The central research topic of the philosophical research is the concept of rationality. Rationality is often seen as a distinctive characteristic of human beings. But what does it mean to be a rational being, and how can ‘rationality’ be defined? From what standpoint can we judge the rationality of the beliefs, actions and practices of ourselves and of others? Do our categories of reasoning and our standards of truth and consistency enhance or distort our understanding and interpretation of others? What are the foundations of rationality and how has this concept developed over time? The research in the fields of theology and religious studies focuses on the interaction of religions in their various social, cultural and political contexts. Its aim is to develop, integrate, facilitate, perform and valorize excellent research in theology and religious studies, and to educate and supervise new generations of scholars.

The systematic study of rationality is carried out in the context of the following research programmes:
- Cognition, Interpretation and Context (Prof. M. Slors)
- The Project of a Hermeneutic Philosophy (Prof. P. van Haute)
- From Natural Philosophy to Science (Prof. C. Lüthy)
- Ethos, Polis and Religion (Prof. E. van der Zweerde)

These four programmes deal with different aspects of a range of things that are considered ‘rational’. The first programme relates to conceptions of belief, cognition and language. It addresses the various ways in which we interpret and understand human behaviour – linguistic and otherwise – in its physical and social context. In the second, the relationship between rationality, meaning and interpretation is examined. The third programme focuses on the emergence of science as the key paradigm of rational thinking in Western Europe and traces the history of long-term developments and transformations in scientific thinking from its philosophical beginnings. The fourth programme focuses on the concept of practical rationality and its impact on ethics, politics, and religion, addressing the idea of the ‘city’ as both a political and ethical community. A variety of methodological approaches are used in the research programmes: analytical, hermeneutical, critical, and historical. This makes the Institute one of the few places where a dialogue between these very different approaches can take place.

The research programme ‘Religions and Transformation in Contexts’ (RATIC; 2007-2012) makes a scientifically and socially relevant contribution to our insight into religious dynamics by focusing on the concept of transformation. While this concept is commonly associated with dynamics, it is seldom accurately defined or operationalized. In the RATIC programme, transformation is studied as a process of change in religious and spiritual identities, both at the level of the individual believer and at the collective level of communities and institutions. The RATIC programme is carried out by five research groups:
- Trajectories of Religiosity (Prof. E. Venbrux)
- Biblical Studies, Ancient Judaism, Early Christianity, and Gnosticism (Prof. E. van Wolde)
- Transformations of the Concepts, Practices and Representation of Discipline in Christianity (Prof. D. Müller)
Staff
Prof. P.J.M. Bakker (p)
Prof. W.P. van den Bercken (e)
Prof. J.A.M. Bransen (o)
Prof. H.G.G.M. Driessen (o)
Prof. G. Essen (o)
Prof. R.L. Grimes (p)
Prof. M.A.C. de Haardt (p)
Prof. P.J.M.M. van Haute (o)
Prof. C.A.M. Hermans (o)
Prof. A.J.M. van den Hoogen (p)
Prof. C.H. Lüthy (p)
Prof. F.A. Maas (o)
Prof. H. Motzki (p)
Prof. D.A.T. Müller (o)
Prof. P.J.A. Nissen (p)
Prof. J. van Oort (p)
Prof. R.A. van der Sandt (o)
Prof. J.B.A.M. Schilderman (p)
Prof. M.V.P. Slors (p)
Prof. H.G.B. Teule (p)
Prof. J.M.M.H. Thijssen (o)
Prof. P.J.M. van Tongeren (o)
Prof. B.H. Vedder (o)
Prof. P.C.L. van der Velde (p)
Prof. J.A. van der Ven (p)
Prof. H.J.M. Venbrux (o)
Prof. C.H.M. Versteegh (o)
Prof. J.G. van der Watt (o)
Prof. F.J.S. Wijsen (o)
Prof. J.-P. Wils (o)
Prof. E.J. van Wolde (o)
Prof. E. van der Zweerde (p)
(o), (e) and (p) see Glossary

Tenured
Full Professors 10.7 FTE
Associate Professors 1.6 FTE
Assistant Professors 7.2 FTE
Researchers 3.6 FTE

Non-tenured
Researchers 6.8 FTE
Doctoral candidates 19.4 FTE

• Transformation of Religion within the Frameworks of Modernity
  (Prof. G. Essen)
• Religious Identity Transformation in Context (Prof. C. Hermans)

Trajectories of Religiosity
Researchers in this group, which combines comparative religious
studies with the anthropology of religion, focus on 1) ritual and
religiosity (death rites, pilgrimage, and religious tourism), 2) religion and the arts, 3) religion, conflict, and media, 4) methods
and theories of comparative religious studies, and 5) the history
of religions.

