3rd PhD and Graduate Student Symposium

Constructing and Deconstructing Meaning.

Text Beyond Author and Reader

PROGRAM

Jewish, Christian and Islamic Origins
Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
University of Groningen

Organisation: Prof. Dr. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta
With the assistance of Fryderyk Kwiatkowski

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Constructing and Deconstructing Meaning. Text Beyond Author and Reader

Organisation: Prof. Dr. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, Professor of New testament and Early Christianity, University of Groningen (The Netherlands); with the assistance of Fryderyk Kwiatkowski

The Symposium: "One text defers, differs from, is differentiated from another. In viewing every text as a supplement, as writing, as sign, the reader's individualizing, authorizing voice disappears in favor of the effects of difference and the process of differentiation itself only to emerge in the guise of the new text, sign, commentary, writing. This being so, the critical task is not a search for an Ur-text or originary meaning that has founded all others but a demonstration of disconnections, of residual texts present by negative implication, by differences, not commonalities of, source or intention." (G.A. Phillips, "Sign/Text/Différence. The Contribution of Intertextual Theory to Biblical Criticism," 93).

Constructing and Deconstructing Meaning.
Text Beyond Author and Reader

21st June 2019

Room 117, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies

9.00-9.15   Opening by Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

9.15-10.00   Israel Muñoz Gallarte, Keynote Lecture:

When the Two Become One: The Robe in the "Hymn of the Pearl" (*ATh* 111.75-113.97)

General discussion

10.00-10.45   Petru Moldovan

The Case of Thomas. Traditions and Interpretations: from potential meaning(s) to the self-creating scholarship

Respondent: Viviana Felix

General discussion

10.45-11.30   Forrest A B Kentwell

Who is the Ideal Reader?: Tracing acts of Identification in studies of Plutarch

Respondent: Alberto Romero Criado

General discussion

COFFEE BREAK   11.30 – 11.45

11.45-12.30   Arjan Sterken

Cognitive Theory and the Binary Principle in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Respondent: Fryderyk Kwiatkowski

General discussion

12.30-13.15   Fryderyk Kwiatkowski

Philip K. Dick's Reception of Gnosticism and His Fiction in Light of "2-3-74"

Respondent: Forrest A B Kentwell

General discussion

LUNCH   13.15-14.15

14.15-15.00   Viviana Felix

About some interpretations of Justin Martyr

Respondent: Petru Moldovan

General discussion

15.00-15.45   Alberto Romero Criado

Keys to Understand and Translate Properly the Adverbial Lexemes Νῦν and Νυνί in the New Testament

Respondent: Arjan Sterken

General discussion

COFFEE BREAK   15.45 – 16.15

16.00-16.45   Eryc de Oliveira Leão

Naturalism, impiety and some hermeneutical questions around the trial of Socrates

Respondent: Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

General discussion

16.45-17.30   Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

Ancient Religious Texts and Intertextuality. Plato's and Plutarch's Myths of the Afterlife

17.30   Drinks and Dinner

Keynote Lecture:

Dr. Israel Muñoz Gallarte

(University of Córdoba)

When the Two Become One: The Robe in the "Hymn of the Pearl" (*Ath* 111.75-113.97)

Abstract: The present paper will focus on some textual and interpretative problems that the Poem of Pearl of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* raises, such as the section ATh 111.63-113.97. Numerous scholars have attempted several interpretations, but up to date there is no consensus regarding its meaning. By means of contextualizing the hymn in the cultural and literary framework it was composed, I will propose an interpretation that takes into account other Nag-Hammadi writings, Gnosticism, and Greek philosophy of the Imperial age. After commenting the passage, we will try to draw some conclusions, mainly related to the soteriological aspects of the poem.

