



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Metaphors of Religion: Comparative Perspectives, Theoretical Potential, and Methodic Innovation



27th – 29th OCTOBER 2025



RUB Convention Center,
Universitätsstr. 150,
44801 Bochum, Germany

Funded by



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Welcome to the International Conference: **METAPHORS OF RELIGION**

Metaphors shape how religious communities articulate the inexpressible, negotiate meaning, and transmit traditions. This interdisciplinary conference explores metaphors as fundamental elements of religious language, thought, and practice across cultures and historical periods. Key discussions center on the role of metaphors in the emergence and transformation of religious language, the comparative study of metaphoric patterns in traditions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism, and the cognitive and linguistic mechanisms underlying metaphorical meaning-making.

Further topics include how religious metaphors adapt in response to intercultural encounters and historical shifts; the potential of digital and computational methods for analyzing metaphors across languages and large corpora; and the interplay of metaphor with material culture and visual media in religious contexts.

By addressing these questions, the conference highlights the theoretical and methodological importance of metaphor studies for understanding religious diversity, the dynamics of belief systems, and the shared or divergent ways humans imagine the divine, salvation, and ethical life. The programme brings together perspectives from linguistics, religious studies, cognitive science, and digital humanities to advance innovative approaches in the study of religious metaphors.

PROGRAM

Monday, 27th OCTOBER

08:30–09:45 Registration and welcome coffee

09:45–11:00 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Room: 2a

09:45–10:00 Welcoming address of Martin Paul, Rector of Ruhr University

10:00–10:15 Introduction to the conference by Volkhard Krech, spokesperson of the CRC 1475

10:15–10:30 Introduction to the program by the coordination team of the CRC 1475

10:30–11:00 First discussion

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

11:30–13:30 SESSION 1: The Potential of Metaphor: Theoretical and Philological Perspectives I

Room: 2a

Chair: Camilla Di Biase-Dyson

11:30–12:10 What About the Index of Religious Metaphors?
Volkhard Krech

12:10–12:50 Ontologies and Comparative Metaphor Studies: Interlinked Catalogues of Elements with Religious, Cosmological and Anthropological Relevance
Velizar Sadovski

12:50–13:30 Metaphor, Transcendence, and the Ineffable
Jacob Hesse

13:30–14:30 Lunch break

14:30–16:30 SESSION 2: The Potential of Metaphor: Theoretical and Philological Perspectives II

Room: 2a

Chair: Kianoosh Rezania

SESSION 3: Religious Metaphors of Experience and Emotion

Room: 1

Chair: Marion Eggert

14:30–15:10 Metaphors in Early Modern Alchemy
Reinhold Gleiß

Like an Ant Trapped in a Circle of Fire: Incorporating Aristotelian Mediety into Sharia Through a Metaphor by Al-Ghazali
Yesmine Karray

15:10–15:50	True Speech and the Event Structure Metaphor: How Etymology May Help Clarify a Key Indo-Iranian Religious Concept <i>Lucien Van Beek</i>	Famine and the Sword: Apocalypse in Early Modern Iran <i>Saman Mahdevar</i>
15:50–16:30	Raising the Heart Above the World: Grammar Related Metaphors in al-Quṣayrī's 'Grammar of Hearts' (Naḥw al-qulūb) <i>Vicky Ziegler</i>	Atmospheres, Outbursts and Flows: The Role of Emotion Metaphors in Theories of Religion <i>Gerrit Lange</i>
16:30–17:00	Coffee break	
17:00–18:30	KEYNOTE Religious Metaphors, Embodiment and Multimodality Eve Sweetser	
Room: 2a		
18:30–20:00	Dinner <i>Location: RUB Convention Center</i>	



Tuesday, 28th OCTOBER

09:00–11:00	SESSION 4: Digital and Computational Approaches to Metaphor Analysis <i>Chair: Tatjana Scheffler</i>
Room: 2a	
09:00–09:40	The Venom of Heresy: A Computational Approach to Tracking the Development of Anti-heretical Hate Propaganda Metaphors in Western Christendom, 1000–1150 <i>David Zbiral</i>
09:40–10:20	Counterfactual Metaphor <i>Markus Egg</i>
10:20–11:00	Religious Metaphors at Scale: Digital and Computational Approaches to Metaphor Identification and Analysis <i>Frederik Elwert, Sebastian Reimann & Lina Rodenhausen</i>
11:00–11:30	Coffee break

11:30–13:30

SESSION 5:

Metaphors of Life and Death

Room: 2a

Chair: Reinhold Gleib

SESSION 6:

Metaphors of Space and Movement I

Room: 1

Chair: Christian Meyer

11:30–12:10

Death is Down: Orientational Metaphor, Conceptual Blending, and the Katabasis Theme in Three Indo-European Mythological Texts

Anna Bonifazi & Riccardo Ginevra

Metaphorical Space between WAY and LIGHT. Transcendence (or Transcending) in Early China

Licia Di Giacinto

12:10–12:50

Wind as an Image of the One in the Sources on Vraytyas

Tiziana Pontillo

“that Christ [...] was raised (ἐγήγεῖται) on the third day [...] and that he was seen (ὤφθη) by Peter and then by the Twelve” (1 Cor 15.3b-5) – Metaphors Paul and the Corinthians Lived by

Bärbel Bosenius

12:50–13:30

The Path None May Escape: Death Metaphor in the Avestan and Pahlavi Aogəmadaēčā

Neda Mohtashami

Sacred as Space: Comparative Metaphors of Religious Landscapes in Yoruba Religion and Christianity

