paper discusses conversion in the Russian Baptist community. During my fieldwork in the rehabilitation ministry for addicted people, I identified conversion as a process of interiorizing the text of the Bible (the Russian Synodal translation) as the language of not merely liturgy and worship, but also communication, thought, and reasoning.

Russian Baptist conversion is a multi-faceted phenomenon. I will discuss it from an ethical standpoint — as a process of unlearning the old ways of living. My current research focuses on gender order, family values, and sex as ethical affordances (Keane 2016) — moral potentialities that essentialize particular human experiences but do not strictly determine behavior. I will demonstrate how juxtapositions between the old ways and the new Christian life, as well as the process of unlearning sinful behavior, facilitate the construction of the Russian Baptist ethical narrative.

Liya Xie - Princeton University

Unlearning Religion in Churches: Why did Soviet anti-religious museums fail?

Soviet anti-religious museums present a curious case study for understanding the top-down mechanisms of unlearning religion and propagating an atheist Weltanschauung. In this paper, I compare the history of two anti-religious museums as a way to understand how Soviet scholars studied and represented religion in the public sphere: the Central Anti-religious Museum (TsAM) in Moscow and the State Museum of the History of Religion (GMIR) in Leningrad. I argue that one of the major reasons why anti-religious propaganda in these museums failed lies in the Soviet scholars' inability to understand the symbolic meaning of the museum space as well as the emotive power of religious objects. The fact that both GMIR and TsAM were housed in former cathedrals or monasteries and used original religious objects preordained their failure to "eradicate vestigial religious elements" and instill atheism in people's minds. In this sense, "the space is the message": the audience did not perceive the content in an amorphous vacuum but in specific forms, whose very spatiality and materiality had the power to evoke religious sentiments.

Session 12 - *Aud. Goethe LI04* - Chair: Ruth Illman

Lena Roos - Södertörn University

The Green Sabbath Project. A Day for Learning about Our Place in the World

The Green Sabbath Project was initiated by Jonathan Schorsch, professor of Jewish History at the University of Potsdam. Several Jewish and Christian organisations/congregations have joined the project's network.

The goal is to inspire Jews and others to observe one day a week of rest as a way counteracting climate change. Green Sabbath observance means to strive to consume as little as possible of the Earth's resources, especially non-renewable ones. Instead of consuming, the participants are encouraged to arrange other types of activities: nature walks, lectures, study circles, picnics, sing-alongs, poetry readings etc. The Green Sabbath Manifesto especially stresses that Sabbath has traditionally been a day dedicated to learning and suggests for instance sermons focused on environmental issues or a free screening of a documentary on an environmental topic. Other forms of learning can include inviting seniors from the area to talk about the history of the place.

Schorsch connects the project to the Talmudic notion that if all Jews would just observe the Sabbath properly once, then the Messiah would come. In Schorsch's vision, if one billion monotheists, and many others too, would observe a green day of rest each week, this would give the Earth a chance to renew itself, which would be a prerequisite for the messianic age.

Laura Wickström - Åbo Akademi University

Learning About the Environment Within Islamic Tradition

Ecological threats have, already for a longer time, been considered one of the most serious issues of modern time (Benthall 2008: 138). In response to the current ecological crisis, various representatives for Islam attempt, as do most religious traditions, to restore environmental and ecological values in their religious tradition (Foltz 2005: 2651). Especially during the last three decades there has been no lack of courageous new approaches, including environmentalism, within the Islamic theological thought, but whether these thoughts will be developed further by a wider circle of academic theologians depends heavily on the political and social development of several countries in the region (Wielandt 2018: 753). Based on ethnographic research in the region, this paper argues that the learning about the environment in the Middle East is gaining ground within the Islamic tradition but faces simultaneously great challenges.

