

Dialogue in the Dungeon

The 'Disputatio Raimundi Christiani et Homeri Saraceni'

Wednesday, 19 May 2021

18.00 – 18.15 **Welcome and Opening Address**

Prof. Dr Annemarie Mayer (KU Leuven) & Margot Leblanc (KU Leuven)

18.15 – 19.10 **Session I**

'The *Disputatio Raimundi* on the broader background of 13th century Christian Muslim relations in East (and West)'

Prof. Dr Herman Teule (KU Leuven)

19.10 – 19.15 **Short Break**

19.15 – 20.10 **Session II**

The West Mediterranean Arch (WMA) during the 13th century: an introductory presentation particularly focused on its North African side

Prof. Víctor Pallejà (Barcelona)

20.10 - 20.15 **Short Break**

20.15 – 21.10 **Session III**

Staging persuasion and dissent in Ramon Lull's narrative dialogues

Prof. Dr Lola Badia (Universitat de Barcelona)

Thursday, 20 May 2021

18.00 – 18.55 **Session IV**

«*Saracenus non considerat nomen Dei ita altum, sicut christianus*»: God's essential attributes in Christianity and Islam according to Lull

Dr Simone Sari (Universitat de Barcelona)

18.55 – 19.00 **Short Break**

19.00 – 19.55 **Session VI**

The *Disputatio Raimundi* in the Light of Muslim Thinking

Prof. Dr Hans Daiber (Universität Frankfurt a.M.)

19.55 – 20.00 **Short Break**

20.00 – 20.55 **Session VII**

Muslim responses to Christian refutations in the beginning of the eighteenth/fourteenth centuries. Ibn Taymiyya and the al-Dimashqî letters

Prof. Dr Mehdi Azaiez (Université de Louvain-la-Neuve / KU Leuven)

Friday, 21 May 2021

18.00 – 18.55 **Session VIII**

Disputar per autoritats no ha repòs: Ramon Llull and the Thirteenth-Century Debate over Authority

Prof. Dr Ryan Szpiech (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

18.55 – 19.00 **Short Break**

19.00 – 19.55 **Session IX**

Preachers, Teachers, and Fools: Dominican influence in Ramon Llull's dialogue with Islam

Prof. Dr Robin Vose (Saint Thomas University, Fredericton)

19.55 – 20.00 **Short Break**

20.00 – 20.55 **Session X**

An Assessment of Lull's Interreligious Endeavours from a Contemporary Perspective

Prof. Dr Emilio Platti OP (KU Leuven)

20.55 - 21.10 **Closing Remarks**

Prof. Dr Annemarie Mayer (KU Leuven)

Venue: online

Registration: **before 19 May 2021** via email Margot.LebLANC@kuleuven.be

Abstracts

Mehdi Azaiez (Department of Theology, Université Catholique Louvain-la-Neuve / KU Leuven)

Muslim Responses to Christian Refutations at the Beginning of the Eighth/Fourteenth Centuries: *Ibn Taymiyya's* and *al-Dimashqī's* letters

How to refute and convert Christians at the beginning of the fourteenth centuries? This paper will focus on two major letters written by Tâqī al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (661/1263-728/1328) and Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Abī Tâlib al-Ansârī al-Dimashqī (654/1256–727/1327) which represents an indirect but systematic refutation of Christian theological discourse at the time of Ramon Llull's *Disputatio*.

