

August 19–20, 2024

***Workshop CFP: An Aesthetic Hermeneutics of the Law? Comparing Religious and Secular Legal Approaches***

**Organized by the International Center for Comparative Theology and Social Issues,  
University of Bonn**

Participants are invited to discuss ways in which an aesthetic approach to the law is helpful for gaining an understanding of the particular nature of legal orders. Taking a comparative approach to exploring concepts and frameworks established in contemporary research on legal aesthetics, the workshop seeks to discover whether the scholarly response to aesthetic categories, such as legal forms, is a suitable approach for finding a more precise description of what elements religious and secular law do and do not have in common. To this end, the workshop brings together scholars from the fields of religious law and secular law as well as scholars of comparative theology and cultural studies.

Recent research on legal aesthetics often proceeds from the observation that there is “no *quid* without *quomodo*”, that is to say that little may be said about the law without also considering the specific ways in which the law represents legal realities. Hence, it seems impossible to analyze legal content by abstracting it from its form. If we assume that form and content unite to constitute the law, this finding encourages the scholarly development of hermeneutic approaches to the law which, instead of methodically separating form and content, discover their dialectic relation. The workshop discusses the assumption that form and content of the law are intrinsically intertwined and what this implies for religious and secular legal traditions. It also examines what we can learn by studying the similar and different responses to legal content and legal form expressed by these traditions. While it might seem self-evident that religious and secular legal traditions differ widely with regard to legal content, it remains a matter of discussion whether they also differ essentially with regard to form. Do religious and secular traditions require different legal forms to represent what they understand as “law”? And what do different representations of the law tell us about the meaning of “law” in the respective traditions? With regard to Jewish law or Islamic law, it seems essential to study the law by incorporating the study of its performativity. In what respect and with what means is “doing law” similarly relevant for the constitution of secular law or for positivized and codified religious law, such as canon law?

We want to discuss and debate these questions within a comparative setting. To this end, the workshop invites scholars of Jewish law, Islamic law, secular law, and canon law as well as scholars of comparative theology and from the field of law and culture to convene at the University of Bonn. Each session will consist of 60 minutes (20–30 minutes paper presentation, Q&A). The workshop wants to encourage the participants' further cooperation in research.

The organizers are responsible for arranging accommodation and will reimburse all travel costs.

Judith Hahn, Susanne Gössl, Klaus von Stosch

## Program

### **Monday, August 19**

*Moderation: Klaus von Stosch*

1:30-2:30 pm Nora K. Schmid (Oxford): Ethics, Law, and Aesthetics in the *Ḥadīth al-Ifk*

2:30-3:30 pm Moshe Lavee/ Roy Lavee (Haifa/ Jerusalem): Jewish Law and Aesthetics:  
Understanding the Talmud Through Images

Coffee break

*Moderation: Yael Attia*

4-5 pm Idris Nassery (Paderborn): Islamic Law and Aesthetics: Exploring some Historical  
Manifestations

5-6 pm Judith Pfeiffer (Bonn): Yasa and Shari'a in thirteenth century Mongol Iran

*Moderation: Judith Hahn*

6:15-7:45 pm Menachem Lorberbaum (Tel Aviv): Embodying the Law - form and figure in  
medieval Torah

Conference Dinner

## **Tuesday, August 20**

*Moderation: Idris Nassery*

9-10 am Susanne Gössl (Bonn): Aesthetics of Decision Making in State Courts

10-11 am Judith Hahn (Bonn): The Form of Canon Law: The Implications of Codification

Coffee Break

11:30-12:30 Sabine Meyer (Bonn): “Domestic Dependent Nations“: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Native American Responses to Federal Indian Law’s Metaphors

Lunch

*Moderation: Susanne Gössl*

2-3 pm Bianca Scraback (Bonn): Comprehensibility and Aesthetics of Contracts

3-4 pm Klaus von Stosch (Bonn): Aesthetics and the Foundation of Religious Law

4-5 pm Final Discussion and preparation of the next workshop