

For an ARCHAEOLOGY OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The Ethics of Belief
from the Middle Ages
to Fake News
[ArCoTh]

EGSAMP International
Summer School
Morimondo
3-8 settembre 2025
Abbazia di Santa Maria
di Morimondo

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Università degli Studi di Torino

(PI: Pasquale Porro)




FONDO ITALIANO
PER LA SCIENZA



UNIVERSITÀ
DI TORINO


Dipartimento di
Studi Umanistici


EUROPEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR
ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

ArCoTh: For an Archaeology of Conspiracy Theory. The Ethics of Belief from the Middle Ages to *Fake News*

The Covid-19 pandemic, together with numerous recent political events, has highlighted – and indeed intensified – the diffusion of unchecked beliefs, ranging from the acceptance of theses devoid of any evidence to the elaboration of complex conspiracy theories. However, this is not new: for example, the crisis caused by the Black Death that swept through Europe in the mid-14th century led to particularly violent acts of persecution against Jewish communities, accused of being behind the spread of the disease. The Middle Ages thus provide a far-reaching historical precedent for looking at what is happening in our time from a different perspective, i.e. starting from the question: is it rationally acceptable and morally legitimate to believe in something in the absence of sufficient epistemic/cognitive foundations for doing so? It was precisely in the Middle Ages that sophisticated discussions took place on the epistemic and moral status of beliefs, their truth value, and the

role that the will assumes in appropriating and upholding them. The ArCoTh project intends to address this cluster of issues, and to show that it is worthwhile to relate medieval discussions to modern and contemporary ones. It comprises four research axes:

A. *Certitudo/Fides*. An archaeology of the opposition between epistemic evidentialism and doxastic voluntarism;

B. *Ratio/Voluntas*. Intellect and will in the explanation of moral agency;

C. *Scientia/Opinio*. The historical redefinition of the boundaries between science and opinion;

D. *Consuetudo/Renovatio*. The role of custom and fear of novelty in the formation of beliefs and conspiracy theories.

ArCoTh's basic methodological assumption is that one should not seek a linear continuity between past and present. Rather, only an accurate, philological scrutiny of the differences and discontinuities between one and the other can offer fresh and less obvious perspectives for interpreting current phenomena.

EGSAMP Summer School Morimondo 3–8 September 2025

Programme

Wednesday, September 3

Throughout the day, participants will be transferred from their arrival airports and from Milano Centrale railway station to Morimondo (times to be arranged)

From 15h00 / registration of participants

18h30 / guided tour of the Abbey of Morimondo

19h30 / welcome aperitif and dinner

Thursday, September 4

Opening Session

09h30 / Andreas Speer (Köln): *The XXV EGSAMP Summer School: Opening Remarks*

10h00 / Pasquale Porro (Torino/Milano): *Presentation of the FIS ArCoTh Project "For an Archaeology of Conspiracy Theories. The Ethics of*

Belief from the Middle Ages to Fake News" (with Additional Notes on the Conspiracy Legends Surrounding the Deaths of Three Medieval Philosophers)

10h40 Coffee Break

Philosophical Approaches to Conspiracy Theories

11h00 / Tommaso Piazza (Pavia): *A New Account of Conspiracy Theories*

11h40 / Anna Ichino (Milano): *Conspiracy Theories between Belief and Make-Believe*

12h20 / Chiara Caterina Arena (Leuven): *From Opinio to (Counter-)Scientia: Intellectualizing Western Decline on Long-Form YouTube*

Lunch

Certitudo / Fides

15h40 / Riccardo Brighenti (Milano): *True Then, False Now — but Always the Same? Aristotle on Beliefs*

16h20 / Luigi Valletta (Milano): *Preaching Philosophy. Fight against Heterodoxy and Confirmation of the Faith in Roland of Cremona, Moneta of Cremona, and Humbert of Romans*

17h00 / Coffee Break

17h20 / Andreas Speer (Köln):
*Believing – Thomas Aquinas Meets
Anthony Kenny*

18h00 / Alessandro Passera
(Clermont-Ferrand/Fribourg): *The
Certitude of Things. A Theme in the
Latin Reception of Avicenna*

