PRACTICING INTERDISCIPLINARITY

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

Edited by Rafael Barroso Romero, Elisabeth Begemann,
Enno Friedrich, Elena Malagoli, Anna-Katharina Rieger,
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Antonietta Di Giulio

Implementing Interdisciplinarity: Connecting the Mindset of a Worrier, a Dreamer, and a Bookkeeper

Opening this volume is a pleasure and an honour. In 2022, I was invited to be a companion of the International Research Training Group 'Resonant Self–World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices' (IGS) on a part of its interdisciplinary journey that resulted in this impressive collection.

In our first exchange – it was where the seed of this volume was planted – we discussed the added value of adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the quality requirements of implementing an interdisciplinary approach, and the manifold challenges that are faced in aspiring to interdisciplinarity, especially in the context of Research Training Groups in which young academics experience a broad diversity of challenges and expectations on their way to an academic career.

Interdisciplinarity is about investigating phenomena that cannot be suitably addressed or remain in the shadows and thus undetected by a monodisciplinary approach. It is about producing comprehensive results that cover and, most importantly, integrate more and more different aspects than can be considered in monodisciplinary research. It is about developing a picture of the object that is investigated that cannot be produced by the single perspectives alone and – in doing so – finding the adequate balance between individual and collaborative work, between disciplinary and integrative work. It is about comparing and integrating disciplinary worldviews which cover epistemological dimensions (choice of phenomena and how to describe them correctly, what questions are asked, body of knowledge and basic assumptions, technical language, and theories), normative dimensions (value system, social rules, criteria of scientific rigour, ethics), and practices (set of preferred methods, how to approach and solve problems).

Interdisciplinarity is a collaboration of people belonging to different disciplinary research and teaching cultures and having different worldviews – the sine qua non of interdisciplinarity are distinct disciplinary profiles that are made explicit and productive in an integrative effort. At the same time, interdisciplinarity is a space in which different research and teaching cultures meet. This entails challenges and the potential of serious conflicts caused by the inability of acknowledging, trusting, and appreciating diverse perspectives.

But even if all participants are willing, interdisciplinarity does not just happen. Experience shows that a lot of the problems occurring in interdisciplinary projects are due to underrating the cognitive and social processes that have to take place in

order to compare, link, and integrate disciplinary perspectives. The management of interdisciplinary projects quite often is reduced to issues of administration, of scheduling and of managing financial resources. But these more traditional tasks of project management are only a part of what has to be done. Interdisciplinary research necessitates a dedicated design aimed at integration, people that are willing to take it seriously, and a professional approach in its handling. Implementing interdisciplinarity necessitates the mindsets of a worrier, a dreamer, and a bookkeeper.

Dealing with the potential problems and challenges necessitates the mindset of a worrier: The mindset of a worrier always keeps a wary eye on the potential problems and challenges. If someone in an interdisciplinary team does not feel appreciated, he or she will stop thinking and contributing. The mindset of a worrier sees to it that everybody is valued and feels cognitively comfortable. At the same time, it is necessary to make sure that people actually engage with each other and challenge each other. The mindset of a worrier sees to that as well. An interdisciplinary collaboration requires a continuing reflection and engagement in one's own professional identity. All participants must be able to actually enunciate their specific worldview, and they must be able to step back from it when appropriate. They must be able to leave the comfort zone of the worldview they are familiar with and to relate their way of thinking to other worldviews. Seen from this angle, interdisciplinarity has much to do with knowing (or getting to know) oneself. Accepting other disciplines and engaging with them is not just taking note that others think differently, tolerating the existence of other disciplines and using their results and data. Rather, it is about digging deeper. It is about wanting to know how others think and valuing what their specific perspective reveals.

Unlocking the potential of different disciplinary worldviews and exploring uncharted territory necessitates the mindset of a dreamer: Time and cognitive leisure are important ingredients in unlocking the potential of an interdisciplinary collaboration. The mindset of a dreamer is concerned about providing and protecting spaces in which it is possible to lead an open discussion and to cognitively roam around. Exploring promising pathways of interdisciplinary integration is not something that takes place at the beginning of a collaboration and is then done with. The mindset of a dreamer creates spaces for reflection and roaming around from time to time in order to allow the ongoing process of knowledge integration to evolve. And in order to unlock the potential of the different disciplinary worldviews, it is necessary to cleverly combine times of individual thinking, times of collaborative discussion, and times of peer-to-peer-feedback. In order to get somewhere it is, at the same time, crucial to know when to stop exploring and start producing. This necessitates to clarify which of the pathways that have been ex-

plored are promising and which ones will lead nowhere. This is where the mindset of a dreamer hands over to the mindset of a bookkeeper.

Setting the stage for achieving scientifically robust results necessitates the mindset of a bookkeeper: The mindset of a bookkeeper makes sure that things get done and that they are done right. Within the last two decades, a broad agreement has been reached about interdisciplinarity being a research approach that can and must be designed like any other research approach. The mindset of a bookkeeper makes sure that promising fields of integration are translated into shared questions, common goals, and milestones. Commitments to engage in integration-oriented activities have to be supported by suitable methods and procedures, otherwise they will not be successful by either not leading to results at all or by leading to results that are not deemed to be scientifically sound. Quality is achieved by translating the quality requirements of interdisciplinary research into tasks that are then attended, and by using these tasks to reflect on and monitor the progress that has been achieved. The mindset of a bookkeeper explores and implements methods of knowledge-integration and thus sees to it that knowledge-integration takes place while keeping an eye on the milestones.

This is where we left after our first exchange. In our second exchange – it was where the seed of this volume started to grow – we discussed the difference between performing interdisciplinarity, discussing interdisciplinarity, and producing interdisciplinarity, and we applied this to reflect the discussions within the IGS. This took place in a retreat in which different topics – dark resonance, tertiary resonance, theory as a bridge, and multi- vs. interdisciplinarity – were discussed, all of them suggested and prepared by small teams of the IGS members and informed by the aim of providing an opportunity for an open discussion and for cognitively roaming around.

Performing interdisciplinarity refers to how scholars actually interact with each other. This covers different dimensions. One dimension is how they deal with the differing lines of arguments and approaches, with differences that are due to their different epistemological lenses, and with the tacit knowledge that is present in each communicative interaction that takes place (and might not be shared by all participants in the interaction). Another dimension is to what extent they engage in connecting, in identifying common ground, and in exploring potential synergies, to what extent they get cognitively involved.

Discussing interdisciplinarity refers to the collective reflection and discussion of the actually experienced interdisciplinary interaction. This includes different dimensions as well. One dimension is what aspects of the experience are addressed, what challenges and problems are identified, what aspirations and mutual expectations are revealed. Another dimension is how the participants communicate and treat each other in discussions, how they deal with power relations and hierar-

chies both in the actual interdisciplinary experience and in reflecting and discussing it. And still another dimension is the atmosphere informing the reflection and discussion, touching aspects such as mutual trust and openness.

Producing interdisciplinarity refers to the knowledge that is actually produced by the interdisciplinary interaction, to how performing interdisciplinarity translates into results. This as well includes different dimensions. One dimension relates to the projects and/or disciplines of the participants, to how the interaction benefits their individual projects and yields inspirations for their disciplinary research. Another relates to the participants themselves, to what they learn about other perspectives and about their own perspective. And one dimension relates to the common topic, to the added value that is produced by working on common questions and producing integrated research results.

In reflecting the discussions in the IGS along these lines, three points predominated. One was the impressive level of mutual trust in the IGS that allowed to discuss also fields of tensions, feelings of uneasiness and insecurities irrespective of academic status – and resulted in discussing how to improve the interdisciplinary interaction within the IGS. Another was the extent of mutual and individual learning, of cross-fertilization across disciplines and academic status that took place and had been made possible by the open discussions. A last one circled around synergies and promising common questions, but also the extent to which the individuals would actually be able to commit to a collaboration beyond the isolated space of a retreat – a discussion in which both experienced and young researchers honestly, and without the allure of showing off, shared personal limitations and restrictions to an extent that is often missing when the point has come to decide which pathways shall actually be pursued.

This is where we left after our second exchange. Our shared interdisciplinary journey ends with this volume – the plant that has grown out of the seed.

As a companion of the IGS, I learned a lot on this journey. For quite some time now, I have been providing trainings, coaching, and consultancy (for individuals, projects, project groups, organisations) with a view to supporting interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, or transformative research. In these contexts, people are always asking for examples to learn from. I am happy to be able to refer to the IGS when the question arises of what can be achieved in this regard in Research Training Groups.

While Research Training Groups are devoted to an interdisciplinary topic, they are, as a rule, not designed to yield interdisciplinary results. And they do, as a rule, not aim at a collaboration across academic status. Both took place in the IGS, and this is mirrored in this volume. The IGS was successful in connecting the mindset of a worrier, a dreamer, and a bookkeeper. The process that took place is exemplary and a convincing proof of what can be achieved in Research Training Groups.

The book is the result of a long journey of reflections and discussions. It is an inspiring collection of pieces that mirror the openness of the process and cover, accordingly, a broad diversity of topics, ranging from hands-on reflections about the interdisciplinary experiences in the IGS to highly abstract discussions of theories. Some of the contributions have been written by individuals and some by tandems. Some have been written by tandems of young researchers and some by tandems of young and experienced researchers. While some reflect the role of supervisors, others reflect the role of doctoral researchers, and others again the role of those in charge of the IGS as a program. In some contributions, disciplinary perspectives are compared and discussed, in some limits and potentials of interdisciplinarity are explored, in some interdisciplinary experiences are shared, in some integrated knowledge is produced about theories, artifacts, or societal phenomena related to religion and religious practices. Some contributions adopt the format of a classical research paper, others the format of a case study, some the format of a written conversation, others the format of an individual reflection, and still others adopt a storytelling-format. Despite this diversity and beyond all these differences, they all express the willingness of engaging in an interdisciplinary dialogue, in learning about others and oneself, and in learning from each other – and all of them distinguish themselves by their authors' openness to share not only scientific expertise but also feelings and emotions.

The book is not a single plant, it is a garden with high diversity of plants. May it flourish.

Rafael Barroso Romero, Elisabeth Begemann, Enno A. Friedrich, Anna-Katharina Rieger, Jörg Rüpke, Elena Malagoli, Ramón Soneira Martínez, and Markus Vinzent

Practicing Interdisciplinarity

1 Making Use of Productive Tensions

In interdisciplinary projects and research networks, the participants are faced with multiple demands. The requirement for these projects is that they both advance scientific programs and produce publications, thus creating visibility for the participants and their research. In addition, they must bring (international) experts into dialogue with those involved in the project and generate innovative impulses and new ways of thinking and broaden the scope for self-chosen topics.

This amount of challenges and demands meets different expectations and experiences, especially in projects with researchers at the beginning of their careers. In the humanities and social sciences research landscape, looking beyond one's own discipline is not only common practice, but almost necessary in order to achieve meaningful and, above all, relevant results. This applies not only to established advanced researchers, but also to early career researchers. Regarding the latter, however, such expectations are met with a reality that is characterized by time pressure, high demands from one's own discipline and often also increasing administrative tasks. What can meaningful interdisciplinary work look like in such an academic environment? What tasks and constraints, demands and requirements do researchers face? We also need to look at the range of subjects involved: How can interdisciplinary research projects be organized in a meaningful way? How can different disciplines, their methods and theories be brought into dialogue with each other across the spatial and temporal distance of their subject matter throughout the duration and the successive funding phases? And in such a way that the results are effective and visible in all sub-projects? This publication aims to shed light on this by way of example.

In view of an unusual disciplinary tension within the International Research Training Group 'Resonant Self–World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices' (in short: IGS), a research project carried out jointly at the Max Weber Center of the University of Erfurt and the University of Graz, this joint publication aims to reflect on and formulate the experiences and results of the inter-

disciplinary work of a humanities and social sciences research training group with disciplinary breadth as well as historical depth. It is based on a conference dedicated to this topic, aiming not at another conceptual rethinking of interdisciplinarity but at a bottom-up approach, that is, reflecting one's own interdisciplinary and inter-generational practice across the full range of our disciplines, from classical philology to religious studies, from archaeology to literary studies, from ancient to North American history, from sociology to biblical studies, from musicology to philosophy. This long list and – even for graduate schools financed by the German Science Foundation – untypical broad range of academic fields, methods, and subjects, is not meant as a basis for a claim to generalization. The underlying assumption of this volume is that interdisciplinarity is a practice informed by many different factors. Disciplinary organization is not even the dominant one, if we consider the different cores and borderlines between disciplines in an international perspective, also thematized in this volume. Academic and non-academic age are further factors, and this tension and opportunity provides the basic principle of co-authorship. Individual trajectories are as important and need to be reflected in this. Present disciplinary affiliation and overall academic age do also not sufficiently define interdisciplinary practice in a given context of collaboration. Time and again, the authors reflect on this in their analysis of their approach to, and experience of, interdisciplinary work. Not least, the very research question and its methodology form an important framework for all professional interaction. This will again show up in the contributions, but they are consciously not intended to provide new insights or sum up recent finding. Instead, we will summarize the research questions and methodology of the international graduate school in this introduction.

2 Self-World Relations in Antiquity and Modernity – Interdisciplinary Approaches

The members of our research group investigate question of relationships of individuals, groups, and even institutionalized entities to the world they live in by studying the socio-religious practices and efforts of ritualization in antiquity and modernity in an effort to improve interdisciplinary, intercultural and inter-sectoral approaches across disciplines, combining research in classical and biblical antiquity with sociological research and comparative analyses of contemporary late modern societies. The core interest of the participating scholars is in spaces of habitualization and the inter-linkage of emotional experiences and moral maps, and above all to look for historically comparative questions that connect phenomena in

past and modern societies. The period of Mediterranean antiquity, for example, offers a useful point of comparison to modern, Western forms of self–world relations in religious and nonreligious contexts. Moreover, the ancient period offers an exceptional comparative framework as it constitutes, in many ways, a 'near remoteness'. Members of this interdisciplinary project are thus offered the opportunity to identify changes and continuities of longue durée.

In this endeavor, the IGS focuses on the mutual employment of theoretical approaches and models in the disciplines dealing with ancient and past societies. For researchers studying present-day objects, the added value of looking at the classical period lies in the opportunity to comprehend and explain the forms, manifestations and the evolution of modern societies and cultures against the backdrop of long-term socio-cultural (continuing or intermittent) developments. In current sociology, we find a specific reception of antiquity that can aid us in acquiring an improved understanding of the image of modernity and, hence, permit us to better explore the principal issues facing modern society.[1] Compared to disciplines that emphasize, and are largely relevant to, present times, the field of classical studies struggles with a lack of sources. Therefore, models from the social sciences can contribute their own catalogues of questions and hypotheses of explanation, which it would be impossible to generate purely from the available source material. Even though the scope of theory in the social sciences elicits questions concerning the generalizability of ancient findings, their application can encourage to generalize and thus lead to more precise contextualization.

The close collaboration and the exchange of social theoreticians with classicists and theologians – who frequently reference sociological terminology without theoretical depth when formulating questions or presenting findings – lead to more comprehensive, better argued and theoretically sound results. The contributions to this volume are evidence of the processes of discussions and collaborations, of the debates and differences as well as of the limitations of doing research across disciplines.[2] As sociologists, we frequently assume things to be 'modern' innovations without these assumptions necessarily standing the test of historical comparison. The unusual collaboration between sociologists and historians, who employ both empirical and theoretical methods to explore questions regarding present-day society and the most recent past, and scholars in cultural, historical, and religious studies, whose work focuses on the cultures of the Mediterranean

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[1] Moebius 2014.

[2] An example of a problematic employment of social theory in history are epigraphic questions about social status or ethnic origin that use long outdated categories passed on by social history. In cases like this, explicit engagement with the diachronic development of sociological theory and its terminological evolution is required.

classical period, promises to bring about a meaningful broadening of perspective, along with exemplary interdisciplinary training for young academics.[3]

To shed light on the possibilities, contingencies and limitations of potential relationships to the world, a culturally comparative approach, which takes into consideration epochs widely separated in historical time, is tantamount. Due to the wealth of available material, a contrasting comparison of the relationships to the world implied in ancient, polytheistic or monotheistic (biblical) practices with those that characterize the contemporary, (late-)modern period, lends itself especially well to scholarly scrutiny. All research projects (of both the doctoral researchers and the faculty members) represent an effort to employ the interdisciplinary, intercultural, and inter-sectoral approaches in the study of the socio-religious practices of antiquity and modernity across the various disciplines. By focusing on self–world relations, the cross-disciplinary, cross-epoch, and international collaboration offers a unique and excellent environment for research as well as research training.