Lola Badia (Centre de documentació Ramon Llull, Universitat de Barcelona)

Staging Persuasion and Dissent in Ramon Llull's Narrative Dialogues

The core of Llull's apologetic project was built on his new method of methods, the Art, aiming at the conversion of Muslims and Jews into Christianity. Preaching and public disputation were the usual contemporary ways of contacting a non-Christian audience or encouraging the 'right believers' to expand the Truth beyond the borders of Christianity. Nevertheless Llull was basically a writer in the modern meaning of that word: after the conclusion of the nine years of study subsequent to his conversion into penitence, he almost produced a book every year when it was a massive one (see the *Book of Contemplation*); in the case of a lesser format he could deliver a text every month (see the Antiaverroistic Parisian works, or the *Opuscula* from Messina). The two hundred and sixty titles in the catalogue of Llull's writings and the variety of genres involved confirm such a general assessment. It has been shown that Llull was one of the best medieval authors of literary dialogues and his *Liber de gentili et tribus sapientibus* is the jewel of the crown in that section of his literary career. Some Lullian dialogues like the *Disputatio Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni* or the *Liber disputationis Petri et Raimundi*, also called *Phantasticus*, merge the dialectic structure of the dialogues from the Platonic tradition with some peculiar Lullian uses of autobiography, becoming not only a persuasive tool, but even a theatrical artefact: the success or the failure of Llull's Art to prove the theological or ethical foundations of Christianity are put on a stage, together with Llull himself and his fictional adversaries.

Hans Daiber (Goethe Universität Frankfurt a.M.)

The *Disputatio Raimundi Christiani et Homeri Saraceni* in the Light of Muslim Thought

In 1307 AD Raimundus Lullus had a disputation with the judge (or Muftī) 'Umar ("Homer") in the town of Biḡāya/Bougie in Algeria. He had at his disposal a lifelong study of Muslim thought, as well on the basis of written sources as through numerous contacts with Muslim scholars.

The only preserved protocol of the disputation is his *Disputatio Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni*. It shows Raimundus' acquaintance with Ibn Sīnā's (370/980 - 428/1037) "The Book on Healing", the part on "Theology", with Ġazālī's (450/1058 - 505/1111) "The Intentions of the philosophers", his treatise on "The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God", and with Ibn 'Arabī's (560/1165 - 638/1240) "The Meccan Illuminations".

Moreover, Raimundus seems to have known some traditions based on Muslim texts about the art of disputation: He took over the logical concept of “implication” (*mulāzama*) for his proof of the inseparability of God from the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. According to him, in God essence and action were inseparable, what Raimundus demonstrated on the basis of the divine attributes. The *saracenus* on his part placed particular emphasis on God’s transcendence, and he did this in the footsteps of Ibn Sīnā and his Neoplatonism, of the Mu’tazilites and the Qur’ān. According to Raimundus, however, God is *actus purus* – and this proves the inseparability of God and Trinity.

Our paper will illustrate this in discussing the divine attributes, which are central in the disputation between Raimundus and the *saracenus*. The divine attributes are shared by Muslims and Christians and they are mirrored in the human qualities that should be followed by man in his emulation of God. The Platonic *Imago-Dei-Motif* finds its parallel in Ibn ‘Arabī and earlier in Miskawayh’s (d. 421/1030) concept of ethics as likeness to God.

Víctor Pallejà (independent researcher, Barcelona)

The West Mediterranean Arch (WMA) during the 13th century

In order to better clarify the religious, political, social and cultural background during Ramon Llull’s span of life, we propose to introduce the term West Mediterranean Arch (WMA). Our suggestion is to consider the almost closed circle which has geographically Majorca as its center as the scenario for a historically distinctive dynamic.

The House of Barcelona in all its branches cooperating or competing with Genova, Pisa and others, while facing the Capetians and even the Papal power, went on to dominate in the span of a century the territory of the Balearic Islands, Valencia and Murcia, Sicily and Sardinia, together with Malta and Djerba on the Tunisian coast up to the county of Athens. The different coalitions often under Catalan rule gained a particular momentum of forces achieving astonishing operations during this period and even making their own attempt of a Crusade in 1269. Regarding North Africa, cities like Tunis, Constantine, Bijaya and Sabta intensified their relationships with their northern neighbours whether it was in the form of merchants and trading branches, military support or diplomatic presence.

