

Alphabetical List of Abstracts Presented at the Research Conference
“How Bodies Matter: Religion, Disability, and Just Futures”
Lund University, October 21-23, 2026

Niclas Barholm

Life is the Meaning of Life: Spirituality Within the Transhumanist Scene

This paper is part of my PhD-dissertation where I map the transhumanist scene on a transnational level and explore the discourses surrounding spirituality within the movement. Transhumanism is a movement with heavy emphasis on materiality and technology. One of its core ideas is to transcend the perceived, baseline human body through the help of advanced technology. Transhumanism, as a movement, is not a coherent entity. For instance, there exists both a corporate presence, attributed to a market- and tech-sphere, as well as a community of “Do It Yourself Biohackers” or “Grinders”. Within this latter group, anarchism, trans, queer, and disabled people have a prominent presence which creates tensions towards other transhumanist discourses. For this paper, my focus lies on how the body functions as a seat of spirituality within transhumanist literature. The discourses within transhumanism are often overtly negative towards religion despite heavy Christian influence. Metaphysical concepts are scorned, called “childish” or deemed unprovable, and therefore unworthy of attention. However, despite this, the discourses often touch upon existential ideas of what humans are and ultimately could become. Through a lens of Chrisopher Partridge’s occulture and using Critical Discourse Analysis certain prominent discourses are revealed. These discourses circulate around a flawed human body, the goal of reaching a complete human body as well as attitudes towards institutionalized religion favoring individualized spirituality. Within transhumanism exists a cartesian mind- and body split where the mind is elevated over the body. The body could be switched out, modified, or even abandoned altogether. It is my hope that this paper contributes to raising questions of the body in relation to spirituality and to anchor transhumanism in the field of contemporary secular spirituality.

Korsteologi för lidande som inte går över

På en föreläsning frågade en mamma hur jag hanterar sorg och skuld och det faktum att jag inte kan skydda mitt barn från faror. Jag kunde inte svara. I ett par böcker har jag diskuterat sårbarhet och livet tillsammans med ett barn, nu ung vuxen, vars neuropsykiatriska funktionsnedsättning medför ett slags lidande som inte går över. Det innebär också en kontinuerlig pågående sorg, som behöver famnas och tolkas.

Hur detta lidande och denna sorg ser ut och kan tolkas, ska diskuteras i denna artikel. Det handlar om eget erfaret lidande, och anhörigs lidande. En delad smärta, som med ett skapelseteologiskt perspektiv kan beskrivas som ett faktum i den tillvaro vi lever i. Sårbarhet är inte en avvikelse, utan en del av skapelsen, såsom det uttrycks i Kyrkornas världsråds dokument: Gåvan att finnas till. Om kyrkan och funktionshinder. Tolkning, framställning av, och hantering av lidande, diskuteras här i ljuset av samtida feministteologiska tolkningar av korset, språket och gemenskaper.

Här används teologer som särskilt arbetat med trauman och som sökt ord, tolkning och läkedom för sådana smärtsamma erfarenheter. Utgångspunkten tas i dessas beskrivningar, trots skillnader det innebär mot att leva med en funktionsnedsättning, för att söka tolkning för den bestående sårbarhet, likaså det lidande, det innebär att leva som minoritet med en neuropsykiatrisk funktionsnedsättning i en neurotypisk majoritet.

Tolkningar av korset diskuteras med hjälp av teologen Serene Jones tredelade symbolisering av korset; the alluring cross, the mirrored cross, the unending cross. Här analyseras även hur hon använder begreppet nåd, i relation till korshändelsen, snarare än exempelvis begreppet frälsning. Även refereras teologen Septemmy E. Lakawas beskrivningar av kroppar som minns trauman och de konsekvenser för språket detta behöver få för tolkningar av kors och lidande, vikten av ett teopoetiskt språk.

Universalities and Particularities as Conceptual Tools for Considering Disabilities

I would like to explore how the concepts of universality and particularity can help us discuss the relations between different groups of people with or without disabilities – but also how this discussion could have bearings on other situations where people have different needs and assets. Having a disability means being vulnerable and, to different degrees, dependent on others. But we could also say that this is a universal human condition: we are all, in one way or another, vulnerable, and none of us is totally self-sufficient. Admitting this universal human condition can be helpful in that it takes the stigma out of having a disability – but on the other hand it could also obscure the particular situation of persons with disabilities.

”Disability” is in itself a universalizing concept, which is helpful if you want to advocate for people with disabilities, and build strong organizations for them. But we also need to affirm that there are many kinds of disabilities, and moreover that different groups can have not only particular but also opposing needs. One example is that for a wheelchair user, a beveled curb is helpful, while a blind person needs the edge to feel where the pavement ends.

Power relations also must be taken into account when talking about disabilities. Are some kinds of disability more ”high-ranking” than others? What is disabling to a poor person might not have the same effect on a person with financial means and cultural capital. So not even the same impairment has a universal impact on the persons affected.

Identifying these aspects of universality and particularity in the area of disabilities might be useful also in relation to other vulnerable groups.

Recent observations by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlight a concerning resurgence of the medical model of disability, especially within social security and support systems. At the same time, Nordic countries are adapting their institutions to prepare for large-scale crises, including armed conflicts, climate emergencies, and systemic issues disruptions. In this context, new contingency plans and resilience strategies often include measures to safeguard “particularly vulnerable groups.” While these measures are often well-intentioned, they also carry a significant risk of reintroducing medicalised and deficit-focused views of disability, where vulnerability is seen mainly as a matter of individual bodies rather than in social relations, institutional frameworks, and political decisions.

This paper explores how theological understandings of vulnerability may challenge both the re-medicalisation of disability identified by the CRPD Committee and the logics that shape contemporary crisis preparedness. In theology, vulnerability is commonly understood as a fundamental and shared human condition, albeit always mediated through social relationships, dependency, and institutional structures (Reynolds 2008, Stålsett 2015, Lid 2022). From this perspective, vulnerability is not an exceptional state attached to certain bodies, but a relational reality that is distributed and intensified—or mitigated—through collective practices.