3 Comparative Analyses as the Basic Tool

Investigating ancient Mediterranean and Western modernity in such an environment is only possible with a strong focus on the comparative analyses which help reveal the blind spots in, and arbitrary boundaries of, the relationships to the world that became dominant in the late modern period and that inform our view of cultures separated by time or space. The work of the IGS aims to accomplish this in the arena of religious practice through a comparison of the classical Mediterranean era and of Western modernity, made possible by structured collaborative, rather than simply juxtaposed and additive, research. A careful and dense arrangement of exchange and teamwork transform the risks inherent in the tensions of two distant groups of disciplines into mutual benefits and disciplinary self-reflexivity. The particular focus on these two epochs springs in part from practical research concerns but is also based on concrete historical reasons. Mediterranean antiquity seems to represent a spatially and temporally ideal setting to track religious, political, and social processes since these very processes underwent substantial changes in late antiquity, but selectively also remained constitutive of post-ancient and even contemporary cultures and identities.[4] Precisely because the

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3 Spickermann 2016.
4 See Detienne 2002; Burger and Calame 2006; Taves 2009; Holdrege 2011; Stausberg 2011; Calame and Lincoln 2012.

culture of the ancient Mediterranean region is so distinct from subsequent eras in history, it can offer an illuminating contrast. Due to its history of reception, it also forces researchers to engage with the entanglement between observing and observed culture.[5] In addition, research on both epochs has continuously been supplemented and deepened through comparisons with the South Asian region.[6] There is hardly any other cultural context for which one can find a comparably dense and differentiated collection of sources and studies that essentially invite researchers to ask complex, comparative questions.

Ultimately, this situation allows us to develop the concepts and questions hitherto confined to, and used in, interpretative and historical sociology, and to integrate them into a research program that is explicitly inspired by classical disciplines and the history of religion. The theories and analyses of self–world relations that have grown out of present-day findings create a new vantage point from which to explore antiquity as a specific period in time, which differs from modernity in its practices but has, simultaneously, been crucial for the production of resonant socio-religious practices constituted as 'religions' (Judaism, Islam and Christianity).[7] The conjuncture that, since the start of the modern era, the term 'antiquity' has begun to become a cultural and historical realm of resonance in itself, is of particular interest in this context: antiquity is loaded temporally, spatially, materially and intellectually and is brought into contemporary thought as a quasi-dialogical relationship to the present itself.

Therefore, the object chosen is central in various respects: Efforts of ritualization represent one of the basic forms of human action and are thus the object of intensive research. Anthropological theories of ritual, results produced by the cognitive sciences and empirical data have been brought to bear on historical contexts. And yet, the proposed attempt to explore questions about the main types of self–world, and particularly, 'resonating' self–world relations is new. Its core interest is in spaces of habitualization and the inter-linkage of emotional experiences and moral maps turns these questions into a historically comparative research program. We claim that in such ritual practices, particular persons, objects and/ or places (and times) are put into focus and are ascribed a specific role for religious communication. Thus, immediately or in the long run these relations become

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5 Within the established research framework for 'Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective,' which was carried out as part of the DFG-funded Research Unit (FOR 1013) this intense relationship, which was set up with particular historical depth, has proven extraordinarily fruitful (see Joas and Rüpke 2013; Rüpke and Spickermann 2012).

6 Winter 2016; see Fuchs 2015; Fuchs and Rüpke 2015.

7 Rüpke 2016.

institutionalized in the form of lasting relations to self, social others (e. g., forms of sociability) and material others and overarching, transcendent horizons.

4 The Four Foci of Comparative Research on Self–World Relations across Disciplines

A set of four foci has grown out of and is intended to further develop the collaboration between the different disciplines and periods that are part of our research project. They are as such not the topic of the collected essays of this volume; however, they outline the frame in which the research takes place.

4.1 Repetition

By using this term, we take a more nuanced look at the temporal sequencing, the repetition *and* modification of rituals and within rituals and the short- and long-term consequences of such renewals and replays, taking into account the insights of performance studies.[8] The perspective of resonance proposes to address questions of individual experience and institutional support of routinization (and availability or increasing dispositions and sensitivity towards resonant relations).[9] This permits a closer look at constellations within, but also between, different rituals and their role in the establishment of dispositions, spheres and axes of self–world relations of different qualities, starting from micro-sociological approaches towards ritual.[10]

In addition to the visual dimension, foregrounded so far, the acoustic dimension of ritual, the experienced soundscape and music in particular gain in importance. Repetitions are characteristics of rituals, the weight of which is increased in social or religious groups. However, those who are able to stage their rituals as dominant can also influence the collective memory – although not quite determine it. 'Marginalized people have no history' was the slogan that fired social historical and liberation-theological researchers to doubt the 'official historiography' as the only collective memory. This is especially true for the life contexts of women, social and religious minorities, lower classes, or LGBTQ* persons, whose memories, expe-

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8 E. g., Fischer-Lichte 2003; Fischer-Lichte 2004; Fischer-Lichte 2005; Butler 1997. See also: Friedrich, Gärtner and Rieger (forthcoming).

9 Cf. Hollstein, Rosa and Rüpke 2023.

10 E. g., Collins 2004, with problematic suppositions.

riences, and ritual manifestations never received the same collective resonance as the androcentric ones of white (intellectual) Europeans.

4.2 Second-Order Resonance

In our research agenda, empirical and conceptual work into the phenomenon of self–world relations characterized not by resonant peak experiences, but by references to, or personal or cultural memory of, such experiences, is given priority. Such second-order resonance can also appear to be generalized through repetitions by setting the frame for potentially resonant experiences. At two conferences in 2018 and 2021, we have mapped phenomena that might offer starting points for further conceptualizations such as narrative strategies in texts and performances recalling or imagining experiences of resonance.[11] Our hypothesis is that texts, images, or performances can trigger expectations and potentialities of resonant experiences. Such sources and phenomena allow us to inquire into the routinization and scaling of resonant experiences. The concept of second-order resonance, too, demands that we pay attention to minorities and actors classified or self-classifying as marginal to develop an understanding of how their appropriation of such media might trigger 'deviant' versions and ritual change. Scales and grades of resonant experiences depend on triggers or sensorial and performative anchor points that rely on audio-visual, narrative, or performative patterns.

4.3 Power, Agency, and Resonance

To bring perspective to ritual, the question of agency, condensed in the problem of access to and denial of power, must be moved center-stage. This holds true for modelling resonant experience on the blueprint of impersonal expressions or the 'medio-passive' modality in some languages, but also for the self-reflective mode of religious rituals' balancing of action and experience, addressing and listening to its transcendent addressees. In rituals and related discourse (as highlighted by the focus on second-order resonance), promises or expectations of resonance may be linked to certain modes of conduct or a certain way of self-government. The yearning for resonant self–world relations thus may be instrumentalized for power techniques and disciplinary regimes. Questions of power, as addressed in our February 2020 conference, highlighted issues such as inclusiveness or exclu-

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11 Friedrich, Gärtner and Rieger (forthcoming).

siveness of rituals that need to be included in this inquiry.[12] Matters of gender again become central. The power to repeat and thus entertain second-order resonance is at least temporarily controlled by power-shaped processes in the regimes of race/ethnicity, class, and gender, thus producing inclusive and exclusive memories. In cultural terms, the attribution of meaning is thus accompanied by the process of gendering or ex- or inclusion, the process that produces the social position, roles and characters of the individual genders, races, classes, but also notions of the transcendent. Such societal norms related to power and gender, class, and race, center on the human body. In many cultures, the socially (and usually religiously) desired norm was and still is a two-gender, hierarchically lived heterosexuality. This has an effect on the relationship to oneself insofar as all other sexual orientations and manifestations of the body are declared deviant which is widely internalized by the individual. This has been shown in view of dress codes[13] and can also be seen in light of concepts of beauty, such as contemporary slimming concepts or Asian westernization of facial features, which bring such norms to the fore.

4.4 Materiality and Material Objects

Many practices that can be fruitfully analyzed as rituals establish relationships with objects – and are constituted by objects and human interaction with objects. Based on several panels in international conferences and relational paradigm shifts in material-based disciplines such as classical archaeology, object relationships/relational approaches to objects are given more space and conceptual treatment across disciplines and projects within the interdisciplinary research group which discusses aspects of their work here, thus binding together disciplines working with literary or material sources and aligning their approaches with the aforementioned foci. The massive presence of objects either as parts or in the center of rituals invites us to look beyond their role in establishing self, social or transcendent relationships as mere 'gifts' or 'markers of sacralization'. Our observations point to the establishment of lasting, re-enactable and important relationships to specific objects or material qualities beyond ritual contexts, from musical instruments and their sounds to luxury goods and material wealth ('Pluton') or cars.[14]

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12 Cf. https://www.uni-erfurt.de/fileadmin/fakultaet/max-weber-kolleg/Forschung/Forschungsgruppen/IGS_resonant_self-world_relations/Conferences/Program_2020-02-17_komplett.pdf.
13 Butler 2006.
14 Cf. https://www.uni-erfurt.de/max-weber-kolleg/personen/vollmitglieder/doktorandinnen/manuel-moser; Müller (forthcoming); Galindo, Gonzalez and Moser 2023.

5 Lived Interdisciplinarity

It is this potential of the interdisciplinary approach to relate details of historical and empirical studies of rituals to their dynamics and repercussions in their wider historical and social contexts which allows for more ambitious (in disciplinary terms) dissertations and more sophisticated mutual fertilization (in terms of interdisciplinarity).

This volume and its contributions represent the result of face-to-face exchanges during workshops in February and July 2022, group discussions at various occasions and video conference conversations as well as general single-authored reflections on interdisciplinary environments for an individual researcher. All texts, essays and papers aim at bringing to the fore the advantages and difficulties, the weaknesses and strengths, the limitations but also open-ended explorations in an interdisciplinary research group.

In author pairs of experienced and young academics and of junior researchers, individual experiences and identifiable manifestations of interdisciplinary work in the respective manuscripts or research projects were as much discussed as discipline-specific yields and problems or, on a third level, collective experiences with joint interdisciplinary research. The contributions in this volume take on very different forms: reflections and dialogues, experience reports and perspectives and formulations of expectations. The authors are interested in both the theoretical framework and the practical realization of interdisciplinary research.

The many-sided individual and joint contributions reflect the multifaceted research projects, overarching interests as well as disciplinary approaches. They address the problematic issues pertaining to interdisciplinary collaborations. Whatever the level of problems, solutions, and new insights are – the work of the IGS (and the outcome in this volume) shows that such an endeavor is more than only the sum of its parts. The added value is represented in the rapprochements of different types and traditions of scholarships, the search and formulation of the overlaps and differences, the acknowledging of failed trials and fruitful failures.

Our publication thus discusses in various combinations and formats the advantages and pitfalls of interdisciplinarity as a practice from various angles and multiple approaches. The first part is dedicated to 'Reflections' – what do we mean and what are the advantages of interdisciplinarity? When do we encounter it, how do we encounter it, do we need it and when and how do we need it? What can and what should we expect from interdisciplinary research and what does that involve on the researcher's part? The contributions by Tziminadis, Sojer & Weidner, Malagoli & Rüpke, Barroso & Fischer as well as Bégin & Zeller are dedicated

to these questions, outlining expectations and experiences in present-day academia, which, it seems, cannot live without interdisciplinarity, while at the same time insisting on disciplinary boundaries, methods, and questions. Disappointments are part of this process.

A second part approaches the topic from specific 'Case Studies': interdisciplinarity as applied in performative textual approaches (Heil & Wurzinger), relating to objects (Kolomaznik), as a way to expand knowledge of specific practices (Heidl & Kamenou), and in discussing the history, meaning, and thrust of certain terms across the boundaries of various disciplines (Alhachem & Winter).

The final part is dedicated to 'Applications' of interdisciplinarity: how can we reflect on interdisciplinarity while also reflecting on content, where does it lead us if we consider matters from different angles and times, how does this expand not only what we know, but how we do research, how we approach our objectives, how we interact with other disciplines to achieve our goals? The contributions by Döller & Vinzent (philosophy), Kumpitsch & Malli (ancient history and sociology), as well as Soneira Martínez & Rosa (religious studies and sociology) participate in this debate, to which is added another paper on application very concretely by the coordinators of the interdisciplinary research program who reflects on the multiple task and challenges that come along with implementing a research program such as this.

In our process we have been very fortunate to have been accompanied by an expert in the field who not only provided invaluable theoretical input, but was our guest at the retreat in Eisenach where she observed and challenged how we do interdisciplinarity, where we are successful and where not. Thus Antonietta Di Giulio opened our volume with an outline of what interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinary should do and how they are to be approached if they are to be more than mere window dressing and a label stuck to funding applications. Our cordial thanks go out to her for accompanying our reflection process with all her expertise, trying to better the work that we are doing across disciplines, cultures, times, and generations. We hope that this volume may present to you an approach (our approach) to interdisciplinarity in practice by way of example, while we are always ready to admit that we are not done yet and that our way of interdisciplinarity must be restricted to the humanities and cultural studies and does not (yet?) extend into further fields.

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Part I **Reflections**

João Tziminadis

A Note on Lived Interdisciplinarity

A world that grows more complex by the day poses a challenge to the disciplinary boundaries and the organizational and scientific specializations in which modern academia has come to thrive. The desirability of interdisciplinary[1] cooperation – and especially interdisciplinary knowledge production – is frequently expressed by scholars of various areas, and universities pride themselves in their interdisciplinary programs. Nevertheless, despite cheerful support for interdisciplinarity, the pressure for specialization still persists, if not intensifies, as new branches of scholarship emerge every day, coagulating around them a plethora of particularizing practices, publications, modes of thinking, and institutions. Even within disciplines themselves specialization leads to growing abysses between particular fields. More concretely, the level of scientific excellence of a particular branch of scholarship is frequently measured by its capacity to delineate clear methodological and thematic boundaries. Established academics can blissfully bear this tension between lauding interdisciplinarity and highly specializing practices as an inconsequential cognitive dissonance. Most of the time, interdisciplinarity is practiced in the form of 'networking' or 'exchange' with colleagues from other disciplines, which might happen in conferences or joint projects. However, after selective collaborations on specific themes and questions, both scholars and their disciplines tend to return to their own businesses, their disciplinary identity mostly intact. Such problems are even more pressing at the level of graduate school training groups. Despite the exaltation of interdisciplinarity in discourse, young scholars pursuing a Ph.D. and beginning a career in academia feel particularly pressured to demonstrate proficiency in their own disciplines and sometimes even prove their allegiance to particular traditions, groups, or styles. However, the cognitive dissonance between lauding interdisciplinarity and demanding specialized practice can be more consequential here, as a graduate student who takes too seriously the grand talk of interdisciplinarity might end up risking his or her future academic employability.

As such, I believe that the International Graduate School (IGS) 'Resonant Self-World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices' constitutes a

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1 I use the terms interdisciplinary and interdisciplinarity throughout the text but, in doing so, I also have in mind other models of 'postdisciplinary' approaches to research. My argument draws on incongruencies between the expressed desirability of such alternative models and the recalcitrant disciplinarity of academic practices. I thank Professor Stefan Selke (Hochschule Furtwangen) for drawing my attention to the notion of postdisciplinarity.

rare context in which interdisciplinary research is both meaningfully and structurally integrated into its training program. I want to give an account of my participation in the program as a Ph.D. candidate with attention to the tensions and problems that have emerged from the practice of interdisciplinary research. More generally, however, I also want to comment on interdisciplinarity – or, better, on the disciplinary porousness – in my own trajectory as a student and young academic, and how it influenced my experience in the IGS context.

My doctoral dissertation looked at the phenomenon of prolongevity (the desirability and attempt to prolong human life beyond 'human limits') in contemporary biotechnological research. I have looked at the formation of alliances between scientists, venture capitalists, and transhumanists with the aim of extending human life through intervention in biological aging. In short, as a social scientist, I have dealt in my dissertation with the 'modernization' of human biology. Formulating it very broadly, the engagement with this topic stems from, on the one hand, my interest in modernity as a culturally and materially dynamizing social formation and, on the other, in the discursive and phenomenological place of 'the human' in the context of technological innovation. It entails the expanding of disciplinary boundaries at, at least, two different levels. Firstly, in working on a biotechnological issue, I was also influenced by the knowledge produced in areas that are far removed from the typical fields a social scientist is used to. I incorporated in my own theorizing contents from biological research on aging, such as the observation that the evolutionary favoring of reproduction over regeneration constitutes a biological building block of embodied vulnerability. Secondly, my own position as an observer, as a social scientist, was not sustained solely by sociological concepts, but rather vastly influenced by other disciplines, such as philosophy of technology, anthropology, bioethics, etc. It is worth mentioning the type of project I have carried out because, from its inner characteristics, it constitutes an intellectual activity to which the openly interdisciplinary framework of the IGS did not pose a challenge per se. In fact, challenges were more prominent along the lines, which characterizes the 'modernity'/'antiquity' divide in the group's concept.

