

Religion: Concealed and Revealed

Turku/Åbo, Finland

9–12 June 2025

Summer School

Sunday 8 June

18:00 Informal get-together for summer school participants at Gastropub Löytö, Uudenmaankatu 1

Monday 9 June

Registration opens and coffee at 09:45, Arcanum lobby

10:15–10:30 Summer school opening & Welcome, Aava (A152)

10:30–12:30 Workshop 1

Aava (A152), Tutors: Reima Välimäki, Mika Vähäkangas

- **Daniel Mladenovic:** *Te Deum*, War and the Monarchy - A Comparative Study of Thanksgiving Celebrations in Times of Crisis and Power Transition in Sweden and Great Britain 1789–1815
- **Anna Jarske-Fransas:** Sacred Spaces and Places in Medical Practices
- **Joel Mansikka:** Perceptions on religion revealed through popular culture and videogames

12:30–13:45 Lunch at Aurum, Henrikinkatu 2

13:45–15:45 Workshop 2

Aava (A152), Tutors: Roger Munsu Vanzila, Sofia Sjö

- **Emilia Plichta:** Revealed and concealed dimensions of women's vocation within the Catholic Church
- **Oiva Ristimäki:** Revealing Calvinistic Persuasion in George MacDonald
- **Tomas Ray:** Adjusting lived religion through sermons

15:45–16:00 Coffee break, Arcanum lobby

16:00–17:30 Workshop 3

A268, Tutors: Elisa Uusimäki, Pekka Lindqvist

- **Simon Johansson:** The Sevenfold and Angelomorphic Spirit: from Isaiah 11:2–3a to Tertullian
- **Elli Barsnes:** The hidden and revealed God in David Bentley Hart's theology

A270, Tutors: Tim Rudbøg, Tiina Mahlamäki

- **Julia von Boguslawski:** Hidden by the sources: theosophical practice in Finland around the turn of the 20th century
- **Sofia Silvén:** Lucifer Over Finland: Conceptualizing the Counter-Hegemonic Narratives of Evil Among Turn of the Century Artists

17:45 Pizza dinner, Arcanum, 2nd floor coffee room



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Tuesday 10 June

9:30–11:30 Workshop 4

<p>A268, Tutors: Minna Opas, Linda Annunen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sofia Lindahl: Different Perceptions of New Spiritual Practices in The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland○ Sara Högberg: Christian Women and the Menstrual Cycle: Analyzing Lived Experiences in an Exploratory Study○ Tero Heinonen: Sounding the gods, distilling wellbeing: inner role-taking and sacralization of emotion in contemporary spirituality	<p>A270 Tutors: Manon Hedenborg White, Sonja Hukantaival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mila Santala: Elsa Heporauta: Exploring the Hidden Esoteric Practices of a Finnish Icon○ Boris Brander: The Working-Class Grimoire - The Tattarisuo Incident and the Working-Class History of the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses in Finland○ Pekka Pitkälä: From Obvious to Concealed. Sigurd Wettenhovi-Aspa and Temporal Aspects in Cultural History of Esotericism from Fin de Siècle to the World War.
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11:30–12:30 Lunch at Aurum, Henrikinkatu 2

12:30–14:30 Workshop 5

<p>A268, Tutors: Mercédesz Czimbalmos, Magdalena Dziaczkowska</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Riikka Nikkanen: Albert Edelfelt and the Jews – from antisemitic prejudice and ignorance to approving neutrality○ Christina Kjær Preisler: Tracing responsibility: Theological and Intellectual Currents of the 20th Century	<p>A270, Tutors: Olivia Cejvan, Tommy Ramstedt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Johanna Kujala: innerdance – Concealed and revealed○ Daria Kuznetsova: At the Intersection of Secrecy and Recognition: Siberian Shamanism in Contemporary Russia○ Kristel Ruutma: Revealing the Role of Folklore in UAP Cases
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14:30–14:45 Coffee break, Arcanum lobby