ABSTRACTS

The Case of Thomas. Traditions and Interpretations: from potential meaning(s) to the self-creating scholarship

Petru Moldovan (University of Groningen)

A paper on the *Gospel of Thomas* is already a text which implies a plurality of meanings. The research on the *Gospel of Thomas* as an integrative process, is blended by scholars within their own accepted scholarly tradition together with their dialogue with the text. This research process is *at work* and it guarantees the development of the scholarship's self-creation by opening up constant layers of 'meaning' towards the object of research. Therefore, interpretation is placed in this context always in a specific time and within a recursive approach. However, we should bear in mind that the *Gospel of Thomas* as a cultural artifact is an interface that enables a multitude of possible avoided hyphenated relationships and that their meaning(s) are coming no longer from the Gospel itself, but from the interpretations provided by the scholarship. The place where the Gospel is left aside is visible only passing through the readings dedicated to the meta-narratives constructed around it. This paper aims to emphasize that the moment of transition between a text and its mirrors is not reflected as a reception of the Gospel itself, but as the possible inner relationships created in the process of research dedicated to the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Who is the Ideal Reader?: Tracing acts of Identification in studies of Plutarch

Forrest A B Kentwell (University of Groningen)

A new trend in the academic study of Religion and popular discourse is to discuss "Identity." However, the French cultural theorist Jean-Francois Bayart makes the bold claim that: "there is no such thing as Identity, only operational acts of identification." Thus, identity is never a static category, but all of us are acting in the world and these actions culminate into what often appears as a solidified notion of self and group.

This paper will make use of Bayart's theories of identification (and Vaia Touna's 2019: *Strategic Acts in the Study of Identity*) in an attempt to better understand how scholars of Plutarch create meaning and value. Many Plutarchian scholars claim that there is an "ideal reader" of Plutarch's texts. This ideal reader is generally understood as someone who "knows" all of the sources that Plutarch references (and the meaning he wants to imbue) both explicitly and implicitly. Throughout the presentation, I will trace the ways in which the "ideal reader" is presented by recent monographs and edited volumes on Plutarch. On some occasions this ideal reader is given a face (definition and description), usually well-educated rich men from Imperial Rome (Harker, 2019). Yet on most occasions the ideal reader" is an empty phrase with no explicit referent. This paper will explore the "so what" that an ideal reader appears without a face. Therefore, I will test the following hypothesis: there is no such thing as an ideal reader, only operational acts of subsequent authors creating themselves as ideal readers.

Cognitive Theory and the Binary Principle in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter
Arjan Sterken (University of Groningen)

With the dawn of the cognitive era in the Humanities, some scholars have hoped for a revival of structuralism. More specifically, scholars wished for empirical verification for some of the more speculative claims made by Claude Lévi-Strauss. One such a promising claim pertains to the binary principle. According to Lévi-Strauss, the classification system of a society organizes itself by means of binary pairs of opposition. One of the most substantial binary oppositions is that between nature and culture. This opposition is relevant for scholars of mythology, for Lévi-Strauss claims that societies try to consolidate this opposition between nature and culture by means of myth.

Implicitly, the binary principle is implemented in cognitive theory by means of body schemata. Body schemata are basic cognitive models based on the embodied experience of humans in their environment. People unconsciously use these schemata to guide their reasoning in the world, often in a metaphorical fashion. For example, the VERTICALITY body schema is based upon our embodied experience of walking upright, and employs the binary opposition between UP and DOWN. This body schema, and the binary opposition it utilizes, can be metaphorically implanted upon the cosmological differentiation between heaven and earth.

It is the question, however, whether this clear-cut theoretical schema remains intact when it is applied on an actual myth. In this paper, I will utilize the binary principle to analyze the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. This famous myth recounts the separation of Demeter and Persephonē, and while it utilizes a basic binary scheme, it also breaks with it in subtle but fundamental ways. This case study will therefore both demonstrate the use of the binary principle as a model and its more nuanced implementation in actual texts.

Philip K. Dick's Reception of Gnosticism and His Fiction in Light of "2-3-74"
Fryderyk Kwiatkowski (University of Groningen, Jagiellonian University)

In February 1974, a science fiction author Philip K. Dick, infamous for abusing drugs and after having survived a nervous breakdown, begun to experience a series of visions which changed his life irreversibly. He called them "2-3-74" and recorded in consisting over 8,000 pages journal *Exegesis*. While trying to illuminate the origins and meaning of the experiences, he interpreted them primarily in religious terms, employing his knowledge on Gnosticism, Orphism, Buddhism, Neoplatonism, and other traditions. Perceiving the visions as a validation of Gnostic teachings, he retrospectively interpreted his fictional novels as gospels which in literary way expressed Gnostic soteriology. In my talk, I will investigate Dick's Gnostic interpretive approach to his novels and disclose their intertextual relationships with sources on which he based his understanding of Gnosticism.