Wednesday 17 May

09:00

Session 13 - Aud. Westermarck C101 - Chair: Helena Kupari

Martina Björkander - Åbo Akademi University

Dancing steps of faith: Kinetic-somatic learning processes in charismatic worship

In Kenya, pentecostal-charismatic Christianity is strong and churches play an important part in society, not least in urban areas. Their attraction is especially strong among young people, and a major explanation to that is what Ogbu Kalu calls “the charismatic liturgy”, with songs and music appealing to the young, modern, Kenyan. Church is a place to go for good music just as much as for good preaching or good friends.

Dance as a communal, congregational worship practice is a significant aspect of East African pentecostal ritual life, and one where the connection between learning and religion becomes apparent. By dancing steps of faith, congregants together learn to “walk with Christ” on a daily basis. At the same time, they learn who he is, and effectively internalize doctrinal elements and biblical material. Through ritual action, bodies learn to feel, and brains learn to think in pentecostal ways.

Based on ethnographic material, this paper explores the role of worship for pentecostal spirituality, paying special attention to kinetic-somatic learning processes as part of ritual.

Heidi Jokinen - Åbo Akademi University

Altar Flowers – awing or learning

Visual artefacts have held a multifaceted role in Christianity. The tradition of *Biblia Pauperum* brought religious learning to those with no access to written words, nor to the language of the elites. The visual was not only about teaching, it was also about experiencing God’s presence.

With reformation the view changed. Man-made images were considered reflecting human conceptions of God. Any devotion to them was idolatrous. Religious learning was to happen through word, through ratio, only. While the approach was later alleviated the question of the function of images in the church remains.

This paper offers new perspectives into the intersections of aesthetics, faith and reason by conducting a conceptual analysis of the role of altar flowers in Lutheran liturgy. While not worshipped, flowers are centrally located. They are decorative yet conveying meanings that support a more rational cultivation at the moment. Altar flowers can offer a deeper understanding on how religious learning and experiencing are related to each other.

Helena Kupari - University of Eastern Finland/University of Helsinki

“Back row sign of the cross”: Conversion as learning through legitimate peripheral participation in the Finnish Orthodox community

An important aspect of religious conversion is acquiring new knowledge and mastering new skills. In this presentation, I apply a practice-oriented framework to analyze conversion as learning. According to this theoretical starting point, learning is a situated, social, and generative activity taking place through “legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger 1991). Learners, in other words, occupy a recognized yet marginal role in wider interactive and collaborative processes, with the possibility of gradually moving towards fuller participation.

In this presentation I ask, how does learning through legitimate peripheral participation work in the Finnish Orthodox community. My study draws on participant observation in a catechumen course organized by one Finnish Orthodox parish for people interested in joining the church, as well as interviews of converts and Orthodox magazine articles discussing conversion. My particular focus is on (potential) new members’ experiences of collective worship as a central actualization of the Orthodox community of practice. However, I also discuss how the “pedagogies of conversion” (Galonnier & de los Rios 2016) applied in the catechumen course embrace the notion of learning through practice and “back row participation”.

Session 14 - *Aud. Voltaire M127* - Chair: Terhi Utriainen

Peter Boros - Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Redesigning Buddhist education in early 20th-century China

During the early 20th-century in China, when the country was in transition from imperial reign to becoming a republic, most institutions had to reinvent themselves. Religious institutions, and among them Buddhism were no exception. Multiple responses emerged within the community, but one of the most influential was the radical reform movement of master Taixu 太虛大師, who saw education as the key to revitalize Chinese Buddhism. During his lifetime, he founded several new seminaries for monks, schools for children including girls, and utilized western educational methods and curricula to prepare his students for a ‘modern China’ with ‘modern Buddhism’. However, the reasoning behind his reforms is mostly neglected in academic research. Therefore, in my presentation, I will analyze Taixu’s most important speeches and writings about his educational reforms, and discuss his main arguments. Moreover, I will provide a glimpse into how these reforms influence Taiwanese and global Buddhism to this day.

