



DET TEOLOGISKE
MENIGHETSFAKULTET



UNIVERSITETET I AGDER

INVITATION

Desire and Theology

International Scholars Public Lectures

Program

Thursday March 26th, 2009

0900-0915 Registration

0915-0930 Welcome and opening of seminar

0930-1015 **Jan-Olav Henriksen, (MF) Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo**

Desire: Gift and Giving. Toward a Hermeneutics of Desire

Desire is a gift – not something we acquire. This gift relates us to the good, and opens us up to the world and to others in a multitude of relations. This relation to the good can be understood as part of what it means to be created in the Image of God. Accordingly, when desire goes astray and is directed towards what is not good, this has implications for our openness to God and God's world. To understand the function of desire in human life is thus of great importance for theological anthropology and Christian spirituality.

1015-1045 Discussion

1100-1145 **Wendy Farley, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA**

Beguiled by Beauty: the Reformation of Desire for Faith and Theology

Much of contemporary Christianity, by attempting to ignore or repress desire, distorts the role of desire for faith and hands over the formation of desire to consumer culture. Early Christian texts considered desire a legitimate name of the divine and the formation of desire to be a crucial task of Christian life. Returning to these texts indicates ways in which desire links us to the divine. Recognizing this thread of connection allows us to encounter the world with greater joy and compassion. Moving from a theological analysis to a practical

one, the lecture concludes with a discussion of ordinary practices of prayer and domestic life that can incorporate desire more fully into the life of faith.

1145-1215 Discussion

1215-1300 Lunch-break

1300-1345 **Rita N. Brock, Faith Voices for the Common Good, Oakland, CA, USA**

Paradise and Desire: Deconstructing the Eros of suffering

For its first millennium, Christians worshipped the incarnate, risen Christ and believed baptism delivered humanity into paradise in this world. Love of beauty, the cultivation of wisdom, ethics of non-violence, and works of justice and compassion marked its spirituality. With the Carolingian empire and the Crusades, Western Christianity began to emphasize the crucifixion. Paradise shifted into the afterlife with the focus on redemptive violence, holy war, and suffering as the purification of sin. This lecture will discuss this shift and the possibilities for reclaiming a life-affirming erotic Christianity.

1345-1415 Discussion

1430-1515 **Christine Yoder, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, USA**

Watch Daily at My Gates: Desire in Proverbs 1-9

Interpretation of desire in Proverbs has centered historically on the importance of self-restraint. But there is more to the story. Proverbs also speaks of desire as a constitutive element of character. The lecture explores how the sages engage desire as a vital form of perception and judgment, advocating certain patterns of desire as characteristic of mature, flourishing human lives and, conversely, discouraging patterns that constitute immaturity and lead to misery. Finally, Yoder reflects on the implications of this for contemporary theological constructions of desire.

1515-1545 Discussion

Friday, March 27th, 2009

0900-0945 **Cristina Grenholm, Karlstad University**

Mothers just do not do it

Mothers are loving, but not lovers. They are neither subjects, nor objects of sexual desire. At least, that is the stereotype of motherhood in general, and Christian motherhood in particular. Thus motherhood presents a challenge to the insight that desire also forms part of a healthy contemporary theology. By means of glimpses of a richer Christian tradition that

supplement the generalizations of motherhood, Grenholm opens the window towards a theological vision of a life where also mothers' desires are welcomed, for the benefit of a flourishing society where the richness of life is enjoyed although its difficulties are not hidden.

0945-1015 Discussion

1030-1115 Ola Sigurdson, Gothenborg University

The Passion of the Christ: On the Social Production of Christian Desire

Sigurdson's lecture discusses how Christian desire is produced socially with Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* as the main example. Despite that both historical and contemporary theology has been quite ambivalent concerning the role desire should play in a Christian existence, the church has always, as a social institution that consists of several transformative practices, implicitly or explicitly embodied a certain therapy of desire. In contemporary post-secular society however, no church can any longer claim to occupy any hegemonical embodiment, and so it becomes important to see how Christian desire is produced in between different social institutions, such as for example the church and the cinematic institution.

1115-1145 Discussion

1145-1230 Lunch-Break

1230-1315 Jayne Svenungsson, Stockholm School of Theology

Towards a Theology of Pathos: Levinas and Heschel on Divine and Human Desire

Western philosophy, and to a considerable degree also theology, is often said to be logocentric, i.e. giving priority to order, sense and clarity. But what about pathos, the unruly twin of logos, referring to the entire set of emotions and desires that happen to the human subject beyond its rational control? Inspired by the Jewish philosophers Emmanuel Levinas and Abraham Heschel, this lecture seeks to explore what a theology of pathos would look like.

1315-1345 Discussion

1400-1445 LeRon Shults, Agder University, Kristiansand

Theology After Oedipus

Castration, incest, fantasy: the stuff of psychoanalysis in late modern capitalist societies. Lack, guilt, idealization: the stuff of traditional Christian interpretations of human desire. The tragic journey of the figure of Oedipus – from Sophocles to Freud and beyond – has more to do with theology than one might initially think. This presentation explores ways to develop a more liberating Christian view and experience of desire in relation to others and God.

1445-1515 Discussion

1515-1530 Final words and closing of seminar

Saturday March 28th, 2009

Closed session with invited scholars only, 1000-1600

All lectures will take place in Auditorium II, MF

Norwegian School of Theology, Gydas vei 4, Oslo

The seminar is arranged in cooperation with the Norwegian Pastor's association.

Registration to jan.o.henriksen@mf.no before March 10th 2009

Attendance fee NOK 200.-