Biblical Studies, Ancient Judaism, Early Christianity, and Gnosticism
This group focuses on biblical and extra-biblical texts that mirror
religious transformations in social, political or religious contexts.
Research concentrates on interpreting a number of key texts on
religious transformations, different levels of interpretation, and
re-interpreting early Christian and Jewish texts, as well as their
historical, religious and hermeneutical backgrounds.

Transformations of the Concepts, Practices and Representation of
Discipline in Christianity
This group focuses on the transformations of concepts and prac-
tices of ‘discipline’ (regarding both orthodoxy and orthopraxis) as
well as their historiographical representation. Both mirror major
continuities and discontinuities in the history of Christianity. This
type of research combines specialized and internationally unique,
multidisciplinary expertise.

Transformation of Religion within the Frameworks of Modernity
The aim of this group is to investigate the effects of social and
cultural transformation on the normative quality of religious inter-
pretative systems. Research topics include: 1) the crisis of theism
in modernity, 2) science and theology, 3) conflict and cohesion,
and 4) chronology and topography. Research focuses in particular
on two topics: ‘Evil, modernity, and the making of tradition’ and
‘The problem of divine and human agency within a scientific
world view.’
Religious Identity Transformation in Context
This group develops theories about the transformation of religious identity within a pluralizing and individualizing context that involves various types of interactions between religions. Transformation of religious identity is studied as a continuity or discontinuity of religious identity in time, through adaptation within its current contexts, and within an explanatory framework of its antecedents and consequents.

Research facilities
The faculty library, which is integrated in the central humanities library, houses an excellent collection of books and journals on philosophy, theology and religious studies. In addition, it possesses several special collections such as the Egyptological collection of books named after the Nijmegen professor J.M.A. Janssen, which is considered to be one of the richest in the Netherlands, and the collection of the Titus Brandsma Institute, a fine collection of books and journals on spirituality and mysticism. The library also houses one of the world’s largest microfilm collections of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts on logic, semantics, natural philosophy and metaphysics.

Collaboration
Individual researchers participate in research schools such as the Netherlands Research School for Medieval Studies and the Netherlands Research School for Practical Philosophy. The institute also participates in the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) and the Netherlands Inter-university School for Islamic Studies (NISIS).

The Institute as such also has formal cooperative agreements with the University of Leuven, the University of Stellenbosch, and the University of Münster, which also participates in the International Research Universities Network (IRUN). There are similar arrangements with the Università degli Studi di Parma, the University of Pretoria, De Paul University (Chicago), the University of Sao Paolo, the Catholic University of America (Washington), the University of South Africa (UNISA Pretoria, South Africa), the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), the Faculty of Theology of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetra in Bangalore (India), the University of Heidelberg, the University of the Philippines in Manila, and the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

In addition, members of the philosophy programmes have close contacts with institutions such as the Departments of Philosophy at the Universities of Middlesex and Hertfordshire, Antwerp, Stuttgart and Tübingen, the Humboldt University Berlin, the Università degli Studi di Macerata, the Université de Fribourg, Fordham University and Columbia University (New York), the Centre for Applied Political Philosophy and Ethics at the University of Brighton, and the Centre of Excellence ‘History of Mind Research Unit’ at the University of Helsinki. In 2010, the Institute hosted guest researchers from a number of countries.

The researchers of the theology and religious studies programme collaborate closely with several Nijmegen-based institutes such as the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, the Titus Brandsma Institute, the Nijmegen Institute of Mission Studies and the Center for Thanatology.

Research results
In 2010, eleven PhD theses were defended, three cum laude: Delphine Bellis, Le visible et l’invisible dans la pensée cartésienne, Joas Wagemakers, A quietist Jihadi-Salafi, and Lia van Aalsum, Lied van de eenheid.
Cognition, Interpretation and Context

A new theory has been developed by Prof. Marc Slors on the nature of our ability to understand the behaviour of others in terms of beliefs and desires: we ascribe beliefs and desires only in post-hoc recounting of more direct and intuitive assessments of others. Prof. Slors also formulated a new theory of the function of consciousness in view of recent neuroscientific evidence to the effect that most of our actions are caused unconsciously: conscious decisions are a form of ‘self-priming’ that results in unconscious actions that match our decisions. The theory makes an important contribution to the debate on the societal impact of neuroscientific claims concerning free will. In the project on quantity implicatures (Quantity matters), Dr Bart Geurts and his colleagues obtained new empirical and theoretical results concerning the interpretation of scalar expressions and the long-standing philosophical problem of free choice permission. Veni fellow Dr Corien Bary is currently developing a novel logico-semantic framework to explain how people interpret time-related expressions in natural language. Two book publications stand out: Dr Bart Geurts’ Quantity Implicatures (Cambridge University Press) and the Chinese translation (进化思维) of Dr Chris Buskens’ best selling Evolutionair Denken (Evolutionary Thinking).