Bringing theology into dialogue with disability rights and peace studies, the paper explores how just relations between differently situated and functioning bodies contribute not only to the protection of rights but also to the conditions for peace. If peace is understood as more than the absence of violence— as a durable social order grounded in justice—then the ways societies organise interdependence, care, and responsibility become central. I argue that a relational theology of vulnerability offers critical resources for reimagining disability beyond medicalisation, for evaluating crisis governance from a human rights perspective, and for articulating how inclusive and just social relations form a foundational dimension of peace.

”Logos blev kött” – en analys av kroppens betydelse i nutida hermeneutisk teori

Detta paper presenteras och analyseras en uppdelning i den post-heideggerianska fenomenologiska och hermeneutiska traditionen. Utgångspunkt för analysen är antagandet att Heideggers uppgörelse med tron på ett förnuft som tolkar och förstår omedelbart och oförmedlat förvaltats på två radikalt olika sätt i den följande traditionen. I Hans-Georg Gadamers hermeneutik leder rörelsen från ett transcendent förnuft till en historisk och språklig situering i form av betoning på förförståelse, kultur och tradition. Samma impuls leder i Maurice Merleau-Pontys tänkande till en betoning på kroppen, dess perception och erfarenheter, som ses som fundamentala i mänskligt liv, tänkande och varande i världen.

Denna uppdelning – där Gadamer respektive Merleau-Ponty får stå som representanter för de två distinkta positionerna – leder till olika sätt att tänka och arbeta inom de vetenskapliga humanistiska och teologiska fälten. I detta paper klargörs vilka filosofiska antaganden som ligger till grund för differentieringen och någonting om vad den får för direkta och indirekta konsekvenser för förståelse i allmänhet och humanistisk-teologisk forskning i synnerhet. Antagandet för denna del av pappret är att vad som räknas som grund för kunskap får genomslag i fråga om vad som anses ha epistemisk tyngd i forskning.

Med utgångspunkt i Augustinus reflektion om viljan i verket *De Trinitate* argumenteras det avslutningsvis dels för att Heideggers uppgörelse med rationalismens förnuftssyn kan betraktas som en vid tiden nödvändig korrigering av traditionen och dels för att det finns resurser för en integrerad och nyanserad förståelse av mänskligt tänkande längre bak i samma teologisk-filosofiska tradition.

Christine Ekholst

Disability in medieval Sweden (1200-1500)

This paper will discuss concepts of disability in medieval Sweden. The paper uses the social model for disability and distinguishes between impairment (a biological phenomenon) and disability (how the impairment marginalized, hindered and prevented the person from fully participating in society).

In Swedish medieval law codes, the body was regarded both as a whole that represented a man's embodied honor and as something fragmented. The various body parts had different values and if a person cut off a limb, the perpetrator had to pay a price for the loss of the limb. The body parts all had price tags. Nonetheless, the lawmakers also understood concepts of disability and considered a person disabled when they could not walk without aids, feed themselves, work, go to church or to the market.

By contrast late medieval medical texts reveal how medieval people attempted to cure impairments. These short receipts contain both natural cures and religious remedies, at times in combination. In medieval miracle stories we find other attempts at curing impaired people. By invoking the help of a saint, an impaired person could be healed, fully or partially.

My paper will compare views of disability in various sources and discuss how the texts conceive of impairment and, furthermore, how they establish when an impairment disabled a person. It will discuss the care impaired people received and how the communities tried to cure impairments. It will moreover attempt to compare secular and religious views, demonstrate how they intermingled but also how they contradicted each other. In doing so, it will discuss the idea that disability was a result of sin (as decided at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215) and if we can see this view manifested in Swedish sources.

Från Form till Funktion: Reflektioner över människosyn i Bibeln och det moderna samhället

I spänningsfältet religion, design och disability studies reflekterar jag över Bibelns relationella människosyn och det moderna teknologiska samhällets kroppsfunktionalism. Utgångspunkt är mitt arbete i Independent Living-rörelsen med dess cross-disability-perspektiv, min bok *Vi fick snurr på det: röster ur hjälpmedelshistorien* (2025) samt doktorsavhandlingen i designvetenskap (2024).

Bibliska texter saknar kategorin personer med funktionsnedsättning. Enskilda funktionsnedsättningar figurerar i samband med rituell renhet, status och lojalitet (Fritzson). I NT inkluderas i gemenskapen de fattiga, kroppssvaga och utstötta – de avvisade (Rappmann). Människan som statisk naturvarelse blev med 1800-talets industrialism en formbar och ”foglig” maskinkomponent (Foucault). Ting blev heliga och människor reducerade till utbytbara slit- och slängvaror på en arbetsmarknad (Marx). Begreppet disability uppstår som ekonomisk kategori för sorterar människor efter arbetsförmåga (Qvarsell). Rehabiliteringsparadigmet mäter individens värde i produktivitet (Eieseland). Fel i kroppsmaskineriet hanteras medicinskt mot normal produktivitetsnivå.

Att studera hjälpmedelsutvecklingens historia – drivkrafter, innovationer och användning – belyser vad människan blivit, exempelvis integrationen teknik-kropp (Haraway). Andra hjälpmedel läggs utanför kroppen men upplevs som del av den (Merleau-Ponty). 1900-talets svenska hjälpmedelssuccéer – som Permobil och rollatorn – kan förstås utifrån seklets teknikoptimism men också användares krav på självständighet och delaktighet. Insikter som att samhället ser hjälpmedel som symbol för svaghet medan de befriare för användaren avtäcker Bibelns ableism, till exempel dess visuella bias (Hull).

Hjälpmedlens dubbla roll som befriare och normativitetsriktare klargör vidare för- och nackdelar med vår tids syn på funktionsnedsättning. Funktionalismen har gett oss tekniska hjälpmedel men också exkludering av dem som inte når performativitet (Lyotard). En annan risk för nya samhällsklyftor ligger i hur tidigare speciallösningar för att kompensera funktionshinder idag generaliseras: smartphones blir exempelvis kognitiva proteser som ökar förmågan hos alla. Samtidigt kan generalisering byta kategorisering efter kroppsfunktion mot fokus på mångfald.