Aaron French - Universität Erfurt

Esotericism Against Capitalism? Rudolf Steiner’s Esoteric Pedagogy

This presentation seeks a better understanding of how Steiner envisioned esoteric pedagogy as a site of learning (for example through art, seasonal festivals, ritual drama, etc.). I am especially

interested in how such an approach was intended to resist the encroaching influence of capitalism, materialism, and corporatism that was spreading in Germany following WWI. Steiner's ideas about education did not emerge in a vacuum. He was inspired by and connected with other forms of communist, socialist, and Lebensreform movements in his time. Yet Steiner more actively embraced and incorporated esotericism into his pedagogical project. How did his approach differ from the other anti-capitalist and anti-materialist inspired schools that were spreading at the time, and what role did esotericism play in terms of developing Waldorf students?

This presentation will explore these questions and contribute to the recontextualization of both Steiner and esotericism taking place in recent years.

Tiina-Mari Mällinen - University of Helsinki

Learning Compassion, Unlearning Egoism -Mother Amma's Devotees' Continuing Life Lessons

In my PhD project I research Mother Amma's devotees' identities. The exact research question is as follows: How are Amma's Finnish devotees' identities constructed in their temporal narratives?

Since I'm in the beginning phase of the research and haven't actualized the interviews yet, in this conference I intend to present some broad views of learning and unlearning in the movement in question. This I can do on the basis of familiarizing with the subject for over twenty years.

I propose to give answers to following questions:

What is taught about learning in the Amma movement and how do individuals seem to correspond to this teaching? What are they expected to learn and unlearn and how? Is there "a minimum syllabus" in the movement?

Session 15 - *Aud. Källan C201* - Chair: Maija Butters

Mikko Autere - University of Helsinki

Aesthetic and mystical cognition. Learning appropriate reactions to Sufi poetry

I asked him, "What are the droplets on your cheek?"

He smiled and said, "Oh, just rose water dripping from the flower."

Experiencing Sufi poetry set to music is an important part of the religious practice of several Sufi orders. Some poems feature unambiguously religious praise of the prophet Muhammad and other religious personalities. Others, like the above verse attributed to Jami (d. 1492), celebrate winebibbing, rakish and antinomian behaviour, and all-consuming passionate love.

But how do Sufi disciples learn to attribute religious meaning to such ambiguous themes and react to them in appropriate ways? Drawing from both texts written by Sufis of the Chishti order and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Indian Sufi shrines, this presentation seeks to trace

the contours of the pedagogical methods used in teaching aesthetic and mystical cognition that the Sufis deem essential for turning such poetic themes into a vehicle of a meaningful religious experience.

Olivia Cejvan - Lund University

Revelations according to schedule: Secrecy as didactics in the initiatory society Sodalitas Rosae Crucis

Based on fieldwork as an initiate in the contemporary esoteric society Sodalitas Rosae Crucis (Society of the Rosy Cross, abbreviated SRC), this paper explores secrecy as an educational device in the teaching and learning of ritual magic. Founded in Sweden 2002, SRC perpetuates the teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an influential initiatory society instituted in London in 1888. Fieldwork over three years in SRC allowed me to study how ritual skills and inner sense cultivation were taught and learnt within this initiatory community of practice. Here, a stepwise revelation of secret doctrine and secret practices is employed systematically, with each degree unlocking new pieces to the puzzle of spiritual attainment. In analyzing key ethnographic findings from a social learning perspective, I outline two educational dimensions of secrecy: 1) how the gradual revealing of secrets portions curricular content systematically, promoting effective learning. 2) How this gradual revelation also effectuates another condition for learning: student motivation, in creating curiosity and expectation regarding what remains hidden and what will be disclosed in time

Helena Hildur W.