14:45–16:15 Workshop 6

<p>A268, Tutors: Jaana Kouri, Björn Vikström</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Jael Gardesten: The Theological Development of Just Peace○ Laura Wickström: The Impact of Hidden International Environmental Policies on Eco-Islam	<p>A270, Tutors: Nina Kokkinen, Fryderyk Kwiatkowski</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Inkeri Suutari: Esoteric notions on nature in the video works Sentimentum and Fantomi by Venla Helenius○ Antti Litmanen: Paradise Concealed: Arthur Machen's "N" and Its Legacy
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16:30 Gathering for excursion to the Donner Institute and Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Arcanum lobby

Conference

Wednesday 11 June

Registration opens at 8:30, Arcanum lobby

9:00–09:15 Welcome to the conference, Aava (A152)

9:15–10:45 [Session 7](#)

Aava (A152), Chair: Nina Kokkinen

- **Hedda Jansson:** The green veil – Ellen Key and the concept of spirituality
- **Fryderyk Kwiatkowski:** The (Un)divided Self: Exploring “Innies” and “Outies” in Severance (2022–)
- **Timo Helenius:** Revelation as Fundamental Hermeneutics

10:45–11:00 Coffee break, Arcanum lobby

11:00–12:30 **Keynote 1: Elisa Uusimäki (Aarhus University)**, Aava (A152)

12:30–13:30 Lunch at Aurum, Henrikinkatu 2

13:30–15:00 [Session 8](#)

Aava (A152), Chair: Tiina Mahlamäki

- **Tim Rudbøg:** Secrecy as pedagogy and rhetoric in H. P. Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine
- **Olivia Cejvan:** The Spiral Curriculum: nature, cycles and polarities as didactical tools in Swedish Wicca
- **Tommy Ramstedt:** Christian Yoga in Finland. Development, and meanings for instructors.

A270

ERC grants – Q&A with Elisa Uusimäki

15:00–15:30 Coffee break, Arcanum lobby

15:30–17:00 **Keynote 2: Manon Hedenborg White (Malmö University)**, Aava (A152)

18:00 Conference dinner at Göran, Linnankatu 72

Thursday 12 June

9:00–11:00 [Session 9](#)

Aava (A152), Chair: Sofia Sjö

- **John Björkman:** “The tomte spirits appear at places that are far away from habitation ... and there are many of them.” Rediscovering a “hidden” tradition of folk belief through folklore archives, microgeography and field visits.
- **Mika Vähäkangas:** Religious Realignment and Democratic Resilience: A Comparative Study of Religious Responses to (Geo)Political Crises (RELIDEM)
- **Mercédesz Czibalmos:** Antisemitism: Concealed and Revealed
- **Linda Annunen & Karoliina Dahl:** Religion and social exclusion: concealed and revealed representations in Finnish media 1980–2025

11:00–11:30 Coffee break, Arcanum lobby



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11:30–13:00 [Session 10](#)

Aava (A152), Chair: Minna Opas

- **Henrietta Grönlund & Rosa Huotari**: Silent, silenced, and silencing religion – the case of Lutheran social work in Finland
- **Anuleena Kimanen & Riina Sinisalo**: Silent, silenced, and silencing religion – the case of minority religions
- **Ayesha Qurrat ul Ain**: Transcendence and Immanence: Reflecting on God and nature in the Quranic paradigm

13:00–14:00 Lunch at Aurum, Henrikinkatu 2

14:00–15:30 **Keynote 3: Roger Munsu Vanzila (Nanzan University)**, Aava (A152)

15:30–15:45 Closing words

Conference abstracts

Session 7

Hedda Jansson (Stockholm university): *The green veil – Ellen Key and the concept of spirituality.*

In her ideological vision, author Ellen Key (1849-1926) emphasized a monistic and spiritual belief she referred to as “Life faith.” While Key’s ideas have been explored in previous research, her understanding and application of spirituality has not been thoroughly examined. This gap may explain why Key is often perceived as a precursor to a modern, secular, and non-religious society. This paper presents my postdoctoral research project, which seeks to expand the analytical understanding of the concept of spirituality by investigating Key’s ideas. I argue that she proposed a vision of human existence that was both modern and scientific, as well as religious and spiritual. Through a critical analysis of the discourse on spirituality and religion in Swedish debates, I will demonstrate how Key’s vision was received within the prevailing theories of spirituality and secularity.