What’s more, two international conferences were organized. In collaboration with Dr Cees Leijenhorst (From Natural Philosophy to Science) and Dr Veronica Vasterling (The Project of a Hermeneutic Philosophy), Prof. Marc Slors organized a conference on The Cartesian Myth of the Ego and the Analytic/Continental Divide. Together with Prof. André Lardinois, Dr Corien Bary and Prof. Rob van der Sandt organized an interdisciplinary conference on relating theories in formal semantics to Ancient Greek linguistics.

The Project of a Hermeneutic Philosophy

Dr Gert-Jan van der Heiden published a book that shows the importance of the notions of disclosure and displacement for an understanding of the relationship between truth and language in contemporary hermeneutic philosophy. In addition, he examined how the plurality of languages and the relationship of source with target languages is conceptualized in hermeneutic accounts of translation. He was elected to the Dutch Royal Academy’s prestigious Young Academy (De Jonge Akademie). Together with Dr Tomas Geyskens, Prof. Philippe Van Haute published a book on clinical anthropology in Freud and Lacan. This book shows that the classical interpretation of the abandonment of the seduction theory cannot be accepted. Van Haute was appointed Research Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS). He also organized the third conference of the International Society for Psychoanalysis and Philosophy. Prof. Paul van Tongeren was appointed Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS).

From Natural Philosophy to Science

Dr Michiel Seevinck was awarded a Veni grant for a research project on Probabilistic Causation in a Spacetime Framework. Dr Hiro Hirai obtained a Marie Curie Intra European Fellowship (IEF) for a research project on the concept of The Cosmic Soul in Renaissance humanism and natural philosophy. The presence of Prof. Edith Dudley Sylla as a Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) visiting professor strengthened work on an edition of John Buridan’s commentary on Aristotle’s Physics – a project led by Prof. Hans Thijssen that involves a number of other researchers, including Prof. Paul Bakker and Dr Michiel Streijger. Dr Streijger, Prof. Bakker and Prof. Thijssen also published their critical edition of John Buridan’ Quaestiones super libros ‘De generatione et corruptione’ Aristotelis. Prof. Bakker was appointed Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS). Dr Carla Rita Palmerino, with Dr Sophie Roux (Grenoble), published a challenging double fascicle of the international journal Early Science and Medicine, which examines the various Forms of Mathematization in the philosophical and scientific disciplines from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. Prof. Christoph Lüthy co-organized the international symposium of the interfaculty research programme Text, Transmission and Reception (TRT), a joint initiative of the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, and the Faculty of Arts.

Ethos, Polis and Religion

Researchers involved in this programme participated in a Volkswagenstiftung-funded project on orthodox Christianity and European integration (Alte Grenzen – Neue Fronten). The articulation of virtue ethics for contemporary society, including its application within specific professions such as police work and education, resulted in an edited volume on Deugdethiek en integriteit (Virtue Ethics and Integrity). A project on the relationship between Islam and democracy yielded a report for NWO, and is the starting point for cooperation with the research group engaged in Islam and Arabic Studies. Researchers working on the NWO-financed research project Repertoires of Democracy organized an international conference on Vectors of Transfer.

Trajectories of Religiosity

Researchers involved in the project Refiguring Death Rites – led by Prof. Eric Venbrux – examined new ritualizations of death and notions of religiosity. Joanna Wojtikowiak, MA and Prof. Venbrux specifically focused on the religious practices of the religiously unaffiliated, centring on the phenomenon of communication with the dead. Dr Thomas Quartier completed his research on new mourning rituals in a Dutch context and presented the results of a project on deathbed rituals. Prof. Venbrux co-edited a volume on comparative mythology, another on ritual, media, and conflict (to be published by Oxford University Press) and a special issue of La Ricerca Folklorica on performance in intercultural encounters. Prof. Peter Nissen showed that understanding the afterlife (‘longing for heaven’) was crucial to new forms of religiosity in the nineteenth century. Dr Frans Jespers published Fieldwork in Religion on new forms of religiosity. Prof. Paul van der Velde published his book on the spiritual career of the Siddhartha Gautama, which is central to Buddhism. Prof. Harald Motzki provided a new dating for the
Key publications


Dr Martijn de Koning developed a new approach to the study of the Salafi movement as a utopian movement. The book edited by Dr Roel Meijer on The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe makes a scholarly contribution to the debate on Islam and Islamic movements. Dr Karin van Nieuwkerk edited Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps and Revolutionary Theater, a volume on new artistic developments in the Muslim cultural sphere. Dr Elisabeth Hense published Früh-christliche Profilierungen der Spiritualität, a book on the ‘discernment of the spirits’, an important leitmotiv in Christian spirituality.