Definitely a maritime link bonds together Montpellier, Barcelona, Palma, Naples, Pisa, Palermo, Messina, Béjaïa and Tunis. Yet beyond the mere display of land and navy forces, the West Mediterranean region witnessed a particular dynamic in the 13th century. The intellectual and cultural creativity that actually blossomed appears to be deeply related with these factual settings. Occitan, Sicilian and Catalan languages competed against the Latin and Greek monopoly, had their first translations from Arabic and Hebrew and produced a fresh learned culture not far from Schools and Universities. The multilingual environment tells us about multinational and multicultural societies within which a form of cosmopolitanism blossomed despite all odds. Occasionally, Christian, Jewish and Muslim high culture representatives discussed discretely about transcendent issues in courts as diplomatic agents as well as they often used medicine, science and literature as a bridge for intercultural exchange. Political and religious discussions reached a new stage by means of the fresh Aristotelian translation that established for the first time a propositional logic as the true common language for a brand new elite that created a marked cultural pattern: the cosmopolitan religious sage.

Ramon Llull is a result of and a seminal contributor to this historical moment of particularly intense exchange of ideas. Understanding this particular framework is crucial. We will therefore trace its main features and dynamics against the background of hitherto rather foggy or unnoticed material.

Emilio Platti OP (Interdisciplinair Centrum voor Religiestudie en Interlevensbeschouwelijke Dialoog, KU Leuven)

An Assessment of Lull's Interreligious Endeavours from a Contemporary Perspective

In the very beginning of 'Umar's argument concerning Trinity and Incarnation, the Muslim is arguing that Trinity or Incarnation "have nothing to do with God's essence", as it seems impossible to define these entities correctly: not as substantial or accidental qualities or attributes. We find the same argument in Ibn Taymiyya's "Response to Christianity" (p. 271), in his refutation of the famous Christian Logician Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī (d. 974) in his answer to the Muslim Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (d. 861). This is exactly the same argument presented by Dr. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Abd Allāh Baraka in 1979, responding to a talk given by father Georges Anawati (d. 1994) about "the Common Faith in God" in Islam and Christianity: "(father Anawati) describing God in His nature as a spiritual and unique substance, has no foundation in the Koran", so that this is not an acceptable description of God for a Muslim. This reminds us of the classical expressions about God's attributes qualifying God in the Koran "bi-lā kayf", expressing God's absolute transcendence. That's the reason why modern dialogue with Muslims will not start with mutual arguments about the expressions of the Creed, but rather about the content of one another's Faith, in the modern world. Even in al-Kindī's *Risāla*, referred to by Ramon Lull's late polemics, it is not his first chapter about unicity and trinity which is the most important, but the distinction of the three Laws revealed to humanity: the Natural or reasonable Law, the Divine Law of generosity above nature and reason, or the Satanic Law of injustice and evil. Some will say – as al-Kindī did – that violence and terrorism qualifies Islam as 'satanic'. While in actual dialogue in 2019 in Abu Dhabi, Pope Francis will sign a common document with the Great Imām of al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Ṭayyib, on Human Fraternity, while the great Imām will say that the great Prophets, Moses on mount Horeb, Jesus on the mountain near Kafr Nahum, and Muḥammad on mount Arafat, all repeat God's revelation about human's fundamentally given sacrosanct dignity.

Simone Sari (Centre de documentació Ramon Llull, Universitat de Barcelona)

«Saracenus non considerat nomen Dei ita altum, sicut christianus»: God's essential attributes in Christianity and Islam according to Lull