Fryderyk Kwiatkowski (AGH University of Krakow): *The (Un)divided Self: Exploring “Innies” and “Outies” in Severance (2022–)*

Apple TV’s *Severance* (2022–) reimagines Gnostic themes of hidden knowledge and control within the dystopian corporate world of Lumon Industries. The show explores the consequences of forcibly splitting the self between work and personal life, creating a stark divide between hidden and revealed aspects of identity. This paper examines how *Severance* draws on negative portrayals of esoteric organizations like Scientology by depicting Lumon as a secretive, cult-like institution where hidden knowledge functions as a tool of corporate dominance. At the same time, the presentation will highlight how the gradual unveiling of Lumon’s control mirrors the Gnostic pursuit of transcendent knowledge and escape from systemic oppression. By exploring the dynamics of secrecy, knowledge and power within the show’s esoteric storyworld, I argue that *Severance* presents a contemporary meditation on the existential struggle – and perhaps even impossibility – of achieving a unified self in the age of corporate capitalism.

Timo Helenius (Åbo Akademi): *Revelation as Fundamental Hermeneutics*

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur contends that self-identification and attaining oneself as an existent being are both dependent on the other or that-which-is-greater-than-any-of-the-selves. Human existence needs to figure out and find its expression through cultural productivity that includes religions. Religions, in turn, are grounded in the idea and experience of revelation. Encountering “the Other” results in the need to reassess one’s situation in a manner that rewrites both communal and personal existence. A prophet is a prime example of a human being who dis-covers his condition of needing to rely on the other that enables and facilitates the continuously needed reconfiguration or the authoring reading of one’s existence. This thought has a more general anthropological dimension; revelation can also be approached in existential terms. In terms of human existence, the human realm is opened up or un-veiled through the acts of productive imagination. As Ricoeur puts it in *History and Truth*, “In imagining his possibilities, human being acts as a prophet of his own existence.”



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Session 8

Tim Rudbøg (University of Copenhagen): *Secrecy as pedagogy and rhetoric in H. P. Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine*

This paper explores how Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) employs secrecy. Secrecy can have numerous meanings or be an empty, qualifying signifier. This paper argues that Blavatsky's writings use didactic esotericism or pedagogical secrecy. A pedagogical analysis of secrecy provides a better understanding of her theosophy's ontology and epistemology than a rhetorical analysis. Rhetorically, Blavatsky's secrecy enhances the mystique, exclusivity, and authority of her teachings, positioning her as a gatekeeper of ancient wisdom. However, her deliberate use of cryptic language and symbolic references also fosters a process-oriented learning, engaging readers beyond rational book learning. This didactic dimension, confirmed by historical sources, is crucial for understanding why her writings construct meaning as they do.

Olivia Cejvan (Malmö University): *The Spiral Curriculum: nature, cycles and polarities as didactical tools in Swedish Wicca*

This ethnographic study of Sweden's Aine tradition (founded in 1995) examines practices of concealment and revelation within contemporary Wiccan ritual practice and answers how and why it promotes learning. In the *coven*, initiates repeatedly encounter Wiccan mysteries at progressively deeper levels through three initiatory degrees. This becomes a spiral learning process, intertwined with moon phases and seasonal celebrations—creating a system where each new cycle touches new layers of meaning through nature's rhythms of death and rebirth, darkness and light. As practitioners mirror seasons, phases and polarities in their spiritual development, each return to ritual themes prompts progression from basic understanding to advanced insight. The paper analyzes how strategic concealment and revelation, aligned with nature's patterns, serve pedagogical purposes and become catalysts for transforming tradition and self.