Ojo Rapheal

13:30–14:30

Lunch Break

14:30–16:30

SESSION 7:

The Potential of Metaphor: Theoretical and Philological Perspectives III

Room: 2a

Chair: Rosel Pientka-Hinz

SESSION 8:

Metaphors of Space and Movement II

Room: 1

Chair: Knut Martin Stünkel

14:30–15:10

When the Devil Roasts Snakes on Your Heart – The Role of Religious Morality in the Conceptualization of ANGER Across Languages

Veronika Jávör-Szelid

From Musical to Religious Metaphor: The Meta-Schema for Spiritual Advancement and Its Role in Cognitive Semantics

Mihailo Antović

15:10–15:50

The Sun-God as Experience: A Metaphorical and Phenomenological Exploration of a Solar Hymn from the Egyptian New Kingdom

Camilla Di Biase-Dyson

Researching Qur’anic WAY Metaphors Using Close and Distant Reading

Johann Büssow, Thomas Jurczyk & Roman Seidel

15:50–16:30	The Guardians of Hours: The Phenomenology of Ritual Time in the Shiite Ritual Guidebook <i>Zahra Naghshband</i>	Metaphor, Space, and Worship: on Proximization in Religious Broadcasting <i>Monika Tosik</i>
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16:30–17:00	Coffee break
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17:00–18:30	KEYNOTE
Room: 2a	Metaphor and Religion: How Can Deliberate Metaphor Theory Help? <i>Gerard Steen</i>

18:30–19:00	Transfer to conference dinner
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19:00–22:00	Conference dinner <i>Location: Brauhaus Rietkötter, Große Beckstr. 7, 44787 Bochum</i>
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Wednesday, 29th OCTOBER

09:00–11:00	SESSION 9:
Room: 2a	Materiality and Visuality in Metaphors I <i>Chair: Tim Karis</i>

09:00–09:40	More than Symbols: Metaphor, Blending, and the Dynamics of Meaning in Late Medieval Religious Imagery <i>Marius Rimmele</i>
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09:40–10:20	“Material Metaphors”: A Working Group in the CRC “Metaphors of Religion” <i>Martin Radermacher</i>
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10:20–11:00	Water is Purification: Scientology’s Use of Pictorial Metaphors in Religious Meaning-Making <i>Dunja Sharbat Dar & Anna Kira Hippert</i>
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11:00–11:30	Coffee break
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11:30–13:30	SESSION 10:
	Materiality and Visuality in Metaphors II Room: 2a <i>Chair: Jessie Pons</i>

SESSION 11:
Further Perspectives Room: 1 <i>Chair: Stefanie Dipper</i>

11:30–12:10	The Egyptian Gods as Metaphor in Imperial Rome: Historical and Material Considerations <i>Bryan Brinkmann</i>	“Who is... Who is that man who speaks in front of others?” <i>Atko Rimmel</i>
12:10–12:50	Do You See What I See? Meaning-Making from Visual Representations of Samantabhadra <i>Renée Ford</i>	A Linguistic Approach to Metaphors in Sign(ed) Languages: Materiality, Visuality, Cognitive & Methodological Issues <i>Davide Astori</i>
12:50–13:30	Urban Building Metaphors: The Shape Christianity Takes in the Neo-Liberal City <i>Veronika Eufinger</i>	Shifting Metaphors. Stereotypical Portraits of Religion in Soviet Poster Art <i>Jasmin Eder & Katharina Neef</i>
13:30–14:30	Lunch Break	
14:30–16:30	SESSION 12: Anthropomorphic Metaphors Room: 2a <i>Chair: Carmen Meinert</i>	SESSION 13: Metaphors of Kinship Room: 1 <i>Chair: Monika Tosik</i>
14:30–15:10	Anthropomorphic Metaphors in Orthodox Church Historiography of Eastern Europe <i>Pavlo Yermieiev</i>	Our Father, Our Fathers: A Study of Religious Metaphor of God’s Fatherhood in African Christianity and African Indigenous Religions <i>Benson Igboin</i>
15:10–15:50	The Kingly Buddha and Royal Deities: Kingship as Metaphor in Sri Lankan Buddhist Texts <i>Stephen C. Berkwitz</i>	We Are All Children of God, the Father (or Mother)?! – Polarization in the Conceptualization of God–Human Relations <i>Lina Rodenhausen</i>
15:50–16:30	Sun Disks and Sacred Bodies: Metaphors or Light in Early South Asian Art <i>Jessie Pons & Patrick Krüger</i>	Father and Shepherd: On the Christian Metaphorical Concept of God as Father and its Precursors in the Hebrew Bible <i>Nikita Artemov</i>
16:30–17:00	Coffee break	
17:00–18:30	Concluding Discussion	
18:30	End of conference	

DIRECTIONS TO RUB CONVENTION CENTER

Public transportation

The conference will be held in the university's Convention Center or "Veranstaltungszentrum (= VZ)" on the Main Campus. The campus can most easily be reached via the subway line U35, which departs from Bochum main station in the direction of "Querenburg/Hustadt" every couple of minutes. You reach the campus (with the station called "Ruhr-Universität") at the 7th stop or roughly after 10 minutes. To reach the Convention Center, turn right from the subway station, and just walk across campus, past the library, until you reach the Convention Center building.



Contact

General organizational issues:
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