Lull's remarkable relation with Islam, which evolved as a result of his trips to Muslim lands, can be divided into three phases. 1) The first is characterised by Lull's optimism on the goodness and feasibility of his project to convert all the unbelievers to Roman Catholicism through his Art. 2) After his first short journey to Muslim land (Tunis 1293), his attitude started to change due to the disillusion with European politics, which did not accept his ideas. 3) After his second expedition, (Béjaïa, 1307) his positive approach toward Islam transformed into an actual fight. Lull was no longer willing to debate Christianity and Islam on the same ground, but to demonstrate to the Muslims that «the Christian religion is true, holy, and acceptable to God; the Saracen religion, however, is false and full of error» as he explains in his *Vita Coetanea*. In this paper, we will revise Lull works aimed at a Muslim public, focusing in particular on God's attributes, which constitute the core of the *Disputatio Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni* (April 1308) and of a previous work: *Hundred Names of God* (Rome 1292? Naples 1294?). God's seven essential conditions, which are presented by the Muslim in the first part of the *Dispute* and reused by Ramon to demonstrate the Trinity and the Incarnation of God in the second, are all considered Names of God in the other work. Thus, we can see if there is a change in the explanation of God's attributes in the different phases as well as understand if his *Hundred Names of God* are directed to a Christian or Islamic public.

Ryan Szpiech (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures; Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Disputar per autoritats no ha repòs: Ramon Llull and the Thirteenth-Century Debate over Authority

Ramon Llull experienced his first vision of the crucified Christ around the year 1263. This coincided with the Disputation of Barcelona between Dominican friar Pau Crestià and Catalan rabbi Nahmanides, at which Dominicans sought to employ non-Christian written authorities such as the Talmud as proof texts of Christian dogmas. While this practice of using non-Christian authorities would be developed even more by other Dominicans such as Ramon Martí, Llull repeatedly criticized it in his own writing, proposing instead his unique “Art” for finding truth based on purely rational argumentation. Llull was, at every subsequent step of his career, opposed to the use of written authorities in religious debate, lamenting that disputation on the basis of authorities is a practice “affording no conclusion or rest.” (“*Disputar per autoritats no ha repòs*”). This presentation will situate Llull’s work, including his *Disputatio Raimundi Christiani et Hamar Saraceni*, in the context of this debate with the Dominican polemical method. It will offer a comparison of Llull’s thought with contemporary thinkers including Martí and other Dominicans, and will also consider in this light Llull’s engagement with Arabic sources such as al-Ghazali. It will argue that while Llull’s *Art* stands in stark contrast to the Dominican method of argument based on authorities, it also offers a rival (Franciscan) method that goes beyond mere rationality, proposing a pseudo-hagiographic rhetoric of testimony and authenticity as a tool in Christian-Muslim debate.

Herman Teule (Faculteit theologie en religiewetenschappen, KU Leuven)

Christianity in the Middle East in the Times of Ramon Llull

This presentation aims at giving a picture of the Syriac and Arabic speaking Christians of the Middle East, especially the Mesopotamian area, in the 13th century. Two aspects will be emphasized:

- I. the development of ecumenical thinking among (some of the) Middle Eastern Theologians (of the three main confessions: Chalcedonians or Melkites, miaphysites and “Nestorians”), who by a new approach (or by new approaches) of the traditional dogmatic writings managed to overcome their traditional divergencies, stating that the Christological differences were basically a matter of terminology rather than of substance. This new intuition brought an important thinker like the Jacobite Gregory Bar ‘Ebroyo (d. 1286) to adapt the classical heresiographical list circulating in his Church, removing from it the “Nestorians” and the adherents of the Council of Chalcedon, including the Latins. The Nestorian theologian ‘Abdisho’ bar Brikha (d. 1318), even admits that the position of the Council of Chalcedon (the hypostatic union of two natures) is compatible with the “Nestorian” position. Is this new approach due to the minority situation of the Christians, a sort of ‘united we stand, divided we fall’ attitude towards a more powerful Islam, or are other explanations more probable? As a corollary, I discuss how the Latin Christians, especially the Dominican missionaries present in the Crusader states and in the areas dominated by the Mongols, but also the theologians in Rome via some papal documents, viewed and misunderstood this new development.
- II. The reception of Arabic and Islamic culture, leading to a revival or renaissance of the traditional Syriac literature. The two main protagonists here are again the bilingual Bar ‘Ebroyo and Bar Brikha, who each in their own way were attracted to the Arabic

language, culture and science (the “Islamicate” world) and even to some aspects of the Islamic religion as represented by the writings of Abu Hamed al-Ghazali (d. 1111)