Open discussion ('philosophical
aperitif') and dinner

Friday, September 5

Conspiracy Theories on Medieval Thought

09h20 / Pasquale Porro
(Torino/Milano): *The Invention of
Medieval Thought: Jean Hardouin's
Grand Conspiracy Theory*

10h00 / Riccardo Fedriga (Bologna):
*Suspicious Minds, Bias and
Conspiracies. Esoteric Interpretations of
Dante in the 'Short Century'*

10h40 / Coffee Break

Evidence and Truth

11h00 Maria Evelina Malgieri
(Torino): *Is Evidence Always
Evident? Remarks on the First Notions
of the Intellect and the
Transcendentals*

11h40 / Lucie Rathouzská (Praha):

*Sapientiae amor: The Knowability of
Truth between Augustine and Hugh of
St. Victor*

Lunch

Consuetudo / Renovatio

15h20 / Israel García Avilés (Köln):
*Renovatio doctrinae platonicae. An
Introduction to the Reception of
Proclus' Platonic Theology through
Pietro Balbo's Translation*

16h00 / Fiorella Retucci
(Lecce/Köln): *Averroes on Custom*

16h40 / Coffee Break

Ratio / Voluntas / Error

17h00 / Martina Buccilli (Milano):
*Loquentes in lege sua appellat
voluntates. Observations
on the Role of ratio and voluntas
in a Controversial Passage from the
Errores philosophorum*

17h40 / Nicolò Vantaggiato
(Pavia/Köln): *Fake News at the
Dawn of Humanity?
The Problem of Eve's Creation between
Aristotelian Natural Philosophy and
Faith in James of Metz's
Commentary on the Sentences*

Open discussion ('philosophical
aperitif') and dinner

Saturday, September 6

Scientia / Opinio

09h20 / Walter Larovere (Lecce):
*Aristotle's ultima opinio and the
Consummation of scientia de caelo in
Averroes' De substantia orbis*

10h00 / Mario Loconsole (Catania):
*From Collective Belief to Scientific
Doctrine: Framing the Theory of
Spontaneous Generation in the Late
Middle Ages*

10h40 / Coffee Break

11h00 / Marilena Panarelli (Palermo):
*Conjectural Knowledge and
Epistemological Limits in Medieval
Pharmacology*

11h40 / Stefano Pelizzari (Bergamo):
*Grading Scientific Knowledge
beyond Opinion: Thaddeus of Parma
on What Enables Better
Understanding (MS Vat. lat. 6768)*

Lunch

15h00-19h00 / Historical and artistic
tour of Pavia

Open discussion ('philosophical
aperitif') and dinner

Sunday, September 7

Political Conspiracies in the Middle Ages

09h20 / Federico Canaccini
(Torino): *Everybody Dies, but the
Emperor! Courtly Conspiracies in the
Late Middle Ages*

10h00 / Marco Lamanna
(Lugano): *Conspiracy and
Preservation of Power in
Machiavelli's Work*

10h40 / Coffee Break

Angels, Devils and Lies

11h00 / Lorenzo Centini (Praha):
*What it Means to Believe. Knowing and
Assenting in Demons According to
Bonaventure's Liber Sententiarum*

11h40 / Elisa Maria Venturini
(Lecce): *Angelic Lies in Giles
of Rome's De cognitione
angelorum, q. 13. The Problem of
Angelic Mendacity between Faculties
of the Intellect and Perversions
of the Will*

12h20 / Michele Saracino (Torino):
*Living a Lie. The Doctrine of Angelic
Fall as the First Conspiracy Ever*

Lunch

Afternoon: Excursion to Cascina
Caremma

Tasting of local specialities

Dinner

After dinner:
Concluding Remarks

Monday, September 8

During the morning, participants will be transferred from Morimondo to Milan (destinations and times to be arranged)

All working sessions will take place in the Refectory Hall of the Ancient Abbey.



Organising Committee

Maria Evelina Malgieri • Pasquale Porro
• Fiorella Retucci • Andreas Speer

Accommodation:

Full board accommodation for registered participants
has been arranged at Hotel Morimondo
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