For the most part, the difficulties emerging from this division have to do with differences on an experiential level. The experiential dimension regards the vast differences in terms of objects under analysis, and the historically contextualized socio-religious practices which constitute the content of the individual projects. For sure, it can also be a problem among social scientists, given that objects located in the same 'modern' world widely vary. Nonetheless, the existence of relatively regular patterns of practice, socialization, institutionalization, and political-ethical horizons in globalized societies provide a common ground for comparison, associations, differentiations, etc. Even those researchers who focus on 'deviances' from the norm or very specific milieus in modern times might find common ground

to discuss their projects with colleagues working on the same period. I believe that the same goes for academics working on antiquity, even though, in their case, mediation between projects in different areas seems to be limited by the availability of mediating sources – but I might be wrong. The question concerning the validity of comparisons and approximations between 'modern' and 'ancient' practices might be considered essential for the good functioning of the group – not only as a concept but also in terms of cooperation practices. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, my experience was that tangible benefits can be extracted from these approximations. As a sociologist, especially as a sociologist interested in macro-sociological concepts such as 'modernity' or 'modernization', one tends to think in terms of ruptures between modern and traditional practices. However, the contact with projects looking at ancient phenomena has shown me that aspects of social life thought to be exclusively modern can also be identified in antiquity, despite fundamental differences. I came to understand through exchange with colleagues, for example, that processes of religious individualization also took place in antiquity. For me, the added value of this form of approximation does not lie in the discovery of 'constants' in social practices that survive the swirls of history, but rather in the fact that it helps nuancing theorizations that overstate modern exceptionality. At the same time, however, common points found in this exercise tend to be somewhat abstract. That could be said, for example, about the relation of my project to Konrad Pfeffel's project. In a way, both projects engage with an experience of fear and the manipulation of this fear: in his case, the Romans' fear of the wild and barbarian north could be interpreted as a means for political steering of public opinion; in my case, the fear of bodily decay and ultimately death could be interpreted as a means for the commercialization of anti-aging products and the dream of eternal youth. More: one could say that both expressions of fear did and do not emerge spontaneously, but are rather products of political and commercial manipulation, either to engage Romans in their support of (continuous) warfare or graying baby boomers in certain patterns of consumption. Nevertheless, trying to go beyond the abstract constatation that manipulation of fear could be effective both in Roman politics and the commercialization of health in an aging society might easily lead to unwarranted inferences.

While at the experiential level approximation between 'modern' and 'ancient' practices poses the mentioned difficulties, the work around a shared set of theoretical concepts has, in my experience, proven to be much more fluid. I believe that this greater communicability in terms of a conceptual framework is due to the circumstance that both the social sciences and the humanities tend to be porous to heuristic categories that emerge from neighboring disciplines. Analytical categories such as agency and structure, practice and ritual, power and identity, etc. tend to cover aspects of social life, religious behavior, and relations with sym-

bolic and material surroundings across a myriad of discipline-specific issues. This premise is implicit in the group's concept. The notion of 'self–world relations' works as a fundamental mediator for the different projects being developed in the group and, even if not used explicitly in some of them, it embodies a broader tendency in the social sciences and humanities that speaks to fields as diverse as sociology and archaeology. I refer to a growing theoretical focus on 'relational', 'embodied', 'lived' etc. dimensions of social practices, a trend that redirects research from the semiotic and language-centered approaches that predominated in the humanities and the social sciences at the end of the last century. A renewed interest in materiality, embodiment, experience – and attenuated interest in institutions, discourses, symbolic structures, etc. – marks a shared conceptual background in front of which exchange between 'modern' and 'ancient' projects has frequently taken place, both in the context of the regular colloquia as well as in seminars and conferences. It seems that this circumstance indicates that, at least in the humanities and social sciences, broader changes and trends in the 'philosophical' dispositions of a given period work as a very productive conduit of interdisciplinary cooperation.

During the period in which I worked with some colleagues from antiquity, I have heard from them, on some occasions, that the usage of categories from 'modern' disciplines such as sociology was perceived as unnecessary or even counterproductive to their work. I have witnessed some complain that ancient historians today are expected to 'sprinkle' sociology on top of their work to be taken as original. I do not know how true that is and whether that is a common complaint among ancient historians, but I gather that these colleagues' position might be representative to some extent and that, what for me seems to be a good feature of current academic exchange is for ancient historians a problem. Maybe the above-mentioned shared usage of analytical categories benefits more the 'modern' than the 'antiquity' researchers. While I concede that it might be the case, I believe that the complaint about 'modern' theory being used for the study of classics is unwarranted in the sense that ancient history made in the twenty-first century is likely to look like ancient history made in the twenty-first century. I wonder if there is in current historiographical scholarship usage of any theoretical framework that is not modern. Is it not the case that, regardless of how old their subject might be, historians raise questions that are influenced by the interests, debates, and general 'spirit' of the epoch in which they live and practice their scholarship?

It is worth noting that I write from the perspective of a sociologist who continuously, but not necessarily intentionally, has been failing to cultivate a solid disciplinary *habitus.* It has nothing to do with heroic refusal of specialization, but rather with national and institutional idiosyncrasies. It seems to be only in Brazil that a formally structured bachelor's degree in social sciences exists. In the coun-

try, one can study to become a 'social scientist', which, as a standard, means some-one with high education training in sociology, social anthropology, and political sci-ences. This bachelor's degree takes between four to five years to be completed and normally includes a fair amount of study of neighboring disciplines, such as histo-ry, economics, geography, statistics, and philosophy. As a student, I remember being equally exposed to themes as diverse as the risk society, the crisis of repre-sentative democracy, and Amazonian indigenous cosmologies. Specialization is supposed to happen later, in graduate school. Centers of excellence in the country, however, which are more attuned to international standards, tend to conform to more disciplinary and specialized practices. I assume that it speaks to what I have commented on in my opening remarks, i.e., that excellence in research is often correlated with specialization. But besides such particularities of the bache-lor's degree in social sciences, I have, as a student, been inclined to learn the topics I enjoyed through contacts with disciplines that are not typically in the syllabus of a sociology course. I have attended classes on political culture in early twentieth-century Brazilian literary circles, on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and modern epistemology, as well as a seminar on the geography of railway systems in the local urban landscape. I have cultivated an interest in the above-mentioned 'mod-ernity as a culturally and materially dynamizing social formation' as much from these experiences as from classical sociology.

My recounting of this particular trajectory does not intend to endorse a roman-tic critique of specialization, but rather to indicate how both my research interests and my cultivated academic 'taste' tendentially predispose me to enjoy interdiscipli-nary environments. While I do not regret having taken these 'undisciplined' paths and chosen to work on topics that are not easily placed in a particular field of schol-arship, in hindsight I wonder whether I have enjoyed it too much for my own sake. Of course, I am convinced that, despite the apparent un-disciplinarity of my trajec-tory, I have cultivated consistencies in my education and training in terms of themes, forms of inquiry, and also in my affiliation to certain philosophical and social-theo-retical traditions. And this way of doing scholarship, I believe, has benefited me in feeling at home among colleagues from other disciplines and identifying themes and questions that cut across disciplinary boundaries. As an extension, it has also suited me to operate within the context of the IGS and establish meaningful exchanges with colleagues therein. However, despite my conviction that the model proposed by the group responds to the very real need for the consistent and systemic practice of interdisciplinary research, and despite my own inclinations towards this type of scholarship, I am afraid that the full potential of groups like the IGS could never be brought into fruition while the larger academic environment remains unfriendly to interdisciplinary profiles. In my experience, the fear of ruining one's academic em-ployability if not abiding by the expected course of specialization prevents Ph.D. stu-

dents from systematically incorporating other disciplines into their own work and from being open to a bit more experimentality in their research. What is worse, many students deliberately (and in fact wisely) neglect any serious interdisciplinary effort because they know that such an effort will have no weight in their future employability – it might actually hold them back. It is such a general situation, I believe, that encourages the proverbial sprinkling of sociology on top of the history book.

Thomas Sojer & Verena Weidner

Aesthetic Experiences as an Occasion of Reflections on Possible Exchanges between Theology and Music Education

Sharing daily stories and situations from our lived scholarship and research experience we, Verena Weidner and Thomas Sojer, have learned that our two fields of knowledge, theology and music education as we conduct them, seem to circle around aesthetic experiences. The scholarly comprehension of the latter is constitutive for both academic disciplines which raised questions of to what extent a fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue between our disciplines can be initiated on the basis of this common interest in aesthetic experience.

While Thomas has been a member of the Graduate School as a doctoral researcher since late 2018 in theology, Verena's participation as part of the Faculty has only come about in the re-focussing of the project in its second phase. Both of our exchanges are therefore still fresh and preliminary. Nonetheless, we want to share our first experiences and insights on the following pages.

Our considerations are consequently less to be understood in the sense of a general and extensive literature-based determination of a relationship in which theological and music educational approaches would generally be related to each other.[1] Instead, they are to be understood as a kind of case study and sample which both against the backdrop of a joint interest in aesthetic experiences and on the basis of the concrete academic practices of Verena and Thomas try to sound out possible chances and limits of an interdisciplinary exchange between these two disciplines.

We will start with an outline of some challenges we see regarding such an interdisciplinary approach between theology and music education (1). Then we will give a brief insight into the discussion of our respective 'home subjects'; how aesthetic experiences are discussed in theology (2) as well as how they are discussed in music education (3). Furthermore, we will introduce the idea to conduct interdisciplinary exchanges between theology and music education as form of a *transition* (4). Finally, we want to formulate a little 'guideline' beyond our two disciplines with questions that can lead our and other/future interdisciplinary engagements in performing such a *transition* (5).

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1 E. g., Kallio et al. 2019.

1 Outline of Some Challenges

At first glance, based on some discourses on aesthetic experience in theology and music education, there are several promising points of contact between the two disciplines. The two areas of knowledge seem to have in common not only the conceptual background of aesthetic experience, but also a shared set of questions and tensions connected with the topic.

First, the recourse to aesthetic experience in both subjects is accompanied by an epistemological stance that distances itself both from purely rationalistic or analytical approaches and from exclusively emotional or holistic conceptions. Both theology, as represented by Thomas, and musical-aesthetic 'Bildung', which is significant as a target horizon for Verena, are characterized by an epistemologically complex and multi-dimensional structure in which perception-oriented as well as reflexive-communicative parts are relevant.

Secondly, a desire leads both subjects to contribute to the initiation of the targeted experiential qualities. Although theology and music education identify themselves as academic disciplines, both subjects have not only descriptive or knowledge-generating components, but also a 'practical' orientation that is to be understood in a political-ethical sense.[2]

Regardless of these apparent interfaces between theology and music education, however, based on internal discourses within each discipline, certain aspects remain unresolved, the clarification of which would be crucial for a fruitful interdisciplinary exchange among the two. This is especially true from Verena's point of view, who has already dealt with interdisciplinary relations and the associated 'pitfalls' elsewhere.[3]

For example, Verena questions the extent to which what at first glance appears to be a shared interest would stand up to a longer-term exchange. The reason for this question is her insight gained in the music context that 'music' connects the subjects of musicology, music theory, and music education mainly in name, but that in exchanges between the subjects it leads not only to misunderstandings, but also to interpretive conflicts and power struggles.[4]

Instead of being a common anchor point, the seemingly 'common interest' thus brings to light profound differences between the subjects which make a fruitful cooperation more difficult. Although possible tensions between theology and music education would presumably be explicated differently due to their looser

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2 See, e.g., Kaiser and Nolte 1989: 23.

3 Weidner 2012; Weidner 2015.

4 Weidner 2015: 63–70.

connection within the field of higher education,[5] the question of how far the seem-ingly common interest in aesthetic experiences carries must remain open at this stage of dialogue.

Furthermore, from Verena's point of view, the question arises to what extent one can speak of 'interdisciplinarity' at all in the case of theology and music edu-cation. Music education, at least, has been striving for a long time for its own dis-ciplinarity, but it still borrows its research methodologies and concepts largely from other disciplines like psychology or sociology. In addition, music education sees itself as an 'interdisciplinary subject' due to its different disciplinary manifes-tations within the subject.[6]

Theology, on the other hand, sees itself as an ever-ancient amalgam of numer-ous individual disciplines that date back to the rise of the university system in the 11th century. Additionally, it appropriates new subjects as it goes along. In the case of theology faculties, the curriculum sometimes includes more than 20 individual and distinct institutes, chairs, and disciplines: Most commonly these are philoso-phy with various subcategories, but especially philosophy of science (to debate the scientific profile and legitimacy of theology), biblical studies and ancient lan-guages, church history, canon law, pastoral theology, pastoral psychology, religious studies and sociology of religion, liturgy, religious art history, ritual studies, moral theology, bio ethics, Christian social teaching, dogmatics, fundamental theology, and spirituality. At the same time, theology cannot be seen as interdisciplinary *par excellence*, because the individual disciplines have all developed very strong individual research cultures and identities in correspondance with their 'profane' counterparts (pastoral psychology with psychology for example). In addition, they maintain a strict demarcation between themselves in terms of an implemented employment policy. Many subjects equals many jobs. The common ground in the-ology is the curriculum of the various students' curricula, which, on the one hand, oblige all individual disciplines to coordinate teaching and research in correlation with one another. On the other hand, it is expected that all university teachers in theology have basic qualifications in all other disciplines of theology by having gained at least a basic degree in a Divinity School.

Thus, for the question of interdisciplinary exchange, the disciplinary self-per-ception of music education and theology, effective in the everyday practices of Ver-ena and Thomas, are insofar significant as 'interdisciplinarity' presupposes first of

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5 Music education and music theory are both involved in the music teacher training, which often leads to conflicts of interest and competence. This is especially true for music colleges and conser-vatories, where both subjects are represented with their own professorships.

6 Schläbitz 2009; see also Heckhausen 1987; Balsiger 2005: 146.

all two or more different 'multi-disciplinarities' between which scholarship can take place.[7] Seen in this light, the interest of theology and music education in one another would initially be due to the fact that both subjects borrow their basic concepts and the epistemological and methodological approaches associated with them, at least in part, from other disciplines – in the case of aesthetic experiences, from philosophy. Instead of theological-music educational interdisciplinarity, one would then have to deal with a conceptual situation that is different in terms of subject matter, but systematically located first in a shared epistemology of aesthetic experience.

2 Aesthetic Experience in Theology

Theological research is increasingly shifting its starting positions. Traditionally, theology takes place within a state-recognized religious community. An essential characteristic of religious communities is a set of beliefs which it's members identify with. The prevalent basic structure is already visible in the given description: Individuals are associated with a religious community, which in turn can be recognized by a definable and clearly formulated set of beliefs. To give an example: a woman is Catholic, so she is considered part of the Catholic church. The Catholic church is understood to be a set of beliefs, e.g., formalized propositions about the pope, the sacraments, moral principles, and the veneration of saints. In this traditional perspective, theological research saw its conventional task as critically examining the formalized propositions. Which doctrinal statements about the pope apply to which historical conditions and what significance do they have today, etc.? The primary medium of theological enquiry has remained religious and ecclesiastical text material and the statements of faith it contains. Before the shift of perspective, these systems of texts form the framework and hermeneutical foundations of theological reflection. Now, due to the increasing loss of importance of the major churches and the decline of denominational religiosity in Central Europe, theology is confronted with an ever greater discrepancy between what the traditional systems of texts offer and the actual language and actions of religious people today. Against this backdrop, aesthetic experiences are and will continue to be of enormous importance for theological reflection because they allow a new starting position. By viewing religious identity not as purely cognitive propositions but as something that can be experienced aesthetically, the contents of faith are no longer assumed to be static or take the form of an artificial unit of

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7 Philipp 2021: 163.

measurement that bypasses religious realities. Analyzing religious content as an aesthetic experience opens up the investigation of the existing diversity and complexity of religious belief and religious educational processes, which often have been overlooked in the classical orientation towards clear-cut doctrinal dogmas of faith. This is accompanied by a shift away from the theological axiom that divine revelation and theological knowledge is institutionally secured towards the exploration that divine revelation occurs in individual everyday life and in the unseen and particular, not in large dogmatic declarations. In this sense, perception and the reflection of one's own perception of religious content has become an important part of theology. This raises questions such as: What does a child experience in the first encounter with a certain content of faith, often conveyed and accompanied by images, music, rituals or personal family constellations? How does this perception change over the years, how does it develop, what stimulates it, what reduces it? In a way, Mc Luhan's slogan, *the medium is the message*, can be seen as pointing the way for this shift in theological research away from examining formalized statements of faith towards individual aesthetic experiences and performative aspects of living religion. At this point, Thomas sees great potential to learn methodologically and epistemologically from music education, because of its focus on aesthetic experience.

3 Aesthetic Experience in Music Education

German-language music education, in which Verena grew up academically, has since the 1990s referred in particular to Martin Seel's approach in its recourse to aesthetic experience.[8] Among other things, his distinction between three different modes of aesthetic experience is significant: First, *contemplation* as an immersion in the play of appearances; secondly, the *corresponding* attitude, in which the aesthetically perceived is questioned as to the degree in which it fits (one's own) everyday life and lifestyle; and thirdly, the so-called *imagination*, in which interpretations are also made in addition to aesthetic perception.

This approach also emphasizes the unavailability of aesthetic experiences. Since the sensual being of an object is to be distinguished from its aesthetic appearance and the latter also depends on the individual perception of the experiencing subject, aesthetic experiences are accessible for reflection and communication, but they cannot be completely penetrated or determined rationally.

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8 Seel 1996.