Robin Vose (History Department, Saint Thomas University, Fredericton)

Preachers, Teachers, and Fools: Dominican influence in Ramon Llull’s dialogue with Islam

The role played by Dominican Friars Preacher in the development of medieval Christian approaches to Islam continues to generate scholarly debate. Marked in its earliest generations by a certain enthusiasm for engagement with the so-called “Saracens”, including potential missionary ventures and initiatives for the study of Arabic-language texts, there are also clear signs that this enthusiasm was always somewhat tangential to the friars’ main pursuits. It seems to have further waned and shifted by the end of the thirteenth century, too, amid the growing predominance of Aquinian theology and the new realities of a post-crusade era.

It was in the earlier, more optimistic period that Ramon Llull’s first known contact with Dominicans occurred, and this seems to have made a lasting impact. The intellectual examples of the master Ramon Penyafort, the young Ramon Marti, and other pioneering Dominicans who struggled to come to terms with medieval Islamic worldviews, exposed Llull to philosophical innovations and new methods of argumentation as well as missionary hopes. These may well have had a decisive influence on the emergence of his later polemical writings such as the *Disputatio Raimundi Christiani et Hamar Saraceni*.

Yet Llull’s transformation into a missionizing “Fool for God” distanced him from increasingly skeptical later generations of Dominicans—to the point where some actively opposed him and ultimately branded him a heretic. It seems that Llull too began to see his former mentors as hopelessly misled by the later years of his life, with Marti in particular serving as a possible model for the foolish preacher who can only disprove Islamic beliefs, without proving Christian truth. The Dominicans’ influence on Llull, though still in many ways uncertain and open to speculation, was thus likely both positive and negative; it was also variable, and historically contingent, but always fundamental.

Short Bios Contributors

Mehdi Azaiez

Mehdi Azaiez is a lecturer of Islamic theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve and the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, and a member of the research unit Biblical Studies. His work focuses on Qur’an studies and early Islam. From 2012 to 2013 he lectured Islamic studies at the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA), and he was codirector of the international Qur’ân Seminar- project. Since 2013, he is a member of the Publications and Research committee of the International Qur’anic Studies Association (IQSA), and the Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques (BCAI). From 2012, he is a researcher at the Institute de Recherches et d’Etudes sur le Monde Musulman (IREMAM).

Lola Badia

Lola Badia (Barcelona, 1951) obtained her doctorate at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in 1977. In 1983 she was appointed professor of Catalan Literature. She has taught ancient Catalan

literature in the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the University of Girona and the University of Barcelona. She is the head of the Consolidated Group on Medieval Catalan Literature and Culture, founded by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, and she has directed research projects for the Spanish Ministry of Science and Universities. She has mainly published on troubadour tradition, the literary culture of the 14th and 15th century Catalan writers, Ramon Llull's vernacular works and the medieval scientific heritage in the vernacular. She has been a visiting professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the University of Girona, at the Warburg Institute of the University of London, at the Raimundus Lullus Institute of the University of Freiburg im Breisgau and the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, University of Toronto.

Hans Daiber

Prof. Dr. Hans Daiber (born 1942) held the chair of oriental languages at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt/M., 1995-2010, until his retirement. He taught at Free University of Amsterdam 1977-1995, at University of Tokyo 1992, and at ISTAC (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization , Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia) 2001.

His main fields are Arabic and Islam, including Islamic philosophy, theology, history of sciences and the field of Greek-Syriac-Arabic-Latin translations. He is an expert in analysing and describing Arabic manuscripts. He is a member of the KNAW (Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences) since 1981 and was representative of the KNAW to the UAI (Union Académique Internationale) until 1995.

His PhD-thesis from the year 1967 (*Die arabische Übersetzung der Placita Philosophorum*) appeared in print in 1980 under the title *Aetius Arabus*. In 1973 he got his qualification for teaching Arabic and Islam with his monograph on *Das theologisch-philosophische System des Mu'ammad Ibn 'Abbād as-Sulamī (gest. 830 n. Chr.)*, which appeared in print in 1975.