Tommy Ramstedt (Åbo Akademi University): *Christian Yoga in Finland. Development, and meanings for instructors.*

In recent years a specific trademarked Christian Yoga program called the Yoga of Stillness has become increasingly popular among employees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. This presentation aims to explore and contextualize the development of the Yoga of Stillness and how it is understood by the instructors. “Re-sacralization” or “Christianization” of yoga practices in Finland can be seen to have occurred in a context where yoga for a longer time already has been widespread and commercialized. Giving Christian meanings to yoga involves theological discussions and giving theological arguments for how bodily dimensions and a sense of relaxation become a part of a specifically Christian religious experience. The need to imbue the practice with a clear Christian vocabulary and meaning may be seen partly as stemming from the suspicion against yoga that is still prevalent among more conservative groups.

Session 9

John Björkman (University of Turku): *"The tomte spirits appear at places that are far away from habitation ... and there are many of them."* Rediscovering a "hidden" tradition of folk belief through folklore archives, microgeography and field visits.

Until the 18th century, Finnish folk belief could only be written about with a purpose to prohibit or condemn. Literary culture was, in a way, repellent to local beliefs. However, there are enough glimpses provided by the occasional literary source to let us understand that Finnish folk belief continued to be practiced and natural sacred sites continued to be revered through the centuries, only hidden from the view of officials and authorities and therefore rarely documented. By the late 19th century, attitudes and perspectives had changed and the time was fruitful for documenting traditional culture, including folk belief.

How much can folklore records reveal about local belief traditions that have been hidden for centuries? How much additional knowledge can applying a spatial and microgeographic approach to belief narratives reveal? Can patterns about local belief traditions be revealed via field visits to natural sacred sites?

Mika Vähäkangas (The Polin Institute, Åbo Akademi): *Religious Realignment and Democratic Resilience: A Comparative Study of Religious Responses to (Geo)Political Crises (RELIDEM)*

Contrary to some predictions, history has not ended. Moreover, the great narratives are back. Nationalism and religion have made a comeback. The rise of right-wing populist politics and Russia's war against Ukraine are prime examples. The Russian Orthodox Church justified the invasion of Ukraine. Several populist regimes in Europe have used religious rhetoric to align themselves with churches. This project explores these dynamics. Composed of a team of researchers with backgrounds in theology, history, and sociology, the project examines how churches in four countries bordering Russia - Finland, Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine - respond theologically to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and right-wing nationalist rhetoric. The historically largest churches of these countries span the three major European church traditions – Protestantism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

RELIDEM does not only combine views from the four countries but also from macro, meso and micro levels in the studied churches. Therefore the project team consisting of social scientists, historians and theologians combines the study of written data with interviews and observations and discourse analysis with ethnography, both traditional and digital.

Mercedesz Czimbalmos (Åbo Akademi): *Antisemitism: Concealed and Revealed. The Antisemitism Undermining Democracy project.*

Antisemitism, as a form of hatred has existed over two millennia, in different forms in most societies. Whilst post-war memory politics have fostered a widespread belief that antisemitism is not a problem

in Finland, antisemitism in fact has existed in the country throughout its history. Over the course of the past years, especially during and after the Covid19 pandemic and Hamas' attack on Israel on the 7 October 2023, Jewish communities in Finland as elsewhere on the globe experiences a surge in antisemitic sentiments. The *Antisemitism Undermining Democracy* project at the Inez and Julius Polin Institute for Theological research is currently the only ongoing research project in Finland that studies antisemitism in its contemporary forms in the Finnish society. The goal of this presentation is to introduce the project to the audience, as well as to showcase some examples and results of the research conducted within the frames of the project.

