

(1) Public Religions and Their Secrets, Secret Religions and Their Publics

2016 Autumn Conference of the Dutch Association for the Study of Religion (NGG), Thursday 27 – Friday 28 October 2016, University of Amsterdam.

Outline of Theme

Advocates of modernity and of secularization insist that religion is becoming increasingly individualized, a claim that in its most simplistic formulation presupposes religion's absolute retreat from the public to the private sphere. By contrast, thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas have argued that even in modern societies, religion should be allowed to participate in public decision-making processes in so far as its claims can be "translated" into the (non-religious) language of public reason and become a basis for discussion and consensus between religious and non-religious persons. Furthermore, quite a few significant trends of contemporary religion, such as Pentecostalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and new forms of national or political religion, pose an empirical challenge to the modernity and secularization paradigms by demonstrating the continued presence of religion in the public sphere. Debates concerning public religion have mostly focused on post-Enlightenment, modern society, but the negotiation between a public and a private sphere has been a concern for religion even before the Enlightenment and in other contexts than modernity. This opens up the question of the role of secrecy within these processes of negotiation, both in terms of practices and of discourses. To what extent do practitioners of public religions keep aspects of their practices, doctrines, and material culture behind the veils of secrecy? What role does secrecy play in religious traditions? Is secrecy opposed to public aspects of religions, or is it complementary and functional to them? And what role do accusations of secrecy, double standards (for example the alleged taqiyya in the case of Muslims in the West) and conspiracy theories play in interpreting the religions of others?

We are honoured to announce prof. Jan Assmann (Konstanz) as the conference's keynote speaker.

Call for Papers

For this conference we welcome papers that address all aspects of the public vs. the secret in religion. Proposals can be submitted from all theoretical perspectives and on, and all areas of research within the study of religion. Each individual paper will be given a total of 30 minutes, i.e. 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

Please send your paper abstract of max. 350 words no later than **1 April 2016** to Gerard Wiegers, University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities, Department of History, European Studies and Religious Studies, Oude Turfmarkt 147, 1012 CG Amsterdam, The Netherlands, g.a.wiegers@uva.nl.

(2) NGG PhD Master Class

Wednesday 26 October 2016, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Are you a PhD student and do you plan to attend the NGG conference Public Religions and Their Secrets, Secret Religions and their Publics on 27 and 28 October 2016? And are you looking for a place to get feedback on a chapter or article you've just written? Or are you not participating in the conference, but would you still like to be part of an inspirational day with fellow PhDs? Then join us on 26 October 2016 to take part in the very first **NGG PhD Master Class!** We aim to get together a group of PhD students who conduct research in the field of

the Study of Religion in the broadest sense. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) contemporary religion and its relation to society, religion and art, interreligious relations, religious rituals and commemorations, and religion and education. During the master class you will be able to receive in-depth response from senior scholars, who will be especially invited to give feedback to your research material.

In response to this CFP, please send us a proposal of max. 500 words stating what your research is about and describe the particular topic and article or dissertation chapter you would like to discuss during the master class. If your proposal is accepted, we will ask you to send us this text to be distributed amongst the participants. The number of participants is limited, as we will ask all of you to come prepared and have read the submitted texts. During the master class all participants will give short presentations on their texts, followed by feedback of senior scholars and a group discussion. With this master class we hope to offer an engaging and productive opportunity to discuss your work amongst scholars with different expertise than you might be used to in your own institutional environment. We aim to achieve new and refreshing insights and thought-provoking discussions!

We invite you to submit an abstract, accompanied by a short biography, by **1 April 2016**. Please send it to the NGG PhD representatives Susanne van Esdonk (UvA): s.e.vanesdonk@uva.nl and Lieke Wijnia (TiU): l.wijnia@tilburguniversity.edu

Should you have any questions about the Master Class, feel free to contact Susanne or Lieke as well