He wrote 16 monographs and more than 100 articles. He is editor of *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Sciences* (Brill) and of *Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus* (Brill). In 1999 and 2007 he published a *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy* in three volumes, including extensive indices. His latest book publication (2012) is *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Cultures. A Historical and Bibliographical Survey*. His forthcoming book *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond* (Brill, 6 volumes) will contain thematically arranged key publications and unpublished articles and books.

Víctor Pallejà

Victor Pallejà first studied at the Sorbonne (EPHE Section V) and then studied Arabic philology at the University of Barcelona with complementary studies in Hebrew, Persian and Syriac. He was a lecturer at Pompeu Fabra University, New Haven University, University of Alicante, International University of Catalonia and Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and associate researcher in the European Research Council (ERC).

Emilio Platti OP

Emilio Platti began his academic career training as a Dominican at the Saint Thomas institute in Leuven. Later, he completed Oriental Studies and Theology at KU Leuven. In 1972, he joined IDEO where he started his PhD in literature, promoted by Fr. Anawati (Cairo) and Pr. Van Roey (Leuven). From 1980 to 2010, he was a lecturer at KU Leuven, at UCL, at US Thomas and at the Catholic

Institute of Paris. His teachings focus on the relationships between Christianity and Islam. He is now Professor Emeritus from KU Leuven.

Simone Sari

Simone Sari studied Romance Philology at the University of Trieste. He completed a doctorate at the European Doctoral School in Romance Philology at the University of Siena, in a consortium with the Universities of Milan, Pavia, Paris-Sorbonne IV, Santiago de Compostela and Zurich, focusing on Lullian Mariology. He worked on the edition of the *Hores de Nostra Dona Santa Maria*, and *Desconhort de Nostra Dona* which have been published in the New Edition of the Works of Ramon Llull (NEORL) XI in 2012. He was granted a MSCA-IF on Llull's *Hundred Names of God* and is now researching for the ERC project MiMus (Universitat de Barcelona). Simone Sari's research mainly focuses on the poetry of Ramon Llull, and he translated many of Llull's works, such as his *Book of Saint Mary*. He also translated Isabel de Villena's *Vita Christi*.

Ryan Szpiech

Ryan Szpiech is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Romance Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies and an affiliate of the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan. He was head of Frankel Center for Judaic Studies from 2018-2019, during which time he guided the research group "Sephardic Identities, Medieval and Early Modern". Ryan Szpiech's research usually focuses on the culture and literature of medieval Iberia, with an emphasis on cultural interaction and conflict.

Herman Teule

Herman Teule studied theology, Semitic languages and religious studies at the University of Amsterdam, the Roman Catholic Theological University of Amsterdam and the KU Leuven. Today, he is professor emeritus Eastern Christianity at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies of Radboud University Nijmegen, and emeritus extraordinary professor (Research Unit History of Church and Theology) of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven. His research usually focuses on the interaction between Islam and Eastern Christianity, especially during the Syrian Renaissance. From 2003-2015, he was consultor of the Congregation of the Eastern Churches in Rome; at present, he is consultor of the Foundation Pro Oriente (Vienna).

Robin Vose

Dr. Vose was born in Vancouver and subsequently lived in Montreal, Rochester (NY), Saskatoon, Ottawa, Toronto, Cranbrook, Nanegalito (Ecuador), Alonim (Israel), South Bend (IN), Springfield (OH) and now Fredericton. He majored in History and Middle East Studies at McGill University before switching to Medieval Studies at the Universities of Toronto and Notre Dame. His PhD research focused on the role played by members of the Dominican Order of Friars Preacher in defining and policing barriers between Jews, Muslims and Christians in medieval Spain and North Africa, and he continues to examine premodern modalities of religio-cultural conflict—such as inquisition, crusade, and colonialism—around the globe.