This has consequences for educational approaches. Although especially the imaginative mode of perception has obvious educational relevance – it implies questioning one's own views of oneself and the world and making new interpretations – the idea of identifying aesthetic experiences as the goal of educational activities proves to be dilemmatic. Since aesthetic experiences are ultimately unavailable, they can neither be 'ordered' in educational contexts nor can their attainment be clearly planned or evaluated.[9]

Music educational answers to this dilemma therefore emphasize, on the one hand, that these modes of experience cannot actually be planned, but that educational staging can be imagined that makes their attainment possible or probable.[10] On the other hand, they emphasize the discursive dimension that is inseparably linked to aesthetic educational processes: Although aesthetic experiences are beyond what can be part of educational assessment, one can evaluate the learners' competence to describe their perceptions in an intersubjectively comprehensible way, e.g., in the context of aesthetic debates, and to justify their aesthetic judgment argumentatively.[11]

4 Aesthetic Experience as a Link between Theology and Music Education?

If we take up again at this point the question formulated at the beginning about a fruitful theological-music educational exchange within the IGS between theology and music education, this question can be put forward in a more precise fashion: In spite of the challenges outlined above, how can the discourses on the concept of aesthetic experience, which are specific to the respective disciplines/subjects of theology and music education, be used as a starting point for rewarding forms of interdisciplinary scientific practice?[12]

To answer this question, we propose to consider interdisciplinarity as an *intermediate stage*, in which the joint concept formation becomes comprehensible as a *transition* towards (new) disciplinarity.[13] In our case, such an approach can become relevant in two respects:

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9 Mollenhauer 1990.

10 Rolle 1999.

11 Rolle 2013, Weidner (forthcoming).

12 'Disziplinübergreifende Wissenschaftspraxis', Balsiger 2005.

13 Philipp 2021: 163.

(a) *'in between/transition' in the context of the two disciplines/subjects* and their subject-specific dimensions: regardless of how one thinks abstractly about music education and theology as subjects/disciplines or the disciplinary location of the concept of aesthetic experience, when starting from this concept as it is applied in music education and theology as described above, relevant points of contact arise in terms of common heuristics. This is especially true for concrete research contexts, which can be framed both in music education and theology: e. g., worship bands, Christian R&B or CEDM (= Christian electronic dance music).

While music education will focus on aspects like, where/when is grooving [= contemplative mode], how do participants identify with it [= corresponding mode], how is meaning assigned [= imaginative mode]; what discourses arise around the music practices of such an aesthetic experience, performance etc., theology will focus on aspects of which religious content and imaginations are performed and aestheticized and analyzes the relationship between form and content.

(b) *'in between/transition' as temporal aspect:* We try to think of interdisciplinarity less in terms of content and common themes and methods than as a temporal phase that has an experimental character and that is limited in time. Our aim is not to obtain results that are valid in both disciplines, but to see interdisciplinarity as an important and necessary development phase that opens up research and makes boundaries permeable for new insights. For us, validity and assured results belong to a later stage, which is founded and developed within one's own discipline. In our perception, a temporal understanding of interdisciplinarity as a time-limited experiment and trial and error relieves the burden of complicated dead ends that strongly content-orientated interdisciplinarity entails.

Interdisciplinarity should not be seen as automatically methodologically 'better' or epistemically 'richer'. It can become a possible stage (!) with temporal limits in a research process when the demarcations of one discipline are encountered. At the same time, the separations and boundaries during the transitions between different disciplines must be constantly considered, further developed, and refined. In light of the two *in between/transition*-factors, we conclude with four guidelines that have crystallized in the course of our collaboration and provide brief, indicative answers as a concluding summary of our contribution.

5 In Lieu of a Conclusion: Short Guideline Questions

1. What is the point of departure in each discipline (inner tensions, questions, gaps, loops)?

It began with a shared interest in aesthetic experiences. However, the first trap-door was already lurking here, as the supposedly neutral field of simple perception for theology and music education already had different frameworks. Even the supposedly clear situation of 'someone perceives something' is itself perceived differently by theology and music education. Aesthetic experience as a basic human experience is not attainable in its basal pure form, but is always already within the framework of interest of theological and music education enquiry.

2. What are the dynamics of engagement (bottom-up/top-down, centre-periphery, …)?

In order to enter into a meaningful exchange, it helped Verena and Thomas to clarify in their respective concrete research projects whether they were looking bottom-up/top-down, centre-focused or peripheral and whether they even changed these pre-adjustments in the course of applying the methods.

3. What is the context of the exchange (teaching, research, forced, personal interest, …)?

Based on the approach of considering interdisciplinarity as temporal experimentation, Verena and Thomas quickly came to the realisation that the contexts in which the exchange takes place have a particularly strong influence, because it is precisely not universally valid results that are sought, but rather exploratory discoveries of the unseen, and this is where context sensitivity is particularly important.

4. Question of motivation/personal involvement?

The idea of a time-limited experiment also raises the question of available time and personal resources, which must be taken into account and is often assumed without reflection in research design.

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Elena Malagoli & Jörg Rüpke

Storia delle Religioni/Religionswissenschaft: Italian and German Experiences of Interdisciplinary Research from the Perspective of a Small Subject

Young researchers do not enter a Graduate School as if they were a *tabula rasa* nor do senior researchers enter such an enterprise of collective and multi-disciplinary research fresh after some kind of conversion event towards interdisciplinarity. In this contribution, therefore, we start from two biographical narratives before we intergenerationally attempt to compare our experiences and suggest some more general conclusions on what interdisciplinarity should be and should achieve in the specific case of the International Graduate School "Resonant Self–World Relationships in Ancient and Modern Socio-religious Practices". Not the least part of this contribution consists in making explicit the manifold factors of inter-nationality, inter-generationality, institutionality, and the differences between the structures of disciplines and their positions in academia in working together in an inter-disciplinary setting.

1 From Rome to the IGS

During my master's degree years, I, Elena Malagoli, studied at 'La Sapienza' University in Rome. The department was very famous, intimidatory to some extent, and very old. My curriculum was *Scienze Storico-Religiose*, or Historical-Religious Sciences, which derived directly from the courses that Angelo Brelich taught in Rome in the 1960s. The legacy that his classes left is still very much present today: The book that he wrote for his students in 1966 was still in use as the basic History of Religions manual[1] when I was a student in 2015.

As for many other schools that deal with religion, the so-called School of Rome opens its inquiry with the question 'What is Religion?'. The same question was also an opener for most of the important Italian scholars who pioneered the discipline in Italy during the last century: Raffaele Pettazzoni, Ernesto De Martino, Ugo Bianchi, and Dario Sabbatucci, to mention only a few. Despite the different approaches of all these scholars, a thread of continuity is always there, and the School of Rome

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[1] Brelich 1966.

built itself with a highly historical and historiographical perspective. Thus, the answer to the question 'what is religion?' is: Religion is a human product, but a special one, which has its own language and functions. This means that it can be easily isolated and studied as a phenomenon embedded in history.[2] That is what I was taught as well. Lengthy discussions ensued in the classrooms. Nonetheless, all the discussions circled back to this idea of religion as a historical phenomenon, and history as the method to study it. Additionally, this rather descriptive methodology allowed for a curriculum of historical-religious sciences that could dive deep into history: from ancient Greece to ancient China.

Italian history of religion differs from theology. The distinction was made during Angelo Brelich's years of teaching and was still made in my student years. For example, the long hallway where *Scienze Storico-Religiose* was located was shared: On the left were the offices of the historians of religions, while on the right were the offices of the theologians and the biblical studies scholars. It was a minor divide, but it was felt very acutely among the students. The interdisciplinary dialogue was proportional to the inner discussion going on among historians of religions. That was my first experience of a (non)interdisciplinary environment: a divided hallway where people talked but did not really communicate with each other.

Of course, I am not trying to say that this was valid for everyone: There were exceptions, and it was overall a stimulating environment. Still, in an academic world that demands more expertise, but also more knowledge from different sources, interdisciplinarity becomes unavoidable.

For the Roman school of history of religion, interdisciplinarity always went along with specific disciplines, such as anthropology. This is clear if we think about Ernesto De Martino, a scholar who was at the crossroads between ethnographical work and religious studies.[3] Thanks to Raffaele Pettazzoni, the comparative method also became part of history of religion. This is strictly connected to phenomenology, which is a discipline in extended dialogue with history of religions. Pettazzoni was a historicist, so he understood religious phenomena as something that needed to take into account the role played by human activity during its creation and development. The difference with phenomenology is that it considers the origin of these phenomena as an *a priori* reality: i. e., a process of 'apparition' or 'revelation' of the sacred. This approach, for Pettazzoni, neglected the human input, but he still appreciated its positive contribution. Mostly, he agreed with the autonomy of religion, and also on the use of comparison, a method that was fiercely opposed by historicism. The tension between phenomenology and histori-

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2 Massenzio 2005.

3 De Martino 1948 and De Martino 1958.

cism ultimately brought the comparative method to the science of religions as a tool with historical features. Against phenomenology, and against Mircea Eliade, Pettazzoni concluded that, in the end, it is always humans who create their ideal world, it is never the extra-human that creates the human world.[4] This is crucial, because Pettazzoni's stance against the idea of a world free of extra-human influence directly relates to his idea of the sacred. Against Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, he repositioned this notion in the human realm, and he conceived it as a product of dialectic thought.[5]

The mention of Otto and Eliade provides the opportunity to underline how active the school was, not just nationally, but internationally. This is what I found lacking during my student years: It is true that I have been introduced to the theories and methodologies of Bruce Lincoln, or Kocku von Stuckrad, but this was not the norm. Around 2014, the School of Rome dominated the curriculum of historical-religious sciences, and dialogue with different schools of religious studies, or other disciplines altogether, was limited. This is not necessarily a flaw per se, but the demand for interdisciplinarity is today higher than ever. The quality of research today depends on the ability to successfully communicate with different fields.

When I was writing my MA thesis, I chose a topic that encompassed all the methodologies that I was taught in Rome. I embarked on a comparative analysis of four gods, whose names appear on a 14th-century BCE treaty recovered in Turkey. The names allowed the comparison between the ancient Near-Eastern religious system and the Vedic one, and it was also deeply embedded in historical inquiry. I had attended both ancient Near Eastern religions classes and ancient Indian religion classes, so I felt confident. My main supervisor was a historian of religions specialized in ancient India, but we realized very soon that there was the need for an additional specialist. This was the very first interdisciplinary experience I had. The co-supervisor was a historian of the ancient Near East who widely researched and studied religions in that area.

The degree of interdisciplinarity was mild, but crucial: They were both acquainted with religious studies, but they were experts on different topics. This overlapping of expertise allowed for a smooth process of researching and writing of my thesis. Yet, as I mentioned, it was a mild form of interdisciplinarity.

The second real interdisciplinary experience of my career happened during my Ph.D., where the need that I felt for dialogue and communication with different disciplines was somewhat fulfilled. The environment was intended to be interna-

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4 See Massenzio 2005: 213 – 214, quoting Pettazzoni 1960.

5 Massenzio 2005: 211 – 212.

tional and interdisciplinary from the very beginning: the website in 2022 stated, "the aim of the joint project [...] is to provide an institutional base for studies comparing the self–world relations that are reflected in the polytheistic practices of ancient times, with those that crystalize in practices of the contemporary (late) modern period."[6]

Whether this is an interdisciplinary success is too early to say. Still, the candidates of the project were encouraged to talk and make use of different disciplines and approaches. The seminars that I attended there where once again related to religious studies, but now the School of Rome was not at their center, while still occupying a place on the stage.

I also found that the international environment stimulated interdisciplinarity or, at the very least, a discussion of different takes and approaches. As the name 'School of Rome' suggests, the geographical identity played a role in shaping the various approaches, so much so that mentioning the Italian school of religious studies is not the same.[7] The Max-Weber-Kolleg of the University of Erfurt did not experience this divide due to the wide range of international students pursuing their Ph.D. projects. Their different backgrounds overlapped and interacted, and this highlighted the range of possibilities that a different education may bring.

The flip side of the coin for me was that this interdisciplinary and international environment was highly unsupervised. This may lead to fruitful discussions among different approaches and disciplines, but only insofar as the parties were already interested in communicating with each other. If this was not the case, people just focused on their projects with a general docility towards different approaches and disciplines. Despite these difficulties, I still feel that the academic world is slowly responding to the need for interdisciplinarity and the IGS is an example.

2 From Tübingen to the IGS

Studying *Vergleichende Religionswissenschaft* from scratch, from the first term onwards, regulations at the University of Bonn forced me, the senior co-author, to study three separate disciplines, contingently rather than conceptually united in my head. Latin philology and Catholic theology were 'minors' (*Nebenfächer*) for the religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft*) program (aiming at a doctorate as

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6 https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/max-weber-kolleg/forschung/forschungsgruppen-und- stellen/research-groups/igs-resonant-self-world-relations.

7 See for example 'philosophy of religion' at the University of Turin, which encompass a different and equally valid approach to the field.

first exam) and at the same time 'majors' in an administratively separate program of training as a teacher in secondary schools in those two subjects (*Lehramt*). The choice was a pragmatic one – how to earn a livelihood, how to restrict the number of languages I had to learn (ending up with Greek and Hebrew in addition to the full-time job of acquiring a higher level in Latin) – and felt like an arbitrary collection of subjects without connections made by anybody but myself. Karl Hoheisel, extraordinary professor for *Religionswissenschaft* but full-time editor of the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* was the only exception and offered a model for identifying an intersection of these disciplines.[8] The process resulted in identifying ancient history of religion – Greek, Latin, occasionally Hebrew texts, the cradle of Christianity – as that intersection. To follow this interest, I moved to Tübingen to continue my studies in basically the same program (now with an MA as 'first exam').

Religionswissenschaft at Tübingen was not regarded as an isolated discipline – even if the Tübingen School, and in particular Burkhard Gladigow, struggled to re-found the subject by way of focusing on *Europäische Religionsgeschichte.* The past of phenomenology of religion was abandoned, that is, the strategy of defining the subject by way of a stable object of research, namely religious phenomena. Instead, *Religionswissenschaft* was redefined as a *Kulturwissenschaft*, 'religion' was not the object, but a perspective applied to culture and societies.[9] This was felt close to the tradition of the *scuola di Roma* and the Italian concept of the *vanificazione dell'oggetto religioso,* the 'removal of religion as something given'. Religion was to be explained, not presupposed. One could identify systemic logics behind certain historical developments and constellations and inquire into the forms and limits of generalization via comparisons. The latter was one of several methods, to be guided by a rigorously reflected process of defining terms and conditions, *Religionswissenschaft* was no longer co-extensive with *comparative religion, religioni comparati.* Methods had to be important from a wide range of disciplines, from sociology to jurisprudence, behavioral biology to literary criticism, historical disciplines (e. g., prosopography and chronology, in my case). Structuralism and system theory were presupposed in those 1980s. But above all, pragmatically, the study program was a collection of a dozen of disciplines across the 'faculty of cultural studies' (*Kulturwissenschaft*) and beyond, from philologies and area studies to anthropology, theologies (rarely), and historical disciplines, whenever those were interested in religious practices and ideas. Thus, multi-disciplinarity was there in the class-

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8 On Hoheisel and Hutter 2002.
9 Gladigow 2005; Gladigow 2009; Cancik, Gladigow and Kohl 1988; on Gladigow, Auffarth, Grieser and Koch 2021.

room, the interdisciplinary discussion forced onto the participants. One's own interests were broadened, one's competence, better, *my* competence remained oligo-disciplinary. Of course.

This is already a long preface to the description of experiences in the IGS but I have to continue for another moment. Given such an intellectual formation, my own research sat between the chairs. The 'religious construction of war', my dissertation, is still read and quoted almost exclusively by ancient historians. The book on calendars, the 'religious representation and qualification of time' from the early Iron Age to Christian regulations of Late Antiquity (again in 'ancient Rome'), likewise, apart from historians of literature. My first application for funding was in the field of 'history of research', *storiografia*, intellectual history, my second and third (smaller) books on a German philologist of Jewish origins, Eduard Norden. Religion was treated as a way to handle other things, a specific solution of social problems – causing problems of its own for contemporaries and later scholars. Methodological input was to be sought from other disciplines, history and sociology above all, historico-critical method and epochalization but also cultural anthropology of materialist provenance in the dissertation, Parsons' system theory, the sociology of time of Norbert Elias for the calendar book, prosopographical methods (network theory *avant la letter*) and social history for the *Fasti sacerdotum*, originally planned as a habilitation thesis and my first funding application to the DFG (German Research Foundation) under the guidance and inspiration of Hubert Cancik, who taught history of religion and literature at the 'Arbeitsstelle für Antike Religionsgeschichte' as part of a department for classical languages.[10]

The same Hubert Cancik pushed me, then tenured professor for classical philology at the University of Potsdam, into the first application for a large cooperative research program, a 'Priority Program of the DFG' called 'Roman Imperial and Provincial Religion: Processes of globalization and regionalization in the history of ancient religion' (2000–2008). The broad range of disciplines assembled across more than a dozen German universities shared a common object, religious practices in the ancient Mediterranean World in the first half of the first millennium CE. The project was a collaboration between archaeologists, philologists, epigraphists, patristic scholars, ancient historians and very few historians of religion.[11] Funerary rituals had been excluded, all such funding requests rejected, by the evaluators who were in agreement that that was not part of religion. Wolfgang Spickermann, now speaker of our present interdisciplinary research group, was then one of our

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[10] The profile is easily detectable in Cancik 1998.

[11] Cancik and Rüpke 2009.

young generation of scholars who moved the project along into close collaboration, intensive publication, and international networking.