Presentationen argumenterar för utbyte mellan teologi och funktionsrättsrörelse. Kommunikation mellan Bibelns och nutidens teknologiska perspektiv – relationell form mot arbetsrelaterad funktion – kräver vidare forskningssamarbete.

How Bodies Matter: Vad den levda kroppens vara-i-naturen och den förkroppsligade förlusten av naturen gör med livsupplevelsen.

Att sänka sig ner i ett mörkt, svalt vatten en sensommarkväll i augusti är en upplevelse som är mycket kroppslig, och skapar en känsla av närvaro och delaktighet med naturen - en stark känsla av att vara levande. Många människor har liknande upplevelser av olika naturmiljöer, men alltför många saknar närhet och därmed känslomässig kopplingen till naturen. Biofobi är en företeelse som beskriver hur människor känner rädsla eller aversion mot naturen, vilket kan bero på minskad kontakt med den.

I Antropocen, den tidsålder då människan omformar vår planet är "Shifting baseline syndrome" något som beskriver att biodiversiteten minskar efterhand, och nya generationer vänjer sig med en natur med allt mindre artrikedom. Teorin innebär att vi därmed inte förstår den förlust som naturen förkroppsligar. När naturens förkroppsligande förändras, vad gör det med oss? Förlusten av glaciärer som betraktas som döda är ett exempel där riter för att ta farväl blir ett sätt att bearbeta förkroppsligandet av en natur som förändras och försvinner inför våra ögon. Kanske kan dessa riter medvetandegöra förlusten som vi både sörjer och själva orsakar.

Den levda människokroppen som genom sinnena erfar naturen, präglas av den; genom ljuden, dofterna, landskapet och djuren. Starka upplevelser av förundran, delaktighet och enhet med naturen blir förkroppsligade i oss, och därmed en del av människoblivandet. Att behålla närheten till, och naturen förkroppsligad i oss framstår som något allt viktigare för att vi ska fortsätta vara mänskliga.

Martin Bubers Jag-Du-ansats kan vara ett sätt att förstå vad betydelsen av mötet med naturen kan göra med vår livsupplevelse och förhållningssätt till densamma – en väg till en existentiellt hållbar värld. Att bli ett med naturen, som nedsänkandet av kroppen i sjöns stilla vatten, kanske är ett litet steg för en människa, men kan vara ett stort och avgörande steg för mänskligheten.

Reclaim your body? Crip Theory as a useful framework for religious education

Current body trends among young people focus on optimization and can therefore be interpreted as a form of enhancement (Gärtner, 2022). Technology also plays a significant role in this context. Wearable technologies, for instance, are gaining popularity among young people and enable bodily processes to be tracked. While the presentation of the body in digital spaces allows for various bodily experimentation (#bodypositivity, #longevity, #slim), these develop ambivalent interpretation. On the one hand, they draw attention to physical marginalization and thus can be empowering. On the other hand, they reinforce the neoliberal narrative of the abled, beautiful and high-performing body. Finally, youth studies indicate that approval of cosmetic surgery is rising (Scharmanski & Hessling, 2021), alongside a growing desire for bodily optimization. This raises the question of how young people perceive their own bodies in the context of these technologies, and which body narratives can be sustainable and empowering. These perspectives enable a critical examination of disability-related discourses on normality. Which bodies are socially constructed “beautiful”, “productive” and “high-performing”, and which are marginalized as “imperfect”? Drawing on the framework of Crip Theory (McRuer, 2006), our aim is to demonstrate how religious education can challenge strategies centered on the abled, high-performing body within current body trends among young people. Based on Queer Theory, it deconstructs the dichotomous constructions of 'able' and 'disabled', fostering an intersectional understanding of body and disability that resists binary reductions. Overcoming restrictive discourses of normalization can result in empowerment, as illustrated by the subversive reclamation of the term “crip”.

Thus, Crip Theory may serve as a framework in religious education to promote interpretations of bodiedness that go beyond the concept of an ideal, socially recognized body. Furthermore, it offers ideological critique by analyzing implicit assumptions and mechanisms related to bodiedness and productivity in religious education and pedagogical practice.

Joseph Foltz and Angela Molloy

A Liberative Disability Critique of Un-healing in the Coptic Act of Peter and Jan Rombouts's Fall of Simon Magus

The Coptic Act of Peter (Papyrus Berolinensis 8502.4) is a fourth-century tractate from the Nag Hammadi codices that delivers one of the most provocative and violent portrayals of disability found within New Testament apocryphal literature. This short episode centers on Peter's disabled daughter, whose healing and immediate un-healing ultimately has deeply unsettling implications. To this day, most scholars looking at this apocryphal story have either ignored the presence of disability in the text in favor of exploring themes of chastity or assumed that the text's disabled character is perpetually suffering. Such readings sideline her embodied experience and reinforce ableist assumptions that frame disability as divine punishment or a narrative prop for apostolic power. Ultimately, this project aims to expand this discourse with a liberative disability ethic which foregrounds the violence, ambivalence, and oppression found within this text. To further emphasize how this fragment enacts harm by removing agency from Peter's daughter, we put the fragment in conversation with Jan Rombouts the Elder's Fall of Simon Magus. Ultimately, we argue that the depiction of Peter's daughter by Rombouts not only visually marginalizes her but also reinscribes the narrative's harmful construction of disability. Interpreting this tractate with a liberative disability ethics and art historical lens reveals how disability is used by the apocryphal author(s) to make a theological point, despite the profoundly negative and dehumanizing impact this constructive move has on the text's disabled character herself.

Var är Gud i lidandet? En jämförande studie i passibilitet hos Luther och Moltmann

Studien undersöker hur Martin Luther och Jürgen Moltmann behandlar frågan om Guds passibilitet genom en komparativ analys av deras förståelse av lidande, korshändelsen och relationen mellan Gud och mänsklig erfarenhet. Analysen bygger på utvalda texter av Luther samt Moltmanns *The Crucified God* och är strukturerad kring tre teman: lidandets struktur, lidandets uppenbarelse och relationen mellan passibilitet och metafysik.

