

CFP Interdisciplinary conference (English and French):
Mulhouse (Alsace, France), 22-23 May 2025

GHOSTS! A Conversation on the Unreal

So, what are ghosts anyway? What is their epistemological function? As a cognitive phenomenon, “ghosts” have to do with the margins of knowledge, often undermining the stability of our thinking, adding unexpected (and therefore often terrifying) dimensions. They may be traces of interloping false memory full of superstition, but they can also be true and relevant memories that have been suppressed but are now trying to manifest themselves. In either case, such ghostly experiences always force us to **renegotiate our sense of reality**.

In order to learn more about these issues, we invite experts from **different disciplines** to share at this conference their understanding of the notion of ghosts, of hauntings, or the supernatural and improbable in all of its many diverse manifestations and its traditional and new theorizings.

Possible topics for papers can range from ghost stories and **Gothic** fantasies in literature to discussions of the **Uncanny and doppelgangers** in Freudian and post-Freudian ways, **idealist Hegelian notions** of the *Weltgeist* (world spirit), or even poststructuralist **Derridean Hauntology**.

Still, we would like these high-brow approaches to be complemented not only with possible examples from ghost-busting **popular or even trash culture**, but also with **folklore studies** that discuss the meaning of ghosts in **ethnographic approaches** based on field work and examples from many different cultures, such as the continuous power of dead family members in **ancestor worship**, or also the case of **Voodoo** zombies and duppies, and other occasions of African American “h’ants.”

Theologians can contribute to our understanding of the unreal by sharing their debates about the **resurrection of Christ in the flesh** and the nature of other Biblical miracles, or the agency of angels and devils. **Demons and spirits** of all kinds of course also exist in other religions that can give a fuller picture to our understanding of the ghost phenomenon...

Intercultural discussions of the Other are also welcome, as in the **Chinese appellation “gui”** for foreigners, and similar cases in other cultural contexts. **Historical hoaxes** or “Ossianisms” may add to our discussions as well, or cases of what psychologists call “group speak” that lead to colossal misunderstandings. In a similar context, economists may want to present the case of **business “bubbles.”** Even in the LED-lit spaces of the **digital world**, ghosts have recently found ways of hiding out in the form of **bots**.

In short, ghosts do matter in many of our respected and well-established academic disciplines, and we want to organize a gathering of as many experts in as many disciplines as possible.

The aim of this interdisciplinary conference is thus to put experts from diverse fields in contact and make it possible for them to share their knowledge of various phenomena of the unreal in the immodest hope that, maybe, this will make it possible for our participants in turn to learn more about “the real”—a complicated notion that we put in lower case in order to emphasize its experiential relativity and tenuous constructedness. In an age of fake news, alternative truths, and the absolute rejection of positive knowledge, it is important to learn as much as possible about how **knowledge** can be framed and how exactly its

borderlines can be defined. We want to approach ghosts as an omnipresent epistemological challenge that confronts our experience with the very foundations of our beliefs.

Location: UHA Mulhouse (Alsace, France)

Scientific committee:

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