Interfaith Dialogue by Images

I hereby submit a contribution, which could take the form of either a presentation, or an exhibition. It's the documentation of a two-part workshop – a methodological pilot - held in October 2019. The organizational framework was 'A Day of Art, Sisterhood, Dialogue', arranged by the Study Association Ibn Rushd and the Church of Sweden; a development from a series of women-only studies in Scriptural Reasoning, welcoming women of all faiths to interreligious exchange. My task was to offer a space for non-verbal communication, and to moderate group reflections afterwards. The first part of the workshop focused on each individual's state of mind at the beginning of the day; the last part, by the evening, invited the whole group to interpret their day in simple imagery on large sheets of paper, and subsequently to meet and negotiate creatively with each others' expressions. 20+ women of various confessions participated with sincerity and ardor.

11:00

Keynote - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Maija Butters

Mulki al-Sharmani - University of Helsinki

Women Living with, Learning from, and Reasoning with the Qur'an: Selected Experiences from Finland and Egypt

A burgeoning scholarship has shown the active roles undertaken by contemporary Muslim women in diverse contexts in religious learning as well as production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Such processes have often been found to be located in women's daily pursuits of living ethical meaningful lives.

This presentation is located within and builds on this literature. I investigate the intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and embodied engagements of ten Muslim women in Finland and Egypt with the Qur'an as a source of Islamic knowledge and as a mode of communication with God. My interlocutors in this study come from different walks of life. I examine how they interact with the Qur'an in their daily lives; what they learn from it at different junctures of their lives; and how they reason with it as systems of meanings, values, and norms. In particular, I shed light on how the women navigate their lived realities through Quranic principles, concepts, and language, and at the same time how their life trials and achievements shape their engagements with the Qur'an. I also look at the ways in which the women's understandings of the Qur'an is mediated through their claim to other forms of religious and non-religious knowledge. I draw on an analysis of in-depth life story interviews that I conducted in Helsinki and Cairo in the period from 2020-2022.

13:00

Session 16 - *Aud. Armfelt A102* - Chair: Linda Annunen

Tero Heinonen - Åbo Akademi University

Kirtans and sacred chants as sites of learning

My paper is based on my doctoral research, where I interviewed Finnish practitioners of Hindu inspired Kirtan and other "sacred chants". Results include collective effervescence and regulation of individual emotions for therapeutic purposes within collectively created musical and ritual spaces. Practices often require the teaching and learning of beliefs, symbols, instruments, languages, artistic-somatic techniques, and social affective cues. The Hindu gods or animistic plant spirits that were prayed to with songs and mantras corresponded with learned religious roles that were emotionally analogical with the needs of the participants. According to Self-Determination Theory, I understand learning in "sacred chants" and ceremonies to be motivated by basic psychological needs: intrinsically motivated autonomy, self-efficacy, and social connectedness. According to Social Cognitive Theory, I understand kirtans as a way of building the sense of self-efficacy through vicarious affective learning, where emotional response is learned by observing affective social cues that evoke affect in others.

Laura Hellsten - Åbo Akademi University

Dance as a spiritual formation practice

In the traditions of Christianity *Imitatio Christi* is a classical trope for what it means with entering into and growing in the process of spiritual formation. It has been described as learning how to become Christlike in character. In modern thinking this transformation is often imagined to center on having the “right” thoughts, emotions and ideas about God and adhering to the correct formulations of faith (dogma). However, historically speaking much more attention has been focused on the embodied aspects of learning and transformation. (Coakley 2015) In this article I want to focus on the books by Olaus Magnus *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* from 1555, where he describes the educational paths and learning processes that the citizens in Sweden were to undertake in order to become good leaders in society. My particular interest is in the depictions of various forms of dances, plays and games that are described to form the character of the person practicing these. In light of previous dance research on the importance of embodiment in character formation of the Renaissance I want to compare and contrast the dance depictions described by Olaus Magnus. (Nevile 2004; 2008; Bocksberger in Gianvittorio-Ungar&Schlapbach 2021)

Jip Lensink - Utrecht University

Embodied and Emotional Practices: Learning Religious Songs among Moluccan Christians in the Netherlands

The Moluccan community is a diasporic, exiled community that arrived in the Netherlands in 1951, due to the complicated decolonization process of Indonesia. Despite the promise of the Dutch state of a quick return to a free Republic of South Maluku (RMS), the year 2021 commemorated the seventy year stay of Moluccans in The Netherlands.