Studien visar att båda teologerna förankrar förståelsen av Gud i Kristi kors och betonar Guds närvaro i mänskligt lidande, men att de gör det på olika sätt. Detta leder till skilda teologiska implikationer för frågor som rör kroppslig sårbarhet, beroende och erfarenheter av begränsning. Hos Luther förstås lidandet främst genom inkarnationen och en funktionell förståelse av passibilitet, där Kristi lidande kan tillskrivas Gud utan att den gudomliga naturen förändras. Hos Moltmann utvecklas istället en trinitarisk förståelse där korshändelsen uttrycker något om Guds eget väsen och där Gud kontinuerligt är delaktig i mänskligt lidande och mänskliga erfarenheter. Passibiliteten blir därmed central för förståelsen av relationen mellan Gud och mänsklig utsatthet.

Uppsatsen argumenterar för att Moltmanns teologi kan förstås som en vidareutveckling av motiv som redan finns hos Luther, men omformulerade utifrån hans erfarenheter av krig, övergivenhet och mänsklig utsatthet. Moltmanns betoning av en Gud som delar mänsklig sårbarhet har också fått betydelse inom senare funktionshinderteologi, särskilt hos Nancy Eiesland, vars förståelse av den ”disabled God” vidareutvecklar tanken på Gud som identifierad med kroppslig begränsning och social marginalisering. Genom detta aktualiseras frågor om hur kristen teologi förhåller sig till den funktionshindrade kroppen samt hur föreställningar om Guds delaktighet i lidande påverkar förståelsen av kroppsnormativitet, delaktighet och gemenskap.

Mark Godin

Beyond Apologies: Churches and Atonement for the Colonial Dis-Abling of Indigenous Bodies

When Christians proselytized the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as North America, along with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the institutional communities of those who follow him they also brought theological and cultural interpretations of what constitutes proper bodily life. Moral and ethical judgements on gender, sexuality, family relationships, health and physical appearance, materiality, and the connections of human bodies and the earth transformed how Indigenous bodies fit into social, political, and spiritual institutions. As underlined by critical theorists such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, this colonial realignment of the values of embodiment profoundly dis-abled Indigenous bodies, restricting what particular bodies were allowed to do and how they could be presented, all in the effort to assert sovereign control over Indigenous Peoples.

With reference to critical theory and current ecclesial projects of reconciliation, this paper reflects on how any response to the Christian colonial disabling of Indigenous bodies figures into churches' efforts at repentance and the construction of new social and institutional relationships with Indigenous Peoples. What might it mean to atone for the harm done by the imposition of such an understanding of embodiment? How might this affect the churches' self-understanding and the continuing work of examining and changing harmful theological interpretations, as well as ecclesial relations with other groups, communities, and institutions? How can churches offer practical methods for undoing damage to Indigenous bodies without simultaneously continuing to assert epistemological domination?

Den sårbara kroppens möte med imperial-makten hos Jesaja och Jeremia

När Jesaja och Jeremia skriver om händelserna som leder fram till exilen går det att utröna vissa skillnader i hur kroppar beskrivs om de tillhör imperial-makten eller Juda. Denna kontrast mellan den monstruösa slukande kroppen och den sönderfallande sårbara kroppen utgör grunden för min presentation. Med stöd i genusteori analyserar jag maktstrukturer och de förväntningar som riktas mot män i olika maktpositioner.

Ett illustrativt exempel återfinns i Jeremia, där Babyloniens kung framställs som ett monster som inte bara smakar på Juda utan tuggar, slurpar och gnager, för att därefter spotta ut folket—personifierat genom profeten själv (Jer 51:34). I den hebreiska Bibeln uttrycks sårbarhet ofta genom starkt kroppsliga metaforer. Särskilt profeterna använder bilder hämtade från barnafödande för att gestalta ångest och stress. Kroppen blir således arenan där känslor, maktrelationer och negativa erfarenheter dramatiseras.

Det finns även intressanta teologiska konsekvenser av att fokusera på profeternas retoriska strategi i mötet med imperialmakten, t.ex. att texterna bör läsas med Judas sårbarhet i minne (ett litet folk inklämda mellan stormakter), därutöver kyrkans hegemoniska position relaterat till det sårbara budskapet i många av texterna, och inte minst hur ett misslyckande banar väg för nya ideal.

Således har min presentation dubbla fokus, dels en exegetisk analys som tar avstamp i den historiska kontexten, dels de teologiska konsekvenserna av ett sårbarhetsperspektiv.

Allt liv är skadat liv – om en svaghetsinkluderande människosyn

Hur vi ser på svaghet är ett test av vår människosyn. Ett prov på vårt samhälles mänsklighet är hur vi tar hand om varandra, vilket ställs på sin spets i frågan om hur vi förhåller oss till dem av oss som bär på en särskild svaghet.

Livet för sjuka och funktionshindrade har hårdnat under senare år. En ny exkludering har gjort sig gällande utifrån en utilitaristisk grundsyn. I många ögon finns det inte plats för lidande i ett fullgott, helt liv.

Jag pläderar för en svaghetsinkluderande helhetssyn på människan. I varje tid behöver den återerövas, aktualiseras, hållas fram, för att vi människor ska orka leva med våra skador och svagheter. Vi har stora möjligheter som gemenskap att bära varandra och bli burna och därigenom kunna växa – själva och som gemenskap – också genom det bristfälliga i livet.

Den bibliska berättelsen visar oss Gud som gåtfull i relation till lidande men också den som står på de svagas sida, som med förkärlek fullbordar sina kraftgärningar genom mänsklig svaghet. Gud blir själv svag när han avstår från allt, antar en tjänares gestalt och blir som en av oss i Jesus från Nasaret. Han lider *för* mänskligheten och han lider *med* mänskligheten.

Han lever vidare som Kyrkans kropp i världen så att människor ska kunna leva helt (heligt) med sina ofullkomliga kroppar, i honom. Så kan det lidande som är förenat med allt liv uthärdas i tillit till hans närvaro. Genom hans nåd kan svagheter även vändas i styrka. Denna kroppens nådefulla gemenskap är en motbild till prestigefyllda hierarkier, en gemenskap där ömhet övervinner förakt, en samling människor som står tillsammans i den goda kampen mot all uppgivenhet.