About Some Interpretations of Justin Martyr
Viviana Felix (University of Groningen)

The amount of literature about Justin is huge. His position in the beginning of Christian philosophy has attracted many scholars to his works and ideas. However, the comments and interpretations of our author in many cases differ and some of them coincide.

In many cases, the scholars tried to show one image of Justin according to their previous ideas or general goal. As a result, we can find an image of Justin as the main promoter of Hellenization of Christianity perverting its biblical origins, as well as the opposite version, a Christian who, with a certain knowledge of Greek philosophy, scorns it in favor of Christianity as superior wisdom.

Because of the authority of some of them, these interpretations have become traditional conditioning the reading of Justin.

In this work we will try to show the lack of proof, and therefore, the falsity of some of these, particularly in the cosmology and anthropology of our author.

Keys to Understand and Translate Properly the Adverbial Lexemes Νῦν and Νυνί in the New Testament
Alberto Romero Criado (University of Córdoba)

The aim of this paper is to study the values of the adverbial lexemes νῦν and νυνί in the New Testament from a semantic point of view and to explain their particularities in order to show the differences and similarities between them. For this purpose, the semantic analysis method used in the Greek-Spanish New Testament Dictionary will be followed. Thus, this study will allow a properly translation of those lexemes.

Naturalism, impiety and some hermeneutical questions around the trial of Socrates
Eryc de Oliveira Leão (University of Coimbra)

The trial of Socrates is the most famous process based on an impiety accusation. He was not the first and were not the last to answer this kind of process but, due to the historical importance of one of his pupils, his trial acquired so much importance that every aspect of his juridical case was exhaustively studied through history and most of the topics around it, including the status of the impiety (*asebeia)* accusations were distorted by influence of the aspects of the trial of Socrates (Naden, 2016; Dover, 1976). Many hermeneutic questions arises from it, such as: What were the range of the impiety public accusations at classical time? How political were these processes? To what extent historical events influenced these trials? How was the influence of the condemnation of Socrates and other philosophers to later classical thinkers and doxographers? And what is the relationship between these events, if any, with the

Diopeithes' decree who, according to Plutarch, "brought in a bill providing for the public impeachment (εἰσαγγέλλεσθαι) of those who did not recognize the gods, or who taught doctrines regarding the heavens (λόγους περὶ τῶν μεταρσίων)" (Plutarch, Pericles, c.32 s.2 apud Whitmarch (2015): Battling the gods)? Social considerations of this sort are rarely considered in accounts of the history of astronomy and ancient naturalism and may throw light on the history of pre-modern science after Socrates and the other naturalists accused of commit impiety crimes.

Ancient Religious Texts and Intertextuality. Plato's and Plutarch's Myths of the Afterlife

Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta (University of Groningen)

Dictionaries define Intertextuality as "the interrelationship between texts, especially works of literature." The study of Intertextuality accordingly could be described as the discipline that ponders the way texts live in other texts in order to determine if and how texts reflect, reshape, or transform one another. Originated during the 1960's in the work of Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Gérad Genette, however, the notion of intertext as a "new tissue of past citations," or "dense web of allusion" has been applied in the last decades beyond the literary world and extended to photography, movie, music, painting, and even architecture. After providing an overview of intertextuality and its wide applicability when conceived in this comprehensive and encompassing way, the present chapter provides an intertextual approach to the myths of the Afterlife as developed by Plato and Plutarch of Chaeronea. After comparing Plato's myth of Er and Plutarch's myths in *On the Sign of Socrates*, *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*, and *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*, this paper applies Genette's approach to Intertextuality in order both to assess Plutarch's textual transformations and to show how they generate new meanings more suited to the expectations of authors and readers of the first centuries CE.