Linda Annunen and Karoliina Dahl (Åbo Akademi): *Religion and social exclusion: concealed and revealed representations in Finnish media 1980-2025*

This paper presents Religion and Social Exclusion-project and preliminary findings from the background research on media representations of three cases in Finland: prison incarceration, the Sámi indigenous people, and the LGBTQI+ community. A comparison of the media representations reveals similarities and differences in how these groups have been portrayed over the past 50 years. In the 1980's and 1990's, these groups were typically framed from the majority perspective, often through stereotypes that perpetuate stigmatization and discrimination. Sámi people were depicted as alcoholic reindeer herders or romanticized as "exotic" people tied to nature, LGBTQI+ individuals as promiscuous and immoral, and prisoners as dangerous and irredeemable. Since the early 2000's, religion have played a significant role in the media representations of the LGBTQI+ community, especially regarding the Evangelical Lutheran Church's stand on marriage and adoption rights, but it is less visible in the representations of the other two groups. In Finnish media, religion have been portrayed both positively and negatively in prisons, depending on the specific religion in question. Sámi religion exists in the intersection of traditional Sámi ways of life and Christianity, but have been indirectly connected in media to exoticized shamans or to contradictions between Christian and Sámi traditions. However, over recent decades, a new discourse has emerged, amplifying voices from within these groups, challenging previous stereotypes, and addressing misrepresentations.

Session 10

Henrietta Grönlund (University of Helsinki), **Rosa Huotari** (University of Helsinki), **Tiina Parkkinen** (University of Helsinki) and **Anna Salonen** (University of Eastern Finland): *Silent, silenced, and silencing religion – the case of Lutheran social work in Finland*

In the Finnish society, public invisibility of religion has been interpreted to mean that the societal significance of religion is diminishing (e.g Hjelm 2015). But invisibility of religion can also be a consequence of negotiations related to its roles, positions, and manifestations in public space (Löfström 2015). Silences related to religion intertwine with relationships between individuals and communities, and their positions in society. This paper examines silences related to religion in the social work of Lutheran parishes and faith-based organizations. Their work is rooted in the Lutheran faith, yet they aim in inclusiveness and serve people representing different world views. Drawing from



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different empirical research data on such work, we illustrate how religion is kept silent and silenced, and how this intertwines with power in different ways.

Anuleena Kimanen (University of Turku), **Riina Sinisalo** (University of Helsinki) and **Mitra Härkönen** (University of Helsinki): *Silent, silenced, and silencing religion – the case of minority religions*

The decreasing visibility of religion in the public sphere has been seen as a characteristic of a secularized society, such as Finland. However, behind this invisibility, we can note several processes connected to power relations in the society. In our presentation we discuss silence and silencing regarding minority religions in Finland. Two cases to be illustrated are Islam and Buddhism in Finland. The public discourses concerning these two religious traditions are very different. To a great extent, Islam is publicly discussed through negative depictions. Visible forms of religious practice are often defined as problematic or unfit to the Finnish society. When the public discourse remains silent about positive sides of Islam, some Muslims choose to remain silent about their religion, thus creating harm to their sense of belonging and being seen as whole persons in, for instance, education. In contrast, Buddhism is not seen as a significant source of identity of immigration background Buddhists in Finland. In public discourse, there seems to be room only for a certain, philosophical version of Buddhism. In stead of religionization, which seems to affect Finnish Muslims, immigration background Buddhists in Finland seem to face ethnicization. These two examples, derived from multiple empirical studies, illustrate the processes of silence and silencing in public discourses and the harm caused by those processes.

Ayesha Qurrat ul Ain (FRIAS, University of Freiburg): *Transcendence and Immanence: Reflecting on God and nature in the Quranic paradigm*

“The universe, material and spiritual, is as Spinoza said, one and (in some sense) of one substance; and God, if there be a God, in part manifest and in part concealed in nature, is one only.” This statement belongs to a twentieth century South Asian atheist philosopher turned Muslim exegete AbdulMajid Daryabadi as he juxtaposed the Quranic ideology of monotheism with the Unitarian philosophical approach of Spinoza. This paper intends to see how Majid has interpreted the Quranic text to imply the immanence of nature as revelatory of the divine transcendence while drawing on metaphysical idealism significantly. Furthermore, focusing on Majid’s Quranic commentary as a case-study, it aims to analyze that how Quranic narrative informs the modern Muslim rationality to reflect on the observable operative ways of nature in order to ratiocinate the Omnipotence, Wisdom and dexterity of an invisible God.