The first-generation Moluccan people came with nothing other than their Reformed Protestant faith, to which they held on tight in a situation of homesickness, isolation, longing, trauma, and permanent waiting. The religious songs that the Moluccans brought with them provided the closest connection with the homeland. Singing these songs was a way of communicating emotions that could not be put in words.

This paper takes practices of learning as the starting point for understanding how religious songs play a role in the identity formation of second- and third-generation Moluccan-Dutch Christians. The paper states that the form and focus of the learning process influence the stories, memories, associations, meanings, and emotions that are generated by a growing lineage of religious repertoire.

Session 17 - *Aud. Källan C201* - Chair: Ville Husgafvel

Karima Karppinen - Independent researcher

Applying Mysticism to Psychotherapy: Can Transcendent Experiences and the Expanding of Consciousness be Beneficial in a Non-Religious Therapeutic Context?

Despite our religious or spiritual standpoints, there are certain experiences before which we all stand perplexed, unable to explain their mysteriousness. In religious and spiritual context, however, there is a map of meaning and metaphor already attached to such experiences. How then, do people deal with what may be called a transcendent experience, when there is no religious or spiritual framework surrounding it? Could going deeper into these experiences in psychotherapy be beneficial for the client's therapeutic process? To discuss this, I will first look at what is understood as the goal of psychotherapy. I will then examine whether a type of process of expanding consciousness can take place in psychotherapy and consider what role transcendent experiences could play in such process. My aim is to look at ways in which the wisdom of mysticism in various spiritual traditions could be used in a non-religious context to benefit a person's psychotherapeutic process.

Ariane Kovac - Leipzig University, Germany

Taking Christianity to Therapy: Spiritual (Un-)Learning and Mental Health in a Global Megachurch

The Seattle-based evangelical megachurch Churchome has found its own answer to Christianity's often postulated decline in the US and other parts of the world: They do not only address spiritual "seekers" but also cater their services toward those who, though having been raised in a conservative evangelical milieu, have been discouraged or even repelled thereof in their adult life. These "over-churched" individuals actively work on un-learning and deconstructing those aspects of their religious socialisation they perceive as "harmful" or "traumatic." Often, they explicitly express this in terms of mental health or connect their learning to mental health practices. In my presentation, I will draw on interviews with Churchome members as well as observations at church services to analyse the intersections between individual spiritual (un-)learning processes and mental health. I argue that Churchome uses examples of these un-learnings or de-conversions to present itself as a progressive and healthy church. Further, I will use these results to reflect on broader aspects of self-presentation, identity work, and boundary maintenance of progressive evangelicals.

Andrew Thomas - Østfold University College, Norway

Self knowledge in education

Self knowledge is the preserve of both education and spirituality. Through self-knowledge pupils learn to live with and as the particularity of their brain. "Learning to learn" is an extremely powerful pedagogical tool, and part of a pupil's journey towards lifelong learning and civic competence. Through self-knowledge we are also unsurprised by the strange or sinful turns our internal monologue takes. So how are we to negotiate the strategic and educational consequences of our growth in self-knowledge? This paper discusses common features between educational knowledge (harvested by assessments, screening, etc.) and spiritual development and their advantages and disadvantages for pupils and teachers. Is knowing oneself the gateway to emancipation or manipulation, to passivity or political virtue? And if both are possible, how is it to be deployed responsibly in the classroom? Concrete educational and spiritual practices

are analysed from postcolonial perspectives and other critical theory (Achille Mbembe, Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt, James Scott).