Biblical Studies, Ancient Judaism, Early Christianity, and Gnosticism
Prof. Ellen van Wolde continued to concentrate on cognitive linguistic research of the conceptual transformations reflected in the Hebrew bible in its ancient Near Eastern context. Her book Reframing Biblical Studies was discussed at various international meetings. Dr Robert Rezetko’s work on the linguistic possibilities for dating biblical texts that mirror religious transformations led to a lively debate on dating issues in Biblical Hebrew linguistics. Dr Rezetko’s publication of a landmark article on ‘The Spelling of “Damascus” and the ‘Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts’ strengthened his position in this field. In New Testament studies, Prof. Jan van der Watt extended his research to include ‘John and ethics’, examining the way exegetical research can help when formulating positions in modern ethics.

Transformations of the Concepts, Practices and Representation of Discipline in Christianity
Prof. Daniela Müller focused her research on the transformation of medieval concepts of guilt, punishment and penance, and on the use of discourse analysis (as developed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault) in interpreting the sources of the Inquisition(s). She brought to light some widespread fallacies in the current geographical limitations of this research and in the patterns of the historiographical interpretation of some of the most prominent sources of the Inquisition(s). She presented her findings in several international scholarly articles and in lectures at international conferences.

Transformation of Religion within the Frameworks of Modernity
Dr Ria van den Brandt successfully completed her VWS Oral History Project Witnesses of Theresienstadt, which generated new sources of research and new insights into the coping strategies of Dutch survivors of Theresienstadt. She organized – in collaboration with the Soeterbeeck Programme – the 2010 Holocaust Memorial Day. She also co-edited Spirituality in the Writings of Etty Hillesum and authored Etty Hillesum. Amicitia, ammirazione, mistica. Dr Marc De Kesel organized a well-attended international expert seminar on Imagining/Remembering the Shoah, which investigated the complex role of imagination in the commemoration of the Holocaust, focusing on the work of the famous Israeli author David Grossman.
Religious Identity Transformation in Context

Prof. Chris Hermans and Dr Carl Sterkens developed an empirically tested model of vertical mysticism that can be used in comparative research between religions. The EURESOURCE programme Religious Sources of Solidarity – led by Profs. Hans Schilderman and Peer Scheepers – was successfully concluded. An analysis of previously collected large-scale data allowed researchers to determine the extent to which religiosity is a source of solidarity in European countries. Prof. Frans Wijssen co-edited the Dictionary of Literary Swahili. His book There is only one God was translated in Indonesian with the challenging title (translated into English) Fruits of the Spirit. How to do participatory research in the countries of the Southern hemisphere. The book is used in courses that introduce Indonesian students to research methods in religious studies. Finally, Prof. Hans van der Ven finished his book on Human Rights or Religious Rules, which offers a systematic and historical analysis of the contested relationship between religion and human rights.

Societal impact

Members of the Institute regularly participate in forum discussions and contribute to public debate by publishing articles in newspapers, giving talks on the radio and in other media.

Prof. Paul van Tongeren and Dr Marcel Becker produced a DVD on integrity as a virtue of civil servants. During the traditional Dutch ‘Month of Philosophy’, Prof. Christoph Lüthy took part in several debates on the theme of the ‘maakbare mens’ (‘malleable man’). Dr Bas van Stokkom published a book under the thought-provoking title Wat een hufter! (What a thug!), which gave rise to public debates in newspapers and on television. The MA students involved in the Royal Academy’s Student Assistants Programme on Limits and Chances in the Dialogue between Reason and Religion presented their results in a book edited by Dr Marin Terstra and Dr Ingo Bocken. During a final conference, the students presented the idea of a dialogue between reason and religion from different perspectives, employing a variety of performative strategies. The Faculty’s philosophy section and the Soeterbeek Programme organized the 32nd conference of Dutch and Flemish philosophers (‘Nederlands-Vlaamse Filosofedag’). The theme of the conference was the question of the value and usefulness of philosophy as an academic discipline in 21st-century society. The conference attracted an audience of around 200 people.