Jonna Lenells

Rembrandt van Rijn och Bibelns blinde Tobit – en receptionshistorisk läsning av Bibelns bidrag i relation till synens funktionsvariation

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) är känd inte bara som konstnär, utan också som en stor uttolkare av Bibeln (Bro Larsen 2010, Hoekstra 1990, Mayor 1979). I hans verk skildras ett stort antal bibelberättelser, och flera av dessa återvänder Rembrandt dessutom till flera gånger. En av dessa, som har särskild relevans för konferensens tema, är Tobits bok. I detta paper kommer jag att med receptionshistorisk metod (Berdini 1997, Breed 2014, O’Kane 2007) analysera hur Rembrandts visuella exeges påverkar och förnyar mötet med texten. Av särskilt intresse är att Rembrandt återkommande fokuserar just på Tobits tålmodiga väntan i sitt tillstånd av blindhet. Rembrandts fokus avviker därmed från bokens, vilket gör Rembrandts sätt att förnya mötet med texten särskilt intressant. Mer specifikt kommer jag visa hur Rembrandts sätt att skildra Tobits blindhet – en synens funktionsvariation – bidrar positivt till en inkludering av flera slags kroppar. Genom den blinde Tobit synliggörs en särskild slags fromhet som också överlappar med Rembrandts tolkning av fadern i berättelsen om den förlorade sonen (Luk 15:11–32), samt med hans tolkning av Simeon i templet (Luk 2:25–35). Ytterst visar jag hur denna typ av reception och intertextualitet lyfter fram en särskild fromhet som Bibeln tillskriver den blinde.

Oliver Li

Hela människans kropp i en digital tidsålder – reflexioner över teknologins och människans begränsningar

I en alltmer digitaliserad och teknikcentrerad värld kommer interaktioner med och relationer till teknologier som AI-artificiell intelligens att öka och spela en större roll i människornas liv. I en religiös kontext inbegriper människans nätverk av relationer både människor, världen och Gud.

Utifrån sociologen Hartmut Rosas centrala begrepp resonans, acceleration och okontrollerbarhet i hans sociologiska-filosofiska teoribildning och hans distinktion mellan vertikala, diagonala och horisontala resonansaxlar analyserar jag hur lämpliga resonanssfärer och de relationer som inbegripas bör utformas i allmänhet och i en religiös kontext i synnerhet. Vidare argumenterar jag för att man i dessa relationer bör betrakta aspekter som rör det som i kristendomen traditionellt har beskrivits som kropp, själ och ande. Jag applicerar Rosas teori på människans interaktioner med teknologi i allmänhet och AI i synnerhet och drar följande slutsatser: (1) dagens AI kan inte nå upp till de kriterier som krävs för resonansrelationer, (2) i människans relationer till medmänniskor, världen - inklusive teknologin -, och Gud bör man lägga större fokus på både inblandade och 'ersatta' människors roll i relationer, (3) människan bör lägga mindre tonvikt på perfektion och acceptera kroppens och livets begränsningar samt (4) i större utsträckning inkludera anden och själen och betraktar människan i sin 'förkroppsligade' helhet som andlig, själslig och kroppslig.

Disability as human condition has gained an increased interest in biblical and contemporary theology over the last decades. The UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006, has sparked a renewed interest in human rights of persons with disabilities also in theology and religion studies. However, Medical understandings have colonised disability and left this human condition as a condition less wanted that could and should be avoided by medical means.

Theologically spoken, creation is characterized by diversity and vulnerability, human and non-human alike. In spite of this rich and unlimited diversity, certain embodiments are valorised above others in an axiology system, a system of value differences (hierarchies). In the western civilisation white people have been valorised most as have nondisabled been valued above disabled. Also, theology, church and mission have been involved in developing systems of value hierarchies based on embodied characteristics such as gender/sex, race and dis/abilities.

Augustin (354-430) book 22 of the *Civitate Dei* poses the question if children with disabilities are created by the same God as is human in general. In this paper I examine human diversity and disability in Augustine's work "*De Civitate Dei*", which has become a work of reference for disability theology and the study of disability in antiquity. The writings of Augustine will be discussed in light of 4 autobiographies written by persons with disabilities in Norway over the last 70 years. These autobiographies illustrate that life with disability is contested as a life worth living as seen from an abstract non-disabled perspective. I argue that *Imago Dei* is a powerful metaphor for radical equality when criticised from a disability perspective addressing the value systems that have put disable people in a less valued position.

Stefan Lindholm

On the Benefits of an Hylomorphic view of Bodies in Christian Eschatology

This paper considers the benefits of holding a hylomorphic view of human bodies in Christian theology, with a view to clarifying what this means for glorified bodies in the *eachaton*. Hylomorphism here is understood in a broad “Christianized” sense, rooted as it is in Aristotle’s view of matter and form (*hyle* and *morphe*), hylomorphism has been applied and expanded in the Christian tradition in various ways that goes far beyond what Aristotle initially imagined. The first part of the paper clarifies what a hylomorphic view of bodies is (and is not) and makes a couple of brief remarks on how it differs from some rival views (such as materialism and dualism) that have been prevalent in Christian theology. The second part argues that hylomorphism fits better than alternatives with a “mere” or ecumenically oriented Christian anthropology. The final part clarifies what a hylomorphic view entails with respect to glorified bodies (for NT, see e.g. Matt 17:1–3; Luk 24:36–42; John 20:24–29, 21:12; 1 Cor 15: 35–58; Rom 6:2–14 and 8; 1 Thess 4:17; 1 John 3:2), in particular how it is able to do better justice to possible differences between glorified bodies than what rival anthropologies can.

