

Boundaries in philosophy and anthropology: a public seminar

Where: Auditorium on ground floor, Department of History and Social Sciences, University of the Faroe Islands, Jónas Broncksgøta 25, Tórshavn

When: Friday, February 28 2020, 2.00 - 4.30pm

(refreshments will be provided)

Alment seminar um heimspekiligar og antropologiskar greiningar av 'mørkum' verður á Sögu- og samfelagsdeildini, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya. Framløgurnar lýsa og greina týðningin, ið mørk hava fyri menniskju sum einstaklingar og bólkar í sosialum, politiskum og mentanarligum kontekstum. Annika Solveig Hedegaard Isfeldt (MA í antropologi, BA í heimspeki á Københavns Universitet) verður orðstýrari og fer at geva stutta innleiðslu til seminarið. Framløgurnar verða á enskum.

Fróðskaparsetur Føroya welcomes you to attend a public research seminar at the Department of History and Social Sciences. The subject of the seminar will be the idea of 'boundaries' as these are found in philosophy and anthropology. From phenomenological, social, and political angles (among others), we will be looking at how boundaries figure as an important element of human life on many different scales. The seminar will be chaired by Annika Solveig Hedegaard Isfeldt (MA in anthropology, and BA in philosophy from the University of Copenhagen), who will give a brief introduction as well as organizing discussion.

On the day, we will hear three papers:

Alexander Julin Mortensen, Ph.D. student at the department of philosophy, University of Southampton

Title: "Anthropology and Alterity – A Puzzle or a Paradox?"

Abstract: In this presentation, I'll give a general account of the German phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels' philosophical investigations with alienness. These philosophical investigations are, in his work, inseparably tied to the concept of the boundary. Boundaries come in various forms, counting – but not limited to – *edges, fringes, margins* and *thresholds*, to name some of the many faces of the notion. In this presentation, I will focus on the latter notion of a 'threshold', as elaborated by Waldenfels and the intrinsically related praxis of bounding-off (orig. *abgrenzung*), bounding-in (orig. *eingrenzung*) and bounding-out (orig. *ausgrenzung*), that any boundary-drawing practice also implies. Taking anthropology to be the study of cultural alienness – an alienness that is approached and investigated by *crossing* a threshold – I will, drawing on the cultural anthropologist Bernhard Leistle, argue for the relevance of Waldenfels' phenomenology of the alien for cultural anthropology."

Firouz Gaini, professor at the department of history and social sciences, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya

Title: "Rethinking the Exotic Stranger in Anthropology"

Abstract: In this presentation, the complex negotiation of boundaries between Faroese and non-Faroese in present-day cultural and political discourse is discussed from a critical anthropological perspective. Resonating recent debate on the concept of exoticism, for instance in the book *Against Exoticism* (edited by Kapferer & Theodosopoulos), narratives on essential and authentic Faroese culture will be examined and contested. Which role does exoticization (and its siblings counter- and self-exoticization) and strategic essentialism play in the presentation of Faroese tradition and culture in contrast to the image of the 'Other'? Focusing on cultural uniqueness – and performance of Faroese – as a frontier of the globalising world, for instance in the tourism industry, might also

result in ignorance of emergent forms of cultural expression (for instance cosmopolitanism). The ongoing debate on 'foreigners' and integration in the Faroes echoes some of the key questions about the 'stranger' in society. How can new ideas from anthropological research contribute to a better understanding of these processes in the Faroes and beyond today?

Jan Jensen, Ph.D. student at the department of social anthropology, University of Cambridge

Title: "Where are the boundaries between the sacred and the profane?"

Abstract: This paper deals with the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Ever since some of the earliest forays into the sociology and anthropology of religion in the works of Émile Durkheim, for example, the boundary between the sacred and the profane has been a mainstay of theories of religion. This dichotomy is often seen for example in the division between sacred and profane time, such as the demarcation of holy days, as well in sacred and profane spaces such as the containment of religious practice within the walls of a church. I problematize this underlying theoretical assumption about religion along two different avenues. The first is a reading of Robert Orsi's account of the changing role of the Madonna of Mount Carmel in his *The Madonna of 115th Street* (1985). The second is my own ethnographic work among the members of *City Church*, a neo-Pentecostal church in the Faroe Islands and their relationship to broader Faroese society. In both cases, the boundary between the sacred and the profane is substantially challenged in the lives of religious practitioners. In the former case, the Madonna plays its most prominent role in contexts that are almost wholly profane – during the *festu*, a ritual procession that takes place on the streets of New York amid the hustling and bustling of everyday life. And in the latter case, recent architectural and technological changes in *City Church* have as their explicit goal the eradication of the boundary between church space seen as sacred, and the outside world, seen as profane.