The scarcity of sources for many questions has pushed classical scholars into the search for concepts and methodological innovations, from Lachmann's stemmatic method in the early 19th century through Mommsen's reconstruction of Roman history as systematized law to early 20th century primitivism, Jean-Pierre Vernant's structuralism and Walter Burkert's ethology. Today, disciples of Isis and Mithras look to scientist varieties of cognitive studies to find a way out. The results of the 'Globalization' program led us, and me, to turn to individual actors and look for an alliance with sociological inquiries into individualization. I am not to summarize the story of the first *Kolleg-Forschungsgruppe* at the Max Weber Centre, 'Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective', flourishing under the Centre's directors Hans Joas, Wolfgang Spickermann, and Hartmut Rosa. It was a type of research that was an enormously enriching perspective through meeting scholars from and working on India or China, with colleagues working on the medieval and contemporary world, or Jaina and Jewish texts and history.[12]

When I summarize the project's experiences, I describe my horizon of expectations for the IGS at the same time.

− Historical or empirical research, that is, dealing with sources, is blind without concepts. Interpretations do not magically arise 'from the sources' without them. However, the concepts might be implicit, that is to say, not reflected, prejudices rather than findings put up for detached and critical review.

− Concepts need to be repeated, taught, inculcated. Every generation of fellows needs a new briefing. In other words, we had to do it all over again every six months.

− Yet, repetition never meant re-iteration. Concepts were slowly, but continuously changing. That was the most productive common process, but it came at a cost. People who had just found a way of employing a concept as a tool for their material were often irritated, even frustrated. Unavoidably, I would say.

− There was a difference in communication. The generalists, sociologists, philosophers, were to explain their concepts, and did so with reference to their (usual) material and in their language. The historians (broadly speaking) were to explain their material in a – conceptually and materially – different language. Whereas the first would explain their advance with reference to the state of the art in their discipline, the second would explain their advance by approaching it to the state of the art in the others' disciplines. Not a bad thing, I would say.

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12 See Fuchs et al. 2020 and Suitner et al. 2020.

–   And yet, there was a second difference, a difference in reception. The general-
    ists hardly ever referenced the material findings of the historians (neither
    with respect to the historical material nor the researchers). The historians ref-
    erenced the conceptual findings of the generalists and frequently also their
    material (without critically evaluating it according to their standards). And
    quite a number of actors did not reference anything beyond their own field.
    Not a good thing, I would say.

It is against this background that I was part of the formation of the team of the IGS.
Differences to the earlier project quickly became visible. As a core group, we start-
ed on a much broader basis in terms of persons and disciplines. As a research proj-
ect, we limited not only the conceptual approach – *resonance* – but also the object
of research, taking *rituals* as a shared field. Members of the research project did
not (typically) enter as 'guests' or 'fellows' but as researchers committed for the
length of a dissertation project, three to four years, or as faculty, four to five
years, renewable.

I try to filter out the corollaries of the pandemic, which, I hope, will remain an
episode for our project, even if it became an oppressively defining research condi-
tions for a number of doctoral researchers in their more limited period of funding.
Looking back through this soft focus and in a mollified vision, I see above all the
enthusiasm with which many originally – and I emphatically include me – entered
the intellectual adventure and I still see many new members at least initially shar-
ing that feeling. I have learnt to take out the positive side of the repetitive engage-
ment with the concepts – and am afraid that we started neglecting that, first out of
pandemic necessity, afterwards for lack of time or other priorities.

3 Being in the IGS as Doctoral Researcher and as a Speaker

As it is clear from our two accounts, we entered into the IGS in very different roles.
As a junior researcher, Elena experienced an environment that was already in
progress, despite still being experimental. Jörg entered into it as one of the initia-
tors, not just observing how it worked but responsible to make it work. The results
will impact our own work and life in different forms, but they will impact them:
What we did, what we are experiencing.

The IGS, while still facing difficulties in its interdisciplinary performance,
highly supports an interdisciplinary approach. The seminars encompass a variety
of fields such as sociology, religious studies, archaeology, and philosophy, to men-

tion a few. Ideally, this should give the junior researchers the tools to be able to communicate proficiently with different disciplines about different subjects, without claiming expertise. Interdisciplinarity for the students always means to engage with something different from what they are experts in, to be able to sustain a conversation while understanding the limits of each other's contributions. The goal would thus not be to be proficient in different fields but to be able to proficiently communicate with them.

Nevertheless, we both felt how easy it is to *not* deliberately engage with our supposedly common conceptual ground. Not the least difficulty arises out of the very structure of the IGS. The project is a cooperation between two universities in two different European states, so students would ideally be going back and forth and getting the most out of both institutions. Nonetheless, we realize that doctoral researchers experience some difficulties with the communication between the two, which in Elena's case made the transition during the year she was going to spend at the partner university challenging. Interdisciplinarity is perceived slightly differently by the two academic environments, and this is at times counter-productive interdisciplinary-wise. In the past, it always needed institutional or personal pushes to start thematizing our common grounds anew *and* reflecting the different disciplinary approaches. And only at such an intensified level does the exchange become rewarding, often in astonishing aspects and sometimes arriving at the margins rather than at the center of our conceptual apparatus. Time and again, Jörg has been touched by the advances made by some of the younger researchers, advances that he did not feel able to copy to the same extent. Once again, there is the need for a deeper reflection on what interdisciplinarity is and what the take of the IGS as a joint doctorate is. This should not discourage dialogue; on the contrary, it should stimulate it. Despite the indisputable successes, there have been many hurdles in the communication among different disciplines, so that fruitful dialogues have not always been possible. In fact, the road to real interdisciplinarity can only be travelled via communication and by finding a way of making it work institutionally.

There are many occasions that lead to frustration about the imbalance of certain types of communication and the dynamics of self-organization across all participants. Coming together, for instance, in planning workshops is often limited to very few concepts, while it rarely starts from the basis of shared materials, or even a challenging comparison between such evidence. Shall we dare to invest in a wider range of combinations and initiatives? Or rather withdraw into established external networks for that? That is a question that is particularly difficult to answer. The latter strategy ultimately helps to find a job in academia. The former (hopefully) to more interesting research. We both have experienced that the important questions arise at the intersections.

Interdisciplinarity, finally, is not just about moving between different disciplines. Fruitful communication can be transversally helpful. Both being historians of religion, we witness different takes on what religion is and how it should be approached and studied. Such an 'inner interdisciplinarity' can help to rethink the field, thus producing new insights and potentially advancements. The same is of course true for different fields that can enormously benefit from each other, such as religious studies and sociology. An important goal of the IGS is to better understand not only different disciplines, but also our own discipline. In our case, religious studies, *Storia delle Religioni, Religionswissenschaft*, is a kaleidoscope of approaches that might confuse non-specialists. To present this discipline to an interdisciplinary audience is to better understand such a kaleidoscope ourselves.

4 Conclusion and Concluding Questions

No doubt, there is an added value in working together across disciplines. There is a price to pay, too, but we feel that we should not work to lower the price but to increase the outcome. For that, we need to engage with each other and each other's disciplines. Not least by time and again asking ourselves what we mean by interdisciplinarity in interdisciplinary research projects. The answer is neither easy nor stable. For this very occasion we suggest to break it down into three questions:

1) What does 'interdisciplinarity' (whatever it is) demand from all members of the research group in terms of communication, listening to each other, recognition, and appraisal?
2) What does 'interdisciplinarity' do for our own research and monograph?
3) How does 'interdisciplinarity' advance our reflection of our own disciplinary identity?

We believe that reflecting together on these questions may spark new discussions among both junior and senior researchers in interdisciplinary research projects. The goal is not to become experts in different disciplines, rather to understand how different disciplines work, what the questions are that they ask and why these questions are relevant. Consequently, we should reflect on our discipline: What is there to gain from a mutual collaboration with a different field, how do we make it work without patronizing any of the other disciplines, or without reducing one of them to a consulting role in a very specific field. Interdisciplinarity should focus on understanding the differences, rather than master them.

We should have the situation in which two discipline, by working together, produce something that could not otherwise be. So that all the disciplines involved

can be parent to something that, by themselves, would not have been possible. Some of the keywords we are looking for are collaboration, communication, and awareness of the limits. We believe that if interdisciplinarity can be a powerful tool, it cannot be a totally encompassing one. These limits need to be taken into consideration in order to have an efficient communicative process.

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Rafael Barroso Romero & Irmtraud Fischer

Studying Ancient Religions and their Receptions: Benefits and Limits of Interdisciplinarity

This article reflects on the limitations of monodisciplinarity, our experiences with various types of multi- and interdisciplinarity, as well as on challenges of transdisciplinary cooperation. Being a Spanish doctoral researcher at his first professional teaching post in Madrid and as recently retired professor of Old Testament Studies who studied in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Austria, we both are convinced that interdisciplinarity is essential for today's interconnected research on cultures of the ancient Mediterranean.

1 Different Disciplines and Stages of Career, Similar Experiences

First of all, we reflect on our experiences with interdisciplinarity as two researchers of different ancient religions at different stages of their career.

1.1 Interdisciplinarity from the Outset and the Paradox of Hyperspecialization

Starting an academic career from an interdisciplinary approach is not an easy task. Both in Spain and in Germany it is often taught that 'interdisciplinarity', i. e., crossing disciplinary boundaries by integrating questions and methods from all disciplines, is desirable and very beneficial in any project from an early academic age. But in order to cross disciplinary boundaries, it is necessary to acknowledge and justify them first. As a doctoral researcher, my experience invites me to think that, for the sake of rigor in the study of religious practices in the ancient world, it is more useful to question the limits of disciplines than to underline them, especially in the study of the ancient world and of any socio-religious practice.

Like many others at the beginning of their doctoral theses, one of my main concerns was how to generate innovative historical knowledge despite the scarcity of evidence for the study of the ancient world, and interdisciplinarity was a stim-

ulating option that made me choose the IGS. My postgraduate training was in religious studies, so my idea of interdisciplinarity was based on the combination of different disciplines, mainly philology, social anthropology, and ancient history. Each discipline is thus conceptualized separately and in dialogue with the others around a common object of study: religions. However, each of them preserves above all its 'identity' as an independent science, its limits, and its autonomy, whether using methods such as historical-philological criticism, the intracultural comparison of epigraphic and archaeological sources, or the application of classical theories on culture and society. This way of working does not build on the idea of interdisciplinarity as an integrative way of conducting research. What is clear is that in every doctoral program, interdisciplinarity is encouraged and perceived as something positive. But how to apply it is something different and more complex. One of my first questions therefore was, should I choose one discipline as my guide and the others as aids or complements in different aspects of my research? Should my training as a historian make me tend more towards written sources rather than archaeological ones? I would like to share here the basic reflections that gradually forced me to approach my own doctoral research from the perspective of interdisciplinarity and even made me think about its limits.

Already during my graduate studies, I wondered about the difficulties that arise in reconstructing religious practices in antiquity. Where are the limits of religion? And of a particular religion? Of course, applying these questions to the ancient world presents additional risks and difficulties, since the sources are scarce and fragmentary, and I felt it necessary to employ as many methodological tools as necessary to incorporate as many sources as possible. The almost perennial theoretical reflection on religion in sociology, anthropology and religious studies made it clear to me how fluid the boundaries of religion and its practice can be. I think few researchers today would doubt that religion is a historically situated phenomenon. This means that it is the scholar's task to study how each past culture understood its own religion, both diachronically and synchronically, and to what end and in what contexts we can speak of an experience, social relation, or action as religious or not. In other words, how does religion come about in antiquity, and what change does it entail for the relations between the self and the world? Rivers of ink have been spilled around this idea, but if there is one thing that characterizes this debate, it is its interdisciplinarity. We can find scholars from all humanities and social science disciplines questioning the concept of religion as a category applicable to the study of the past, although most end up applying it as an epistemological category (with due caution).

This problem of categories also came to me from more specific fronts when I chose the subject of my doctoral thesis: death in Roman times. In the first phase of my project, I began by exploring the theoretical foundations that inaugurated the

archaeology of death. One of the first major obstacles I encountered was the concept of 'atypical burials' and its derivatives. They were originally the central theme of my project, which sought to study the most significant cases and to investigate the written sources to find a reason for their existence, which would be, according to my original hypothesis, in the different conceptions of the afterlife that coexisted in Roman times. However, I realized that the idea of 'unusual burials' was a category created by archaeologists and historians to refer to a type of burial (and ritual) that imposed the present impression, the strangeness and amazement at such past practices, over and above the archaeological reality. This idea seemed to me somewhat prejudiced, as it assumes that it is strange or anomalous to encounter certain funerary practices. Does this not mean that the diversity of funerary practices suggested by the archaeological evidence is constrained by the scholar? Moreover, a highly popular hypothesis among scholars is that these were deviant individuals, isolated from society in some way, or even feared, which implies speaking of the 'archaeology of fear'.[1] The main argument is rooted in Durkheim's concept of deviance, applied by Shay,[2] who is essentialist in assuming that there are several characteristics to be associated with funerary deviance, such as suicide, illness, or certain types of delinquency. Although the deviance hypothesis has been questioned, the notion of 'atypical burials' remains quite popular. Both concepts exemplify very well the importance and the need for archaeologists and historians to create typologies of sources. However, it also illustrates very well how useful sociological and anthropological theory is for questioning our categories and refining them to fit reality. I think this is especially important when applied to historical periods. Abstract notions such as religion, funerary rituals, religious pollution, even the very concept of death or social exclusion are culturally and historically specific, so that we must be careful when reconstructing the past using categories from the present. Although using them is unavoidable, it always involves the risk of being carried away by current prejudices, such as an interest in what we find strange or irrational. Should we understand ancient religions in the light of our concept of rationality? Thinking through all these methodological precautions is only possible if we adopt a perspective that integrates the humanities and the social sciences. In this sense, interdisciplinarity is a requirement of the object of study.

Over time, the definitional problems became more acute: which archaeological remains are funerary, and which are not? I thought that if I am seeking to reconstruct and analyze funerary ritual, it is necessary to ask when the ritual begins

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1 Tsaliki 2008.

2 Shay 1985.

and when it ends, whether it was prone to change and innovation, and how this occurred (which helps to explain the diversity of objects used). This raised new questions for me, such as cultural, individual (or personal, including gender, age, or social position) and religious identity, especially in relation to their transformation during ritual action. If we consider that the most popular ritual paradigm in historical research on the Roman funeral is that of a rite of passage, which implies a transformation of the deceased, then what elements did everyone adopt to think of oneself, to show oneself as an individual with their own personality in life, but also in death? Is it not the family – or those who bury the dead – who define them by choosing their tomb and grave goods? What changes did death bring about in the identity of the deceased?

I here only raise those issues that shape my research and that are cross-cutting across various disciplines. These approaches made me see that interdisciplinarity is more an almost inescapable necessity than a complement that gives additional value to research led by a particular discipline. Can research questions such as mine be answered sufficiently from history, archaeology, or philology alone, or by looking *only* at written sources or *only* at archaeological sources? With this in mind, I began to question the extent to which the division between archaeology and ancient history was truly operative in the study of the world of death in ancient Rome (and by extension, of ancient religions). Archaeological evidence is completely mute and therefore must be studied with caution, but, like literary sources, it is not neutral. By this I mean that both are fraught with biases of all kinds: literary sources were produced (mostly) by privileged men who often had specific social and political aspirations, or class or gender biases that are implicit in their texts, which they published already during their lifetime with a clear purpose. Why should archaeological sources be any different? It is true that they often come to us in fragmentary form, but they have been produced by people aware of their social situation, with their material limitations or with specific tastes. People who were subject to a multitude of contingencies which, due to the precarious situation of most of the population (which produced the bulk of the funerary archaeological record) must have been much more limiting than now, for instance the impossibility of paying an undertaker or acquiring the grave goods they wanted, or the need to dispose of a corpse under difficult climatic conditions.

These thoughts led me to think that it is not possible to understand death as a socio-religious phenomenon in ancient Rome in all its complexity without turning to archaeology, ancient history and the sociological and anthropological theories so often present in religious studies. But, even more importantly, it is not possible to ask relevant questions that cut across disciplines (for example, how the subject and the material world are constituted and transformed through rituals?) without recourse to theory. And here concepts play a key role. Defining, reflecting on, and

refining such concepts must be both the basis and one of the aims of all research for the sake of rigor. After all, categories are our basic tool, and their use is inevitable and necessary to analyze the past. If the IGS has helped my research at all, it has been to bring to the table the importance of those forms of abstraction that are concepts. In the first semesters of my doctoral studies within the IGS, I realized the relevance of theoretical reflection in shaping an interdisciplinary debate: most of the participants in the colloquia asked generic questions about methods and the treatment of materials, but above all about concrete notions that were also a problem in other disciplines (e. g., the public/private dichotomy in non-Western cultures, identity, oath, monumentality, agency, materiality, city...). The participants saw in the abstract categories common ground for academic debate and feedback, which is undoubtedly a prerequisite for the application of interdisciplinarity. Theory thus manifests itself as the element that makes it possible to connect a case study with the entire development of the discipline itself, and thus to refine the filters used to examine the past.

Finally, I have concluded that this inevitable 'present bias' implicit in many of the concepts we employ cannot be understood unless we consider the reception of ancient religions in Western society. Our societies, from their own academic traditions in each country, have created and defined the different disciplines and in so doing have influenced the way in which ancient religions are understood and approached. In other words: the reception of ancient religions and the way we study them are indissociable, and there is a whole range of structures and institutional relations behind them that need to be considered to reflect on how we can apply interdisciplinarity and understand why it is increasingly necessary to study the ancient world.