Angela Molloy

Healing Services in the UMC Book of Worship

This paper examines the healing services and prayers outlined in the United Methodist Book of Worship. While not universally used, these liturgical and embodied practices permeate the theologies and well-meaning behaviors of far too many United Methodist congregations whose leaders have not been taught to conceptualize the body in anti-ableist ways. The emerging field of disability theology invites a reconsideration of life-limiting and curative notions of disability, calling out ableist values of normativity which became historically engrained in the institutional church through colonial body hierarchies. This approach understands that bodies have been a contested site within Christianity since the resurrection, that the healing ministry of Jesus focused on restoring people to their communities, respecting their personhood along the way, and that the stigmatization of disability across time and place must be dismantled if we are to nurture belonging for all. Disabled body-mind-spirits are not the problem, not for Jesus in his lifetime and not now.

To co-create God's accessible and justice-driven Kin-dom on earth, Christians must be willing to rethink oppressive practices such as ableist liturgies and the nonconsensual laying on of hands. A ritual with the potential for inviting mutual flourishing, reciprocal relationship, and the recognition that disabled bodies are already both holy and whole, these healing services instead use language of "sin," "lack of wholeness," and "restoration" which enact violence by writing disabled people out of desired futures. Drawing on John Wesley's conception of salvation in the *now* and the *not yet*, this paper argues for necessary, transformative action to create belonging *for* and *with* disabled people in the present. Exploring United Methodist healing services through the sociology of religion and a liberative disability ethics reveals how, if adjusted, these communal practices can help to reshape ableist theologies toward a more just, inclusive, and embodied framework of healing.

Waithanji Mutiti

Embodied Vulnerability and Spiritual Agency: Reframing Disability in African Christian and Muslim Contexts

This paper explores how disability is understood and lived within African Christian and Muslim communities, paying close attention to the relationship between bodily vulnerability and spiritual agency. Rather than treating disability simply as lack, misfortune, or punishment, the study asks how religious beliefs and practices can also open up spaces for dignity, meaning, and possibility. It highlights the ways individuals and communities reinterpret bodily difference, not only as a challenge, but also as a meaningful part of human and spiritual life. It focuses on East Africa, and the paper brings together insights from religious texts and everyday practices. It looks at contexts such as Pentecostal healing ministries and Islamic teachings on suffering, patience, and divine will. These traditions, the paper shows, do not speak with one voice. At times, they reinforce stigma through an emphasis on cure and restoration. At other times, they offer more inclusive visions of community, where persons with disabilities are recognized as full participants in religious and social life. The paper also considers the role of faith-based organizations and religious communities in providing care, advocacy, and a sense of belonging, especially where state support is limited. In doing so, it draws attention to the active roles that persons with disabilities themselves play in shaping these spaces. In conclusion, the paper calls for a more reflective understanding of disability in African religious thought; one that moves beyond simple categories of exclusion or healing and instead sees vulnerability as a shared human reality that can inform more just and inclusive futures.

Autobiographical Wounds and Decolonial Revisions, Reassessing Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Disability from the Global South

This paper offers a decolonial reading of Jürgen Moltmann's autobiographical theology, focusing on how his narration of his brother Hartwig's disability in "A Broad Place, An Autobiography" published in 2008, shapes his later theological commitments. I argue that Moltmann's work contains both constructive and unconstructive elements for a theology of disability emerging from the Global South, where colonial histories, social stigma, and ecclesial narratives continue to determine how disabled bodies are perceived, valued, or marginalized. In "A Broad Place," Moltmann recounts that Hartwig "had no awareness of any kind, His fate and our parents' consequent suffering made a deeper mark on my youth than I realized." This autobiographical wound becomes a theological site where personal grief, social violence, and divine presence intersect. His later claim that "a humane society must be a society of the disabled and the non disabled" offers a powerful critique of segregation and ableist social structures, and this resonates with decolonial disability theologians who emphasize relationality, interdependence, and the dismantling of hierarchies that privilege certain bodies over others.

From a Global South perspective, Moltmann's theology also requires critical interrogation, since his framing of disability sometimes risks universalizing Western experiences of suffering, and his emphasis on ecclesial inclusion can unintentionally reproduce paternalistic assumptions when not grounded in the lived realities of disabled people in postcolonial contexts. This paper therefore evaluates how Moltmann's theology can be re-read, re-situated, and re-purposed for communities where disability is entangled with poverty, religious stigma, and the lingering effects of colonial epistemologies.

I argue that Moltmann's autobiographical theology, when approached critically, provides generative resources for imagining decolonial futures in which disabled bodies are not objects of care but agents who reshape the church's understanding of justice, embodiment, and belonging.

Samhörighet mellan människan och mer än människan, ur neurodivergenta perspektiv

Kan förändrade sinnesupplevelser av samhörighet påverka gudsupplevelser och gudsbegrepp? Samhörighet som relaterar till mer än människor, i form av Gud, i eller utanför annat liv i världen. För att undersöka det gjorde jag en kartläggning av neurodivergenta Gudsupplevelser och använde den som ett raster på Gudsupplevelser i teologerna Aurelius Augustinus, Emilia Fogelklou och Catherine Kellers böcker.

Samhörighet tolkas olika av författarna och beskrivs i relation till några av den kristna traditionens grundbultar; nattvarden, Jesu mänsklighet och djupnande i förståelsen inför mysteriet. När neurodivergenta perspektiv appliceras på samhörighetsbeskrivningarna visade det betydelsen av förändrade sinnesintryck. Nattvard kan förmedla samhörighet med allt liv, i ett kaos som kan fungera både gränsöverskridande och uppslukande. Utgår den sakramentala samhörigheten från att alla individer har samma fokus, och vill mer gemenskap? Kan nattvardens samhörighet skapa en förmedlan till Gud och inte bara ifrån? Teologerna tänker olika om det, men alla är överens om att Jesus innebär ökad samhörighet mellan människan och Gud. Som människa kan Jesus uppleva sinnesintryck, påverkas och påverka. Som människa liknar Jesus sig vid vinstocken vars samexistens får utbyte med allt levande. Genom de bibelord som Jesus förmedlas kan levande samhörighet upplevas. Språk kan vara en starkt förmedlande värld för neurodivergenta. Den kända världens gränser och därmed vad som synliggörs av Gud, det kan påverkas av ökad samhörighet. En neurodivergent hypermentalisering kan synliggöra mysteriet genom ökad samhörighet mellan människan och mer än människan. Men mysteriet kan också döljas när det materiella blir allt som förmås uppfattas, det intryck som nuets helhet ger skymmer det icke-materiella.