Prof. Frans Wijssen co-edited Indigenous Voices in the Sustainability Discourse (together with Sylvia Marcos), a volume that will help co-funding agencies to understand the relationship between religion and development. Dr Karin van Nieuwkerk and collaborators organized a cultural activity together with LUX theatre and Elan (an expert centre for integration, emancipation and participation). Several researchers in the group engaged in Islam and Arabic Studies were involved in the Islam Research Project (IRP), which focuses on Saudi Arabia. The 2010 Radboud Science Award went to Prof. Ellen van Wolde. She will use these funds to develop an educational project in collaboration with elementary schools in the Arnhem-Nijmegen region. A documentary on the work of Ellen van Wolde, an initiative of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the TV channel HUMAN, was made by John Appel and broadcast on national television. Dr Marc De Kesel published a book on monotheism (Goden breken), which became a theological bestseller, leading to many newspaper and magazine interviews, and an interview for VPRO’s TV programme Boeken. Prof. Palmyre Oomen and Dr Taede Smedes published the volume Evolutie, Cultuur en Religie (Evolution, Culture and Religion), which contains contributions by members of the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies and the Faculty of Science. Prof. Oomen also co-edited a volume on Nanotechnologie, which led to interviews on both radio and television, as well as to many invited lectures at conferences on nano-technology.

Future research

On 1 January 2011, the Research Institute for Philosophy and the Research Institute for Religious Studies and Theology merged into one Research Institute for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies. Within this new environment, the current research programmes are being evaluated in order to increase the coherence and sharpen the focus of research. The Research Institute for Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies will continue cooperation with the Institute for Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies (HLCS) and the Centre of Language Studies (CLS), in order to reinforce research in the humanities at Radboud University Nijmegen.

Prof. Marc Slors and his collaborators will develop and expand two current lines of research: conscious deciding as self-priming and mind as reconstructive modelling. Dr Bart Geurts and collaborators will continue their research on pragmatic inferencing, presupposition and the theory of mind. Dr Corien Bary will continue to work on her Veni project Reports from the Past.

Dr Gert-Jan van der Heiden will focus on his Veni project on Conflicting Pluralities for the next two and a half years. Prof. Ben Vedder plans to work on the relationship between hermeneutics and philosophy of religion, while Dr Gerrit Steunbrink will work on Hegel and intercultural philosophy. Prof. Philippe Van Haute will be a fellow at STIAS until 2013, where he will be working on a multi-author publication on The project of a clinical anthropology. Dr Benda Hofmeyr continues her Veni project on Radical Passivity. Prof. Paul van Tongeren will continue research in connection with the Nietzsche Wörterbuch.

The 12½-year jubilee of the Center for the History of Philosophy and Science (which is the name by which the research programme From Natural Philosophy to Science is known internationally) will be celebrated by a series of international conferences. Prof. Lüthy will bring the NWO Programme Visualizing the Invisible to a close by organizing an international conference on the evolution of
Researchers in the Trajectories of Religiosity group intend to work on new forms of religiosity of a holistic nature, comparative research into changing ways of dealing with death in Europe and research on Western forms of Buddhism and Hinduism. The related Centre for Thanatology will host the prestigious international conference on the social context of death, dying and disposal (DDD10) in cooperation with the (British) Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS). Prof. Harald Motzki will start a new research project on the sources of the Sîra, the earliest biography the prophet Muhammad. The aim is to date and evaluate the historical reliability of these sources.

Prof. Daniela Müller and Dr Gian Ackermans will organize an international expert seminar on the history and historiography of various dualistic groups in ancient and medieval Christianity. Dr Ackermans will continue his research on the legal-historical aspects of the voluntary leave of members of institutions of religious life. He will publish a monograph on the life and works of 20th-century Dutch canonists from the Order of Friars Minor.

In the research programme Ethos, Polis and Religion, several new research initiatives will be launched. One is the research line developed by Prof. Jean-Pierre Wils on City, Garden and Desert as three main metaphors in conceptualizing the political community. Another is a joint project with the universities of St. Gall and Fribourg (Switzerland) and the RSUH in Moscow on the relationship between democracy, human rights, national identity and religion in three non-EU European countries (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). A research project on Orthodox Christianity and European Integration will conclude with a conference in Brussels. In 2011 several books are due to appear: a volume on Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights, a volume on Crises of Democracy, and a monograph by Dr Marin Terpstra on Democratie als cultus (Democracy as a Cult). Several members of the programme will contribute to a collective volume on political philosophy, edited by Terpstra, as part of the Basisboek Filosofie series published by Boom.