The division into clearly delimited academic disciplines is based on a tradition that endows them with autonomy and prestige. Challenging this disciplinary autonomy in research involves several risks, as junior researchers must deal with a system that demands a clear hyper-specialization, which forces one to define oneself with a particular discipline. Since my general line of research is the materiality of Roman religion, I need to work at the intersection of religious studies, archaeology, and ancient history, which requires a lot of additional time and effort. Therefore, I am comfortable with all three disciplines. However, that is not completely acceptable in a system that demands clear hyperspecialization. That means that it is necessary to provide a defined profile, whether as a historian, archaeologist, or religious studies scholar. But as a doctoral researcher who has yet to apply for numerous positions in the future, I perceive this as an obstacle to interdisciplinarity. One cannot simply define oneself as an expert on materiality and religion who knows several disciplines. Or you can do so once you have obtained a stable position with a defined profile that over time you redefine from interdisci-

plinarity. And this is something that from an epistemological point of view offers more harm than good, since it presents interdisciplinarity as a risk, or as Irmtraud Fischer rightly calls it below, "dabbling in every field". Of course, interdisciplinarity requires additional heuristic efforts, but there is also the risk that the outcome of the research will be unsatisfactory for the specialists who are entrenched in their disciplines and who will see the study as incomplete for their discipline (e.g., 'not archaeological enough'). In view of this, I ask myself, what are the benefits, for example, of separating the archaeology of religion from material religion and from the cultural history of (religious) objects? These three lines of research, associated respectively with archaeology, religious studies, and history, are born with very similar objectives, but researchers try to preserve the limits of each of the disciplines with which they are identified (alluding to their research traditions). However, in practice they share claims and often methods and conclusions, with only minor differences. All this makes me wonder whether it might not be more beneficial for the humanities and social disciplines to question their own boundaries and thus to rethink themselves in an open and integrative way, paying more attention to the demands of the object of research rather than to the sometimes limiting disciplinary traditions. All in all, my personal experience provides me with more and more arguments to support the idea that studying socio-religious practices from a single discipline implies being too partial. Interdisciplinarity is necessary to generate a substantial and above all structured discussion around questions about the human being and the world that affect all the disciplines involved.

2 Experiences from an Advanced Stage of a Career

As a professor for Old Testament studies at the end of her career, I am able to look back at almost half a century of academic life.

2.1 Interdisciplinarity in My Curriculum Vitae

My experiences with interdisciplinarity have varied a lot during my academic life: from a student's experience of almost strictly theology-specific studies to an assistant at the Institute for Old Testament Studies seeing the beginning of interdisciplinary teaching, especially in gender studies,[3] to my first professorship at the Uni-

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3 Fischer 1988.

versity of Bonn from 1997 to 2004. When I obtained this professorship, I had just become established in Old Testament studies, having published four books in two parts of the Hebrew bible canon – exactly what had to be done for a successful career in those times. As the first female Catholic theologian in Austria, I completed my habilitation in 1993 with feminist research on the formerly so-called 'patriarchal narratives' of Genesis, which I redefined as narratives of the 'Erzeltern', the ancestral parents of Israel (a designation finally adopted in the latest official German bible translation of the Catholic church).[4] Working on this topic, I became more and more aware that these texts are not to be understood without studies in comparative law, at least on slavery, adoption and surrogacy. But working on this, I had no direct contact person for ancient Near Eastern law. So, I learned much concerning the legislative background of biblical narratives[5] by reading publications, especially those of the esteemed Raymond Westbrook[6] with whom I also collaborated later on.[7] This multidisciplinary practice of a researcher of a discipline using methods/hermeneutics/findings of other disciplines by consulting publications *without* contacting researchers of those other disciplines has been common in Old Testament studies for more than a hundred years.

The professorship at Bonn University, described as 'Old Testament and Theological Women's Studies', obviously required interdisciplinarity. Having only little interdisciplinary experience, it was a challenge for a first-generation female researcher who had always argued against special professorial chairs for women and for doing feminist studies in conventional academic positions.

My task was to establish this newly founded professorship in academia. It was clear that I would not be able to teach or do research in all theological disciplines – biblical studies, ethics, church history, pastoral care, canon law, religious education and philosophy. As theology itself is a very interdisciplinary field, nobody is able to keep track of all new developments in all of its sections. Women's and gender studies had always been transdisciplinary, which not only required cooperation within theology, but also with other faculties. So, this professorship was a wonderful chance for me to gain insight in various disciplines and how – or sometimes also *if* – they problematized gender.

Nevertheless, I was very aware of the dangerous minefield of interdisciplinary work and the risk of 'dabbling in every field'. I decided to avoid any transgression of my *venia* in Old Testament – with the exception of the basics of gender studies. I established several contacts by teaching cooperations. For instance, we offered a

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4 See Fischer 1994.

5 See also Fischer 2001.

6 Westbrook 1991 and Westbrook 2001.

7 Fischer 2008.

seminar on the personified city as female together with the Institute of Archaeology, or a congress on Judith and the reception of the narrative in art with the Institute of Art History. Several times, we held a seminar in canon law titled 'More Gender than Law', which reached cult status among critical students at the faculty.

When I was appointed professor for Old Testament at the University of Graz, I was already so used to this kind of interdisciplinary work that I continued in its teaching as well as in research. The interdisciplinary doctoral programs which I officially installed when I was vice-rector for Research and Continuing Education are certainly to be mentioned first in this context. In two of the doctoral programs, I am still active: 'Gender', which has always been a cross-faculty curriculum, and 'Ancient Cultures of the Mediterranean', which brings together researchers of classical and biblical studies as well as of Roman law. The experience in cooperating at the level of doctoral studies was very beneficial for our application for the international graduate school, so that we were able to apply lessons learned directly to an interdisciplinary program on an international level.

In 2006, I initiated another large interdisciplinary project together with Adriana Valerio, Naples, and Mercedes Navarro Puerto, Madrid: 'The Bible and Women'.[8] This series on the reception history of the bible, which is published in 21 volumes and in four languages (German, English, Spanish and Italian), is a cooperation of more than 300 researchers worldwide. This is the only way to offer not only the historical, theological, and philosophical background of an epoch, but also the reception of biblical texts in art, music, literature, film etc. I consider this interdisciplinary project the most important one of my career, since it is the first book series offering a gender sensitive reception history from the formation of biblical texts to this day.

The 'Ausseer Gespräche', an annual series of symposia which I started in 2009, are another transdisciplinary project that is to be mentioned here. Every year in June, academics from different disciplines such as medicine, law, sociology, literature, theology, engineering, environmental studies and from diverse sections of the arts meet to discuss a highly relevant topic from many different perspectives, discussing problems and their solutions together with students in a relaxed atmosphere.[9] The aim of this series of symposia was never to publish the contributions, but to stimulate inter- and transdisciplinary cooperations and networks.

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8 Learn more: https://www.bibleandwomen.org/EN/.

9 See https://altes-testament.uni-graz.at/de/ausseer-gespraeche/.

2.2 Interdisciplinarity as a Game Changer

Multi-perspectivity is the most important advantage of interdisciplinary cooperation in teaching, in networking as well as in research. Although many academics have more than one final degree, no one is able to be a specialist in all fields and familiar with all methods and new developments. It is certainly recommendable to engage in various fields of research that are necessary to understand one's own material in its original context better. In every discipline we find classical cooperations with what was previously called 'Hilfswissenschaften', as in my field archaeology, ancient history, codicology, Semitic languages, Assyrology or Egyptology.

Also, the integration of new approaches (for example trauma hermeneutics, spatial theory, approaches from queer or post-colonial studies) or the application of theories from outside one's own discipline (like the concept of resonance from sociology) are highly beneficial. Doing this, however, academics must be aware that this always means a reception process within their own field. It is possible to further develop theories from other fields and disciplines and make them applicable to one's own discipline, but this always remains an appropriation to another than the original context.

I would like to illustrate these benefits with two examples.

2.2.1 Hebrew Bible Exegesis, Philosophy, Art History, Iconography, and Comparative Religious Studies: God's Reply to Job

The speeches of God in the book of Job have always been discussed as inadequate responses to the very problems of human life addressed by Job. One of the most famous examples is the dictum of Søren Kierkegaard in his book *Fear and Trembling* (1843) in which he argues that YHWH answers with a few lectures on natural history to Job's existential question of mankind, theodicy.

Othmar Keel (and his school of iconographic studies) mapped out a completely different understanding by reading the text against the background of the representation of wild animals mainly on Near Eastern seals. In his 1978 monograph *Yahweh's Reply to Job. An Interpretation of Job 38–41 against the Background of Contemporary Visual Art,*[10] he was able to show that the meticulous description of wildlife details has less to do with natural history, but more with the common imagination of deities as sovereigns of wild animals which emblematize their godly power to defend the cosmos from chaos in the ancient Near East. Reading

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10 Keel 1978.

the speeches of God in this way, the detailed description of wildlife especially in the book of Job makes sense as the creator is accused of having lost control over his creation.

2.2.2 Hebrew Bible Exegesis, Ancient History, Archaeology, Philosophy, and Literature: The Case of the Davidic-Solomonic Monarchy

Researchers such as William F. Albright (1891–1971) were famous for their interdisciplinary research as they combined biblical studies with those of ancient Near East cultural and religious history as well as with northwestern Semitic epigraphy and paleography.[11] They were convinced that archaeological data would confirm the biblical narratives about the history of Israel. In the last decades, however, archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein have questioned the existence of a great united monarchy with a geographical extension from Dan to Beersheba at the beginning of the Iron Age in various surveys.[12] Archaeologically, no evidence for an adequate administrative entity could be found. Due to these archaeological results, biblical scholars adapted not only the concepts of the historical development of the texts of the Pentateuch,[13] but also the way the narrated history of Israel could be understood.[14]

In consequence of such research results, 'biblical archaeology' was changed to 'Israel archaeology'. It no longer takes biblical narratives as an historically accurate or trustworthy chronology of ancient Israel. But how are those texts about the beginning of the state then to be understood? Are they simply wrong? Or do we need other approaches to these texts that narrate the origin of an epoch as the history of families in three generations?[15]

The concept of world making narratives, first developed by the philosopher Nelson Goodman in his book *Ways of Worldmaking*,[16] was adapted for the study of literature by Ansgar and Vera Nünning.[17] This concept assumes that narratives not only interpret the world but create new worlds and thus help to understand the relation between biblical texts and new research results in ancient history and archaeology. If the narratives of a united monarchy are only fictional, that

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[11] Cf. Albright 1954.
[12] Finkelstein and Silberman 2006.
[13] Finkelstein and Römer 2014a; Finkelstein and Römer 2014b.
[14] Frevel 2018.
[15] Fischer 2015.
[16] Goodman 1978.
[17] Nünning and Nünning 2010.

does not mean that they are historical misrepresentations. They rather construct a new identity of the unified People of God with Jerusalem as its center. This became necessary after the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which had dominated the Southern Kingdom of Judah for centuries. In contrast to this historical fact, the narratives of the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom focus on Judah and Jerusalem, the remaining parts of the two entities after the Neo-Assyrian campaign in the late 8th century BCE and try to create a new, unified identity between Judeans and the refugees from Israel who were able to escape the Assyrian deportation.

These two examples demonstrate how interdisciplinary research works and how and to what degree it is able to change research findings valid for a long time.

3 Many Benefits of Interdisciplinarity – and Some Risks

Under which conditions can multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary research – and also teaching – prosper? For multidisciplinarity, the research question must above all be well defined in one's own discipline. It is to be made clear in which way the own discipline benefits from the cooperation with, and integration of, findings in other fields. Afterwards the results have to be integrated by modelling them for one's own field, sometimes also adapting issues from other disciplines.

But then, the discipline that applies another's methods or theories cannot blame the other for false assumptions. With an attitude of 'knowing everything better', interdisciplinarity must certainly fail. The very beginning of interdisciplinarity is curiosity for other disciplines. If this is lacking or some of the disciplines feel to be head and shoulders above the rest, this relationship cannot be called interdisciplinarity; it would be more of a one-way teacher-student relationship in which those in a (supposed) subordinate position are always suspected of dabbling in every field.

For successful interdisciplinary research to work, the entanglement of disciplines, of researchers and institutions is to be avoided. As with every human interaction, interdisciplinary cooperation also is characterized by power relations. Which and whose discipline is more relevant is a question of power, of reputation and of the standing of the academic disciplines within a consortium, a faculty, a university as well as of researchers inside those groups. Power relations are also an issue of quantity. As a single researcher within an almost homogeneous group of another discipline, one can only be dominant if this group depends on the one from the outside, maybe because s/he is an indispensable expert or a

very famous scholar. Where they are not, an 'outside' scholar is not more than a fig leaf for interdisciplinarity.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that in today's university contexts, interdisciplinarity is a much sought-after practice. But in all too many situations, this seems to be mere window dressing: neither evaluators of funding institutions nor appointment committees estimate interdisciplinarity in an appropriate way. Sometimes strictly monodisciplinary publications count for more than interdisciplinary engagement. This gap between claim and reality is obvious for example in teaching: interdisciplinarity is not appreciated, and the more researchers work together, the less it is appreciated, despite the additional work in comparison to monodisciplinary teaching.

Despite all these incongruities, we are convinced that interdisciplinarity is a necessity for serious research in several fields; in others, it is an exciting adventure that opens new horizons, and generally, it is an enormous enrichment which leads to new networks and perspectives.

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Christopher Bégin & Alina A.M. Zeller

De-Idealization of Interdisciplinarity: A Junior Researchers' Perspective

When we talk about interdisciplinarity, we all mean one concept but talk about very different things. This is why we came together to discuss this topic at our conference and now we try to shine some light on different aspects of interdisciplinarity in this publication. This paper presents the perspective of two junior scholars who had then only recently joined the interdisciplinary environment of the International Graduate School 'Resonant Self–World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices' (IGS) at the Max Weber Center at the University of Erfurt. Here, we want to talk about expectations, experiences and limits concerning interdisciplinary work. In our case, we analyze the idea of interdisciplinarity from a junior researchers' perspective. As a starting point, we pose the question: Does 'real-life' interdisciplinary work mean that we are able to completely dissolve the limits of disciplines or are we only blurring or softening them?

I, Alina Zeller, came into this graduate school with some experience in interdisciplinary work, but I had even higher expectations for the situation at the Max Weber Center. Interdisciplinary co-working and exchange maybe held some romantic notion about harmonic collaboration for me. I had the idea that everybody would be highly motivated to work interdisciplinarily and that this would be an easy thing to do. After about a year into my research, I saw things in a more sobering light.

For me, Christopher, I thought joining the graduate school would challenge my vision of my own discipline. I already have experience of interdisciplinarity and learned a lot from it, especially about my own field. When I first came into the IGS I had in mind that it would be a great opportunity for me to open up to different disciplines, to new methods, to new theories, hoping to create mixed knowledge and new ways of understanding the social world. I still think it is possible to do interdisciplinarity, but it might be in a more rudimentary way than I had envisioned.

Those were our general ideas and expectations about interdisciplinarity before coming to the IGS, but in the course of time we realized that it is not only us who manages them.

1 Expectations by Others

We as researchers are part of a wider academic community and later, we might be part of the labor market, therefore expectations towards our work do not solely originate from within ourselves. Members of academia and others in the labor market also expect certain things from us and our work which we cannot ignore. Neoliberal developments did not halt before academia and we are confronted with demands concerning our employability and something that one could name 'global skills'. With global skills we summarize the interculturality, transnationality and interdisciplinarity of our work. Concerning this article, we want to talk specifically about interdisciplinarity. Academic institutions and other employers expect us, also as junior researchers, to be proficient in interdisciplinary work and a variety of other aspects. But is it really the best for our research to have to incorporate all those demands in one person and one project? And do we have the structural foundations for this?

We think that we have not reached the point to answer this question confidently with a 'Yes!'. Our experience in general shows that there is no structural approach to 'learn' interdisciplinary work. All the expectations are put on the individual. We are supposed to work this way but are not offered the resources necessary for learning to do it in good quality. As we discussed during our conference, there are different aspects needed to produce qualitatively valuable interdisciplinary work. Two of the most essential ones for us are time and space, which are not always sufficiently available.

Furthermore, younger academics are expected, especially in the context of interdisciplinarity, to be more adaptable and flexible than previous generations. This means that we deal with a generational element to interdisciplinary work. Hierarchical structures put pressure on younger scholars to be creative and innovative. This is an additional factor of stress, which might rather pose an obstacle in the end. We are expected to have acquired knowledge from not only our discipline but from several others in a short amount of time. But we know from experience: this takes time and is a continuing process.

Not only academic knowledge is an issue, but personal soft skills also rank high on the list of expectation of us. Mostly, we assumed that the academic sphere is not a social space. But in contrast to this assumption, it very much is one. Communication between disciplines could be a way to see interdisciplinarity, but communication is also a skill, and it is neither easy to develop nor something you can learn from a book. Soft skills are needed to learn from others, for networking and for communication, to constructively criticize – and thus better – the work of others. They affect the reach of our research results. But soft skill mediation is still

structurally underdeveloped in the educational system. At least in Germany. Communication and networking skills are expected of us but are rarely part of the curriculum. Once more the acquiring of these skills, also necessary for interdisciplinary work, is left to the individual. So, interdisciplinarity comes with a price. 'Doing' interdisciplinarity results in less resources for deepening our knowledge in our main discipline and more pressure to be creative and communicative.