Genom att titta på de varierade sinnesintryckens betydelse kan bilden av neurodiversitet vidgas från hinder till att även innebära möjlighet för en ökad upplevelse av Gudomlighet. Tar mer eller mindre sinnesintryck neurodivergenta närmare annat liv?

Healing as Exclusion? - Disability, the Dialectic of Restoration, and Normative Bodies in Leviticus 21 and Isaiah 35

Biblical constructions of disability are shaped by a dialectic of exclusion and restoration, as exemplified by Leviticus 21 and Isaiah 35. These texts articulate contrasting yet structurally related approaches to bodily difference. Leviticus 21:17–23 designates bodily “defect” as a criterion for exclusion from priestly service, thereby linking physical integrity to legitimate participation in the cult. By contrast, Isaiah 35:5–7 envisions a future in which “the blind see” and “the lame walk,” presenting bodily transformation as a central marker of divine restoration. Considered together, these passages configure disability within a dialectical framework that is not resolved but reconfigured. Isaiah 35 engages this dynamic without affirming the inclusion of diverse bodies; instead, it displaces the problem by projecting a future in which bodily difference is eliminated. The relation between exclusion and belonging is thus deferred into an eschatological horizon where it no longer applies.

Drawing on disability studies, this paper argues that both texts, despite their differing temporal orientations, rely on a shared normative premise: bodily integrity functions as an implicit condition for full participation and human flourishing. Disability serves either to stabilize cultic boundaries or to be relegated to a future from which it has vanished.

This analysis underscores a broader continuity in the construction of religious body ideals and raises critical questions for contemporary theology. If redemption remains primarily articulated in terms of healing, disability risks ongoing structural marginalization. The paper therefore concludes by asking whether “healing” itself requires critical reconsideration as a theological category, and how religious imaginaries of the future might account for bodily difference without presupposing its erasure.

Maria Småberg

Embodied Care in a Landscape of Vulnerability: Disability, Religion, and Everyday Humanitarianism in IM's Work Among Palestinian Children

This paper examines how religiously shaped understandings of the body, disability, and care informed the early work of the Swedish organisation Individuell Människohjälp (IM) among Palestinian children with intellectual and physical disabilities from the mid-1960s onward. Drawing on newly collected archival material, personal correspondence, field reports, and interviews with former IM workers, the study explores how bodies perceived as “weak,” “burdensome,” or “incapable” became critical sites of moral encounter, negotiation, and transformation within a context deeply marked by violence, poverty, and displacement.

IM's interventions unfolded in a setting where Islamic, Christian, and folk traditions offered diverging explanations for disability – ranging from divine will and fate to the influence of spiritual forces or the burden of social shame. These theological and cultural frameworks shaped how families interpreted their children's conditions, managed stigma, and interacted with foreign aid workers. Simultaneously, IM fieldworkers developed a distinctive form of “embodied humanitarianism,” grounded in Swedish Christian ethics of compassion and the ideal of caring for “the least of these.” Through home visits, rehabilitation initiatives, special education, and parental training, they helped generate new bodily possibilities for children who had often been hidden, immobilised, or socially isolated.

The paper argues that IM's everyday encounters with disabled Palestinian children illuminate how bodies function not only as objects of care, but as catalysts for shifts in social norms, interreligious engagement, and political imagination. Disability work became a space where Muslim, Christian, and, at times, Jewish Israeli actors navigated shared vulnerabilities, translated moral worlds, and reoriented local attitudes toward children previously considered beyond help. The study contributes to broader discussions on how religious narratives of suffering, healing, and dignity can inform more just futures for children with disabilities in conflict-affected societies.

The Incarnated Body of Jesus in the New Testament: A Disability Perspective

What does it mean that God “became flesh” (John 1:14) from a disability perspective?

The paper will explore New Testament texts that address various aspects of Jesus as a human being with a body that had limitations. In the gospels, Jesus is portrayed as a man who experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue and pain, who had emotions and formed relationships with the people around him. These descriptions negotiate emerging understandings of what it meant that Jesus was the son of God (Mark 1:11) and that his suffering and death had salvific consequences for those who believed in him. Other New Testament texts, such as the Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letters, also contribute to the early Christian discourse about Jesus’ simultaneous humanity and divinity.

In the paper, I address how New Testament texts about Jesus’ body can contribute to a disability theology of incarnation. I highlight three aspects that are relevant for this conversation. Firstly, I argue that Jesus can be read as a queer and crip figure who defies norms of masculinity as well as ability. Secondly, I suggest that the resurrection stories in which Jesus shows his wounds to the disciples (Luke 24:38-40, John 20:27) are important sites for a discussion about bodily transformation and vulnerability, and whether just futures imply the erasure of disability. Finally, I point to Jesus’s relationality as an important aspect of his humanity. On the one hand, the gospels portray his compassion for friends as well as strangers, on the other, Jesus was also reliant on other people – he even needed help carrying his cross. This relationality may be seen in light of the Pauline metaphor of the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:12).

Mephibosheth – disability, masculinity, and class

This paper examines how the biblical character Mephibosheth's disability and socioeconomic status affect his masculinity, showing that these intersecting issues are connected.

Theories on disability and masculinity often argue that physically disabled men fail to meet some standards of masculinity, such as power, autonomy, freedom, and the ability to provide for one's family. Making use of Gerschick and Miller's study *Coming to Terms: Masculinity and Physical Disability*, where they interview disabled men of different socioeconomic classes to understand how they construct their masculinity, I examine how Mephibosheth's socioeconomic status might alter how his disability relates to these masculine ideals. For example, Mephibosheth is given a place at David's court and therefore has some political power, and he is able to provide for his family because of servants working his lands, making him no different from non-disabled high-status men who also has servants working their lands. As Gerschick and Miller points out in their study, with dependable assistance one can experience a great deal of independence by acting through another person—however, one also needs to be able to afford to said dependable assistance.

However, Mephibosheth is still vulnerable because his autonomy and physical freedom are limited, because he must rely on servants to carry out his wishes. This vulnerability is exposed during the war of succession between David and Absalom, when Mephibosheth's servant Ziba does not bring out his donkey for him, which means that he cannot follow David and pledge his loyalty; Ziba even tells David that Mephibosheth's absence is proof of betrayal. Mephibosheth is still not able to move about as he wishes and is vulnerable to being plotted against, or at least vulnerable to needing help that might not arrive.

Examining Mephibosheth's situation works as a case study, which offers insight into how his socioeconomic status brings some relief to the social and material consequences of being physically disabled through access to assistance, while also exposing some vulnerabilities to his situation that cannot be solved through the use of servants or money.

Karin Tillberg

”Ingen bland prästen Arons efterkommande som har ett lyte får träda fram till altaret” – Om funktionalitet och sjukdom i Hebreiska bibeln och i kyrkoordning för Svenska kyrkan

Tredje Moseboks 21: a kapitel består av helighetsregler för präster. I slutet av kapitlet beskrivs hur den präst (Arons efterkommande) som har olika typer av vad som idag skulle kallas funktionsnedsättningar, såsom blindhet eller dövhet, men även olika typer av sjukdomar, inte får offra i templet eller komma nära altaret. På olika sätt har en sådan syn på funktionalitet levt kvar både inom den kanoniska rätten och i svenska kyrkolagar. Till exempel beskrivs i 1686 års kyrkolag om att den präst som är vanför eller plågas av farlig sjukdom inte ska bruka ämbetet. Fokus här och i den kanoniska rätten är på hur mässan kan firas på ett korrekt sätt och omsorg om ämbetsbäraren. Genom sjukdom eller annat kan ämbetsbäraren därför *fråntas ansvaret* i sin ämbetsutövning. I nu gällande kyrkoordning för Svenska kyrkan beskrivs det på ett annorlunda sätt. Där är sjukdom ett av kriterierna för att *fråntas rätten* att utöva ämbetet, för samtliga uppdrag inom vigningstjänsten. Fokus framgår genom formuleringen ”på grund av sjukdom eller av annan liknande anledning har förlorat förmågan att rätt utöva vigningstjänsten”.

På vilka sätt går det att skönja en linje mellan vad som beskrivs i 3 Mosebok och i kyrkoordningen, med avseende på prästens funktionalitet och förmåga att utöva sin tjänst? I dialog med fenomenologisk teori, främst hur Maurice Merleau-Ponty formulerat kroppslighet, och teorin om tvångsmässig funktionsduglighet formulerat av Robert McRuer, vill detta konferensbidrag utforska hur kyrkoordningens 31 kapitel kan förstås som reception av 3 Mosebok.

Is Rationality Linguistically Biased in Christian Ethics in Light of Discap Studies?

The main three criteria to judge an action in terms of Christian morality are: the matter involved, the grade of liberty and the consciousness of the moral agent. The responsibility of a moral agent would depend on basically: the matter and on the consciousness while the intention or will would only graduate the goodness or the wrongness of the moral action. The responsibility requires a response and implies linguistic structure of reality, so that a moral agent can give an accurate answer to moral questions.

The term “rationality” that underlies responsibility is challenged by gender- and transgender studies due to its elitist bias that excludes marginalized groups (e.g., 15% disabled or 6% queer of world population). “Morally empty standard of reasonableness” (Gustafson 1994) ascribes the neurotypical character of the humanity as norm, specifically in term of the use of language. This linguistic standard is questioned by researchers on the intersection of animal ethics and disability studies (Singer 1996). They critique the ableist perspective of valuing non-human nature proposing a shift from neurotypical intelligence as the basis for human dignity to identity-based ethics (Austriaco 2021, 402). “When neurotypical and able-bodied human capacities are used as the measure of a being’s value, both non-human animals and disabled human beings lose out (...) The criteria are both anthropocentric, because they reward only recognizably human capacities, and ableist, often leading us to discount the abilities of those with disabilities.” (Taylor 2017).

Rejecting anthropocentric neurotypicality requires finding new ways to imagine humans’ embodiment and singularity (if there is any). Therefore, how can we imagine that intellect or the capacity to speak within human codes is not what differentiates humans from the rest of nature? Which basis of responsibility can be framed from disability studies? Is gender identity a previous step to considering dignity?

Charlene van der Walt

What does it feel like to be a body marked as a problem? From Violence to Belonging when Cruising Utopia with José Esteban Muñoz

Marginalized groups are often constructed as “problems” within normative cultural narratives and dominant social systems. These frameworks regulate which bodies are deemed functional, acceptable, or fully human. Queer bodies, in particular, come to signify what exceeds or disrupts an econo-heteropatriarchal order, rendering them sites of scrutiny, regulation, and vulnerability. In this sense, the present moment, marked by intensified efforts to stabilize the normative operates as a space of constraint where bodily difference is disciplined through exclusion, surveillance, and violence. Drawing on José Esteban Muñoz, this paper explores the future-oriented potential of queer existence as a challenge to such regimes of bodily normativity. Muñoz’s notion of queerness as a “not yet here” utopia opens a horizon in which marginalized bodies are not reduced to problems but become sources of world-making and hope. Two narrative landscapes are read in critical conversation. First, the figure of Joseph in Genesis 37 is revisited as a “problematic” dreamer whose difference provokes mechanisms of control and expulsion. Second, Luke Gilford’s 2023 film *National Anthem* offers the House of Splendor, a queer rodeo community, as a space of chosen kinship and embodied belonging. Here, bodies that might otherwise be marked as excessive or unfit are received, sustained, and reimagined within alternative social configurations. Through the lens of spatial imagination, this paper argues that such marginal “cities” of care disrupt dominant regimes of bodily normativity. They offer glimpses of more just futures in which difference is not merely tolerated but generative of belonging. In cruising utopia, queer bodies no longer signify the problem, they become the grounds upon which alternative worlds are built.