2 Experience of Interdisciplinarity So Far

Joining the IGS was a jump into interdisciplinary exchange with a wide range of disciplines for both of us. Although it was not our first experience of interdisciplinarity, it was our first continuous experience of trying to implement it into our work. This led us to face new situations of exchange in academic contexts which were on the one hand stimulating, but also had us face difficulties in finding common grounds. We will outline different aspects of our first year within an interdisciplinary research project in shedding light on some irritating elements, but also in reflecting on strategies to maybe really 'do' interdisciplinarity.

Our first observation as junior researchers joining the IGS was that we found a highly motivated group which is open and willing to discuss their various research projects and interests on a wide variety of subjects. Our colleagues, both junior and senior researchers, are not only focused on their own subjects, but are very curious and stimulate exchanges which pushes discussions in different unexpected directions. As much as this can be inspiring, on occasion it also goes in a direction which seems irrelevant to a young researcher under the pressure of writing a dissertation within a certain time frame and can feel like a loss of time that might otherwise be dedicated to the thesis directly. This experience might arise because of the large gap of knowledge and resources between junior and senior researchers, but also between different disciplines.

Everyone indeed comes from the perspective of their own fields and backgrounds. Knowledge gaps about the work done in other fields and projects or gaps in a common basis across different fields can mislead someone who is not a specialist in those areas. It might lead to endless discussions as we either do not know other people's projects and their progression, or do not have the necessary theory to grasp the implications of the work done. Reading material and literature put together by ourselves surely helps, but would still only enable us to learn to a certain degree. For this type of exchange, we think knowledge has to be acquired in different ways, it must be challenged and discussed with specialists, so that misunderstandings can be avoided. It is through this exchange that we should deepen our understanding of different fields. In this sense, we might

avoid using theories of multiple fields in a superficial way, which might lead us to a loss in the overall quality of the academic work.

In our experience, the effects of those miscomprehension were translated into discussions revolving mostly around terms and approaches. This might be linked to the lack of a referential system and common knowledge, but also to a lack of common language to express ourselves. In this sense, we think that to work in an interdisciplinary context also means to try to find strategies to translate our work for others, in order for it to reach a maximum of readers coming from different disciplines. This translation process might also be a co-working process already including other disciplines. If we really want to do interdisciplinarity, we will have to find ways to overcome those barriers, and maybe address institutional issues limiting our work.

The misunderstanding we have experienced might also come from some very different theoretical and methodological backgrounds. Many exchanges revolve only around these aspects, and show the necessity to expand our thinking to other elements, like content. To make any discussion fruitful, one must alternate between ways of understanding concepts and ways to acquire knowledge. On the one hand, different methodologies from different fields might bring new perspectives to our own work and help to fill blank spots. They might contribute to the process of iteration in one's work. Discussions with specialist of different fields can help to confront our own approach and to see concepts in different ways. Through this process, all sides ideally emerge with new perspectives. Coming back to our own topic with a new perspective underlines the trivial fact that we all have our main discipline as starting points. As much as we can try to do interdisciplinarity, our starting point might be our weakness in this process. As little as it may seem to be, getting to know others' work in a context of exchange and opening up to other disciplines and see how they can expand our thinking is a first, necessary, and emboldening step.

By our first long experience of interdisciplinarity within the IGS, we also came to think of this research group as more than an instrument to discuss methodology. Maybe it does not go as far as we had expected it, but it nevertheless acts as an instrument for self-reflection. In fact, the collaboration with other researchers of this group from different disciplines and with different life experiences makes formerly alien research and disciplines relatable and authentic, so that the learning to do interdisciplinarity can result in a meaningful and purposeful process and a source of inspiration for our own research. It might, in that sense, open a new angle for interdisciplinarity, as a filtering process of our own interests, a process of reflection on theoretical and personal elements. Those two processes might help us to focus on how and why we are doing our research

and, as a result, overcome disciplinary boundaries and our using a wide range of theories in a superficial way.

3 Limits of Interdisciplinarity

But we also want to discuss what we see as the limits of interdisciplinarity in general. Reflecting on our expectations and experiences, we might have had a wrong interpretation of it. We thought interdisciplinarity was about working together, but in our experience, our previous perception was incorrect. As two junior researchers, we think that the university system, at least in the humanities, forces us to concentrate on individual goals. Humanities still see the writing of a monograph as the way to obtain a dissertation. Other forms of publication, like cumulative dissertations, would set a more flexible and open base for interdisciplinarity. The dissertation is our main work at this stage, and the academic structure does not allow enough space for ourselves and our work to go much beyond it. By focusing mostly on our individual goals, we think we miss a great opportunity to learn from others by working as a team, but also to contribute to others' work.

The interdisciplinary colloquia of our research group are indeed trying to push us in this direction, they but seem focused on the abilities to criticize and to question. We still think those qualities are needed in interdisciplinary exchange, but we are afraid that they might rather impose hierarchies preventing us to take the next step towards creating the ideal and inclusive space for discussions. Moreover, colloquia are rather short interdisciplinary interactions. A long-term (over several months) approach in the exchange would be more useful. To overcome this dead end, we should create institutional resources to work together, in teamed projects or theses which is, in the end, a common practice for senior researchers.

Linked to this idea, we think interdisciplinarity is impossible without interpersonal relationships. Scientific work is not something which is achieved alone, it builds on the previous work of multiple authors, it is always interconnected. We share a common base, but the lack of references and terminology and the misunderstanding of terms common to different disciplines (though with different meanings) shows us that there is still much to be done before calling what we do 'interdisciplinarity'. Without a common language, the work we are doing will not be as useful as it could be, leading to time wasted in trying to get to know foreign concepts, to difficulties to relate to others' projects, and to a feeling of running in circles. It is by taking the time to really understand others' perspective that we might do more than simply sum up different approaches and knowledge. We should aim for more.

At last, we also want to reflect on the knowledge we use as researchers. It is through multiple disciplines and the mutual influence in humanities that a better understanding of the human world was achieved. We think that the trend towards interdisciplinarity shows the blurriness of the borders of our own disciplines, and it reminds us that the disciplines once were not as strictly separated as they are today. It might be time to focus again on the similarity of disciplines and not the differences.

4 Conclusion

We did a lot of criticizing, but we do not want to end on a pessimistic note. We see hope in a new development in academia. After two more years of doctoral work the questions of interdisciplinarity have continuously challenged our work. These few more years of experience in the interdisciplinary environment of our research group have shown that the most productive moments of interdisciplinary work are not to be found in any seminar room but over a cup of coffee. Change needs time, and the fact that we are addressing the topic explicitly shows us that we are developing. Working interdisciplinarily – in the various ways we understand it today – might not yet be the pervading way to do research. But we are getting there. We even hope for a new way to think about disciplines themselves. If we change our thinking about them, we might implement interdisciplinary thinking from the start in university studies. And consequently, we might enable new generations of researchers to enhance their level of interdisciplinarity even further.

During our conference, we came up with a simple structure for a process of interdisciplinary work. Maybe it can serve as a very basic structure to 'do' interdisciplinarity. First, start with your discipline. Second, think about its limits and its boundaries. Third, try to widen your perspective. For example, choose a method from another discipline or think about the question another discipline would pose. Talk to researchers from other disciplines. Come together and start a conversation on a common topic. What advantages are there in it for you and your research from that perspective? And lastly: Bring it together. See this as an opportunity to start doing it.

Part II **Case Studies**

Clemens Wurzinger & Christoph Heil

Performativity as a Bridge: An Interdisciplinary Look at a New Theory

1 Introduction

Texts move people – a statement that holds a central position in Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory and which many people who deal with text, writing, performance and music would instinctively agree with.[1] When the question of "why" arises, however, it is usually difficult to answer: not only are people interested in different works and different genres, but also in texts from different eras and social structures. But just because a question seems difficult to answer does not mean it is not worth trying to answer. This essay will not be able to do so in its entirety. However, it will focus and critically reflect on a theory that attempts to address this problem: the theory of performativity.

The theory of performativity seems fundamentally interesting for any discipline that deals with texts.[2] The aim here is to provide a critical reflection on the theory of performativity – especially with regard to the presentation and reading of texts ("texts as an act") – which emerged from an interdisciplinary discussion between classical philology and New Testament biblical studies in the course of our research group on "Resonant World Relations".[3] The theory of performativity often proved to be a useful "bridge" between the various disciplines, as the focus was often on the point of, What is a text supposed to do for the recipient? Should it convince, delight, inform or all of the above, and what textual structures can a text use to do this?

Performativity seems to address these questions, whereby the history of such a theory must always be taken into account. This theory in particular has a long and complicated history behind it, which is also linked to other theories. Its

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1 This happens throughout the book, but the chapter "The Power of Art" (Rosa 2016: 472–500) is certainly central.

2 The respective basic character of a text and its genre must always be included in such considerations. For the importance of the genre for analyzing a text, see Ebner and Heininger 2018: 183–240; Finnern and Rüggemeier 2016: 85–102; Schnelle 2014: 105–139.

3 The term "text as an act" used here is a reformulation of the phrase "reading as an act", which Iser coined (Iser 1994: 8) and Fischer-Lichte re-accentuated (Fischer-Lichte 2021: 165). However, since both the act of performance and the act of reading are to be dealt with here, this phrase is used as a subsumption.

long history coupled with a multitude of theoretical branches makes a brief look at the beginning of the theory necessary.[4] Chapter two of this essay ("Performativity – a Brief Outline of a Theory") will therefore take a look at the theory and its "roots".[5] In the first sub-chapter ("John Austin and the Beginning of Performativity"), the basic thesis of the speech act theory will be discussed, with brief mention of its successors; the second sub-chapter ("Theatre Performativity and the Path to the Act of Reading") paves the way to the main problem of the essay and, above all, introduces the concepts and terms used subsequently. In the third part, the main part of this article, the focus will be on lecture and reading as an act ("Reading and Performing – Texts as an Act") and presented with one example each from classical philology and biblical studies. In a brief outlook, some conclusions are drawn from the joint work on the theory of performativity.

2 Performativity – A Brief Outline of a Theory

2.1 John Austin and the Beginning of Performativity

The theory of performativity began in a series of lectures given by John Austin in 1955, published under the title *How to do things with words.* In his first lecture, Austin distinguished between performative (*performative utterances* or *performatives*) and constative statements.[6] They could be summarized as "reality-changing" and "reality-describing" statements.[7] Performative statements are therefore not only able to describe the world but can also change it.

What is important for such performative statements, however, is that these statements must follow certain rules in order to work; for example, if two children play wedding in their parents' home, this does not mean that the two children will actually be married. For Austin, the performance of social action must take place

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4 There has been excellent work on this in recent years; Hempfer 2011 will serve as the basis for the brief introduction to this essay. This is intended more as an introduction to the topic, not as a detailed description of the philosophers' thought patterns.

5 For the definition of the theory of performativity as a "rhizome", see Hempfer 2011: 13.

6 "Utterances can be found, satisfying these conditions, yet such that A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just', saying something. [...] I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'performative'". Austin 1962: 5–6.

7 Austin 1962: 4–7 (Lecture I). The decisive characteristics can thus be summarized as self-referential and reality-constructing.

within a correct and appropriate framework; the participants and performers must perform the action correctly and completely; the performers must be honestly involved in the performance: certain emotions and thoughts must be considered and incorporated.[8]

Subsequently, however, Austin realized that his theory needed more precision and designed three dimensions for each utterance, which were to characterize his speech act theory. According to Austin, the speech act of performative statements can be divided into three parts: locution (locutionary act), illocution (illocutionary act) and perlocution (perlocutionary act).[9] Locution is about the utterance itself, i.e., the production of sounds within a certain grammar with reference to reality ("saying something"). Illocution describes the execution of the socially conventional speech act (here "question, request, warning, recommendation and threat" are cited as examples – "doing something *in* saying something"). Perlocution describes the effect that this speech act has, for example "convincing, changing minds, annoying and unsettling" ("doing something *by* saying something").[10]

This theory subsequently found both supporters and critics, who will only be mentioned here in passing; a more thorough discussion can be found in philosophically more sound articles. The most important researchers who have dealt with Austin's theories in one form or another are Jacques Derrida, who probably unintentionally made an important contribution to the theory of performativity by introducing "repeatability" and "citability", and Judith Butler, who added the theory of the social construction of gender.[11]

2.2 Theatre Performativity and the Path to the Act of Reading

The theory of performativity has had a major impact on theatre and ritual research over the last 100 years, which has to do above all with the theories of

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8 For these rules, see Austin 1962: 14–15 (Lecture II). The rules that have been labelled with a Γ ("honesty of the remarks") seem particularly important for the further considerations.

9 From the eighth lecture onwards, Austin talks about the "locutionary", "illocutionary" and "perlocutionary act", Austin 1962: 94–107 (Lecture VIII). It should be mentioned, however, that this separation and thought had already been prepared in the seventh lecture.

10 See for the three quotations Austin 1962: 94 (Lecture VIII).

11 Derrida dealt with the theory of performativity above all in his essay "Signature, événement, context", for repeatability and quotability see Derrida 1972. For additional basic ideas of Derrida and Butler on the theory of performativity in German translation see Derrida 2002 and Butler 2002.

van Gennep, Turner, Tambiah and Fischer-Lichte and should ultimately lead to the central topic, namely the performativity of literary texts. We will take a brief look at ritual theories and then take a closer look at performative theatre research in the form of Fischer-Lichte's theories, as these are central to understanding the performativity of the "act of reading" and are related to them. The "historical course" of the theory nevertheless seems central, as important moments and preliminary considerations for the "act of reading" can be found here.

Van Gennep was the father of the highly influential theory of "rites of passage", which, according to his theories, enable both individual subjects and entire societies to transition from one status to another. Many groups of rituals were categorized by van Gennep in this way, such as the birth and death rituals. Van Gennep divided such rituals into three phases, although these can of course be mixed in detail.[12] Firstly, the separation phase: "detachment" from the everyday context. Secondly, the threshold or transformation phase: those to be transformed are introduced into a liminal state, a threshold phase that "hovers" between the old and new social situation (liminality). Lastly, the incorporation phase: the transferee is reintroduced into the social context. Turner fundamentally agreed with the theories, but also coined the term *communitas:* a society that has gone through a phase of *liminality* together – through a ritual – creates a new "communality" and thus a new identity created in the ritual.[13] It is clear that in both cases there is a seed of the theory of the performativity of rituals, even if the term is not used directly.[14] The ritual acts – in which some form of utterance usually

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[12] Fischer-Lichte 2021: 18. In the (translated) words of van Gennep 1960: 21: "Consequently, I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites,* those executed during the transitional stage *liminal* (or *threshold*) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *postliminal rites.*"

[13] Turner emphasizes in particular the "equality" of the ritual participants in this special moment of liminality, Turner 1991: 96: "It is as though there are here two major 'models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less.' The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders. I prefer the Latin term 'communitas' to 'community,' to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living'."

[14] Although Turner 2002: 193–209 used the term "performative" (but mainly with regard to the English term *performance*).

plays a central role – create and change subjects in societies and, as a result, the entire society as such.[15]

The "theoretical root" of performative theatre studies developed at a similar time; Erika Fischer-Lichte can probably be described as the main representative of the performativity theory of theatre plays. Her theory, similar to that of Austin and the aforementioned philosophers, is too multifaceted to do justice to in this short chapter. The basic considerations will nevertheless be presented, as she offers important building blocks for "reading as an act" and also deals directly with the theory and modifies it. For Fischer-Lichte, a theatre play is a performative work of art in that it is – like Austin's *performatives* – self-referential and reality-constructing.[16] The concrete moment of the performance is thus a unique event that seems to have transformative power in the sense of Austin for all actors and the audience, very much in the sense of a ritual. The central points of her theory will be summarized here, as these are also decisive for the performativity of texts:[17] The first central point is *bodily co-presence:* every form of performance, but in particular the theatre play, lives from a back and forth between actors who act and spectators who react to what they see; the performance is not only produced by the actors, but also by the spectators. Every performance of a theatre play seems to be a new one – even if it is the same play and the audience consists of the same people. Secondly, Fischer-Lichte discusses the concept of *spatiality:* for her, spatiality does not mean the physical spatiality of the theatre performance, but rather the space of the performance itself, which is created performatively during the act and thus serves the fleeting moment of the performance primarily through an immersive function for the actors, but also for the audience. Thirdly, *physicality:* actions are performed in the theatre; this happens – in whatever form – via the body. For Fischer-Lichte, the connection between the phenomenal and semiotic body within the performance seems crucial; however, this applies not

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15 Tambiah 2003: 230 finally even formulated a performative definition of ritual: "Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It consists of structured and ordered sequences of words and actions, which are often expressed through multiple media and whose content and composition are more or less characterized by: Formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion) and redundancy (repetition). Ritual action is performative in three ways: firstly in the sense of Austin, according to which saying something also means doing something (as a conventional action); secondly in the completely different sense of a dramatic performance, in which the participants use different media and experience the event intensively; and finally in a third meaning in the sense of an indexical value (the term comes from Peirce), which the actors ascribe to the performance during the performance and derive from it."

16 Fischer-Lichte 2021: 35.

17 These central ideas by Fischer-Lichte are taken from the introductory work "Performativity. An Introduction to Cultural Studies" (Fischer-Lichte 2021: 63 – 81).

only to the individual actors, but also to the interplay between the various physicalities. The phenomenal body here is the "physical" body of the actor, which produces the semiotic body in the play, created through the embodiment of a character in a play. Fourthly, *phonetics:* phonetics appears to be the decisive link between the various branches of Fischer-Lichte's theory. The voices of the actors – in some cases also of the audience – for her characterize three forms of materiality, namely spatiality, corporeality and phonetics. The voice not only permeates the body of the actors, but also that of the audience, thus connecting them via the three "forms" of materiality. Fifthly, *rhythm:* a play takes up a certain amount of time; for Fischer-Lichte, the organization of this time is defined primarily by rhythm. However, this rhythm does not have to be a constant beat but is rather characterized by its constant transformation of repetitions and "deviations" from these repetitions. This rhythm defines a piece in a special way and turns every performance into a unique moment. Sixth, *perception/creation of meaning:* For Fischer-Lichte, the perception of the play by "others", who at the same time give the play meaning, is of great importance. A distinction is made here between three levels, "perception of (1) self-referential phenomena, (2) of different symbolic orders and (3) as a leap of perception between (1) and (2)".[18] Firstly, this refers to the perception of phenomena that occur within the performance; secondly, it refers to the symbolic assignments that occur through the moment of the performance; thirdly, it refers to the fact that (1) and (2) can always change within the performance, thus creating a back and forth between the two levels. Finally, the central point of the *eventfulness of performances:* performances are thus to be understood as unique events, since the staging of the respective play might be the same, but not the connections between actors and spectators within the performance. Fischer-Lichte emphasizes the lack of power of disposition of a performance, which can be compared to the important momentum of unavailability in Rosa's resonance theory.[19]

Such considerations on the transformative power of rituals and plays can be found from the very beginnings of theater theories, including prominently Aristotle's theories, which were widely received and were to shape theatre research in

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18 Fischer-Lichte 2021: 78.
19 The topic of unavailability will be discussed later; Rosa dedicated the entire book "Unverfügbarkeit" (Unavailability), published in 2018 (⁷2020), to this topic, which of course also appears frequently in the main book *Resonanz* 2016; for a brief summary of this central area of resonance theory, see Rosa 2020: 43–44.

later times.[20] Let's take a brief look at the Aristotelian text of the *Poetics* and what we can determine for our research question (*Poetics* 1449b):

> ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας [25] καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾿ ἀπαγγελίας, δι᾿ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

> Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotion.
> (Text and translation: Halliwell 1995)

The exact translation of the terms μίμησις and κάθαρσις has probably been debated since the first translations of this text appeared; an in-depth discussion cannot be offered here.[21] The precise details of the structuring of tragedy and exactly which elements or emotions trigger a transformation – or in Aristotle's words, 'purification' – can also be argued about. However, it seems clear that a change in the self–world relations of a subject or group through participation and 'co-presence' was already assumed in antiquity – at least by Aristotle. Hall 2017 emphasizes some important problems for our question:

> Aristotle seems reluctant to commit to a more specific account of what happens during the process of catharsis, in whom the process takes place, and in what physical and social context. It is not even clear whether he is thinking about a collective process in which many people undergo catharsis together, or an individual process taking place in a single, atomised psyche.[22]

In addition to this multitude of unresolved areas, the question of whether Aristotle even saw theatre performances of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the work he is mainly concerned with, seems very important for us – does one have to be part of a performance of the play or can this transformation also occur for him through a reading process? Hall ultimately comes to the conclusion that texts should at least not be excluded in the treatment of this passage from Aristotle.[23] With this question, if

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20 It is not possible to provide an overview of the long history of research on this topic here; Hall 2017, which presents the cornerstones of this passage, should be mentioned as a new and appropriate article on the topic of performativity and transformation.

21 With regard to the terminology, reference should be made here to Hoessly 2001: 17–20 and to the entire article by Hall 2017.

22 Hall 2017: 27.

23 Hall 2017: 28, among others, raises this important question: "Since Aristotle had a substantial personal library, and was working at the moment in history when Athenians were beginning to be concerned about the lack of authorized, canonical written versions of the tragedies regarded as

we go back to the beginning of this chapter, we might explain what all this preface is about – should not something about the performativity of written texts standing alone be presented here, rather than something about theatre and rituals? However, these preliminary considerations seem crucial for the main part of this chapter, namely the performativity of texts. Can a text that is read for itself and is detached from a performance in the sense of a theatre play or a ritual also have performative and transformative powers on a subject and consequently on societies?

3 Reading and Performing – Texts as an Act

3.1 Reading as an Act

Texts move people – we began this essay thus, but so far we have only shown that *performances*, rituals, theatre plays and public readings can change their respective participants and audiences. To the point, it is not so much what is said that changes the participants, but the combination of text in a certain social setting, which is generally referred to as "performance". But can a text that can be read alone and in silence change a person's relationships with the world?[24]

Many people would instinctively affirm this. How often do we read a book and our view of the world seems to change? How often does a simple saying or proverb seem to change our relationships with the world – at least temporarily? This phenomenon also seems to be addressed by the theory of performativity on top of reception aesthetics or *reader-response criticism.* Let's take a brief look at the theory of "reading as an act".

The concept of "reading as an act" was coined by Wolfgang Iser, although – as in the case of the implicit reader – he leaves no clear definition in his works.[25] The

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meriting a place on the library shelf as well as in the performance repertoire of dramatic 'classics', we may be expected to include the arousal of pity and fear in the *reader*, as well."

24 There has long been a debate about whether texts were *always read aloud* or quietly in antiquity. In recent years, the myth that texts were only read aloud has been met with harsh and justified scientific resistance. Texts were read silently and alone, which makes an application of this theory in antiquity appear quite reasonable; especially when one considers that poems and collections of poems were of course not only recited, but always also became "book poems" for a reading audience. The elegies of Tibullus are thus understood in the following example – since we know little about the performance conditions of poems in antiquity – as "reading poems". For a detailed discussion of reading aloud and silently, see Busch 2002; Elder 2024: 7–37; Heilmann 2021: 41–56; Hurtado 2014.

25 Iser 1994: 7.

new approach of the school of effect and reception aesthetics around Jauss and Iser can be summarized with one term: *Wirkmacht.* Jauss and Iser asked about the relationship between text and recipient, not just about the text and words alone. Jauss initially coined the concept of the horizon of expectation, which now asked not only about the interpretation, but also about the circumstances and prior knowledge of the recipient, thus providing the researcher with an instrument for analyzing texts.[26] Iser coined the concept of the implicit reader, i.e., the reader who is implicit in the text. A text is no longer understood as a medium from which a specific meaning can be extracted, but which can only be clarified in the interplay between the text and its reception by an individual; a literary text thus unfolds its effect in the reading process: for Iser, this is the "act of reading".[27]

This was taken up by Fischer-Lichte and the theory of performativity, which now addressed the question if a text, in particular a literary text, can also be performative or can only be performative in the context of a performance. Fischer-Lichte believes that reading can be interpreted as an act of incorporation and "immersion in the world of what is read" as a liminal state; various transformations are possible as a result.[28]

However, as there is a risk of conflating two levels that need to be kept separate in the analysis – namely the level of the text elements that enable the recipients to immerse themselves in the performance situation and the transformative level that focuses on the readers – a distinction was made between structural and functional performativity in the special research area of "Performative Cultures".[29] Structural performativity examines the textual elements that could trigger immersive moments in the performance situation for the recipients, but could also create a liminal state. Functional performativity now describes "what" the text triggers, i.e., its "cultural effectiveness".[30]

Let's start with structural performativity. In order to be able to analyze a text with this theory, the elements of structural performativity must first be defined and then found in the text, and subsequently the effects of the text in interaction with the recipients must be reflected upon.[31] Fischer-Lichte herself does not delin-

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26 Jauß 1982: 749.

27 Iser 1994: 60–61. See for a detailed and informative discussion Willand 2014: 269.

28 Fischer-Lichte 2021: 165. For the liminal state, see Turner 2003: 251–261.

29 Velten 2009: 552 and Fischer-Lichte 2021: 165.

30 Fischer-Lichte 2021: 165–166. See also Velten 2009: 552.

31 This comment is by no means intended to allow the level of functional performativity to slip into the speculative realm, but it is intended to make it more precise: when we talk about the reception of texts – especially ancient texts – we must be aware of the methodological problem that we can never make absolute statements. However, this does not make the endeavor to ask about

eate the elements that are to be seen as structurally performative. However, Velten defines it as

> Text strategies that serve to stage presence, orality and corporeality and integrate 'performances' into the narrative or dramatic realization. This 'performance in the text' includes the faking of oral communication, the simulation of theatrical image sequences and eventful exclamations, effects of presence and sensuality, stagings of physical liveliness and emotionality.[32]

In short, structurally performative elements are text passages that incorporate "theatrical" elements into the text, even though it is to be understood as a reading text. However, it seems important not only to name these elements, but also to try to justify them: Why are these text structures able to draw the reader into the text and put them in a liminal state? Let's briefly discuss the individual elements of this structural performativity:

1) Faking of oral communication. When texts call "actors" onto the stage of the imagination, this creates a small theatre play in our heads in which we as participants can immerse ourselves in the form of a co-presence. This refers not only to the representation of oral communication in the form of a conversation on stage, but also in particular to the monologue: An inner monologue,[33] which seems to address the recipients, is in our opinion particularly performative, as it often seems to actively involve the recipients. As a text from classical philology, the inner monologues of Medea in the *Argonautica* (e.g., 3.771ff.) should be mentioned here; in the New Testament, it is particularly Luke who offers inner monologues: Luke 12:17–19, 45; 15:17–19; 16:3–4; 18:4–5; 20:13.[34] Apart from Luke 12:45 (par. Matt 24:48), these are special texts of Luke,[35] probably included editorially.[36]

2) Simulating theatrical image sequences. Once again, we find a text element that is intended to create a performance in our minds, in which we can participate

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these any less important; texts are and have always been there to be read, which means that the question of reception and response can – in our opinion – be described as the central question of any literary study. Filtering out an "absolute truth" or the "central opinion" of a text is also subject to many methodological difficulties.

32 Velten 2009: 552.

33 Cf. Fludernik 2013: 93–102, 174; Lahn and Meister 2016: 135–136; Martínez and Scheffel 2012: 62–66.

34 Cf. Dinkler 2015; Heininger 1991: 31–82; Sellew 1992.

35 This refers to texts that Luke did not take from one of his two sources, the Sayings Gospel Q or the Gospel of Mark.

36 Matthew is also interested in the inner monologue, which becomes clear in Mt 9:21, for example, where he recreates an inner monologue when he takes up Mk 5:28. Cf. Sellew 1992: 251.

more or less intensively – however the text is designed. A sequence is not depicted exactly as a single image in all its details, but as a sequence of images that create a small "performance". For Velten, *theatrical* seems to be the combination of descriptive elements that could be used in a performance: We not only see the images, but also "hear, smell, taste and feel" them under certain circumstances.[37] A well-known example of this is Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* the story of Apollo and Daphne (1.525 ff.) is particularly tangible here. In the New Testament, the parables in the synoptic tradition should be mentioned, some of which have a dramatic character (cf. Matt 20:1–16; Matt 22:1–14 par. Luke 14:15–24; Matt 25:14–30 par. Luke 19:11–27; Luke 15:11–32), but also the infancy narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as well as the passion narratives in all four New Testament Gospels.

3) Eventful exclamations. Eventful exclamations emphasize what has already been said and create effects of emotionality and physicality through their liveliness. If we remember the faking of orality as the first point, exclamations appear to be particularly effective examples of such a fiction: the recipients are almost called upon, one wants to respond to "What am I supposed to do?" – if of the right disposition – and thus become part of the "performance".[38] The best-known example of this is Cicero's opening of the speech against Catiline. In the New Testament, we can think of Paul's diatribe-like questions (cf. Rom 2:3–4, 17–24; 1 Cor 15:29; Gal 3:1–5).

4) Effects of presence, sensuality and physical liveliness. These seem to summarize the previous elements: All of the text passages mentioned attempt to involve the recipients through the fictional creation of a scene in motion. Beings – of whatever kind – are brought onto the stage, they are not only described, but rather presented in their actions, behavior, and speech, in their physicality and emotionality, and thus become an immersive reality for the moment of reading.

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37 A legitimate objection here would be whether such descriptions can really be "smelled, tasted and felt". After all, a description remains a description. However, it seems clear to us that certain words pre-code certain sensory experiences.

38 An interesting aspect here seems to be "metaleptic calls". Metalepsis is a term coined by Genette that deals specifically with the break between the intra- and extratextual levels; famous examples of this are, above all, actors addressing the audience. Calls such as "How could you?" as opposed to "How could he?" are of course addressed to the intratextual recipients, but in emotionally exciting and immersive moments they also affect the extratextual ones, as it were, and thus draw the recipients into the text. This should also include the constant use of the literary "we"; if a *we* is constantly addressed in a work – even if directed at the intratextual level – it also has inclusive function.

These text structures can be compared with the elements that Fischer-Lichte particularly attributes to the performativity of theatre plays: The recipients are called into the scene, and subsequently perhaps also into the work in the sense of a "co-presence". Physicality, spatiality and phonetics are faked; each reader finds their own rhythm in the "act of reading", allowing the *personae* of the play to appear in precisely this rhythm. Perception and the associated creation of meaning seem comparable to that of a theatre play; just like the performance of a theatre play, the reading process is a unique event that is not repeatable in the same form.[39] This point can be seen as decisive for the question of the emergence of an experience of resonance through art in general. Art and literature in particular are characterized by the inability of humanity to become the master of the work of art. It thus represents the basic principle of the antithesis of availability and unavailability.[40] It is precisely this "participation" in a fictional world, this immersion, that can be described as the central moment for the second major level of performativity, the functional level. Velten defines functional performativity in the following way:

> Functional performativity refers to the effects and dynamics that a text unfolds at the interface with its recipients. Like speech acts, texts can also constitute reality, for example by triggering laughter or tears and thus creating community, provoking feelings of hatred or revenge or exerting influence on the cultural modelling of emotional patterns through the iterative use of their staging.[41]

Functional performativity thus refers to the effects that the reading process triggers in the recipients. However, Velten's view of emotions is too one-dimensional here. The elements of structural performativity discussed above seem to involve the recipients – again, if of the right disposition – in the world of the work and thus enable a form of immersion in the performance situation. This does not mean that it explains why we experience emotional responses and possibly even emotional immersion in a story and characters when we read literature. This is a gap that the field of emotion studies in particular is trying to close. Certain areas of emotion studies are not only concerned with the naming and representa-

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39 This does not mean that you can only "really" read a book once, but rather that the eventful character of a reading process should be emphasized. Every reading process is predetermined by our relationship to the world. If this changes, the reading process and thus the experience of the act can also change. A book therefore never remains the same for us. See also the moment of transformation in Rosa 2020: 41–43 as a decisive moment for a resonance relationship.
40 See for the four dimensions of unavailability Rosa 2020: 21–23 and for their significance for a resonance relationship Rosa 2020: 43–46.
41 Velten 2009: 552.

tion of emotions, but above all with the generation of emotions in the recipients.[42] This seems to be of crucial importance for our question of a change in the world relations of subjects, since it is above all through an emotional connection to the characters and the world of a work – whether in a positive sense through sympathy and empathy or their opposites – that we can experience the story and events and thus often become an emotional part of the work or of some characters therein.[43] In recent years, Simone Winko and her student Claudia Hillebrandt in particular have been working on a text-centered analysis of emotion-generating structures, which can be said to at least offer responses to the recipients in the form of emotions.[44] While Winko dealt with lyrical texts, Hillebrandt worked on German narrative texts and refined the analytical grid that Winko had presented. To further emphasize the importance of emotion studies for functional performativity, we can consider the example of the novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, which Fischer-Lichte mentions in her discussion of the "effects" of texts:

> *The young Goethe's Werther novel had a completely different effect. Young men who suffered from lovesickness and felt misunderstood in the bourgeois order modelled themselves after Werther. They dressed in blue tailcoats and yellow waistcoats and, in the worst cases, even committed suicide.* To prevent his novel from having such an effect, Goethe prefaced further editions of The Sorrows of Young Werther with the sentence, "Be a man and don't follow him!".[45]

Reading texts can hit the "pulse of time" in such a way that subjects' relationships with the world suddenly change, even to extremes such as suicide.[46] However, if we read through the example again carefully, Fischer-Lichte includes something that does not seem to be discussed in structural performativity: the emotional situation of the recipients. Fischer-Lichte decidedly emphasizes the "young men who suffered from lovesickness and felt misunderstood in the bourgeois order", i.e., the disposition of the recipients. This is where emotion studies emerge as an important component of the analysis, as they ask how and why text structures manage to generate an emotional response. These must be analyzed from text to text in their re-

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42 Hillebrandt 2011: 11.

43 For the concept of "emotional immersion" see Ryan 2001: 148–157.

44 Winko 2003 and Hillebrandt 2011.

45 Fischer-Lichte 2021: 169–170.

46 What Fischer-Lichte describes has become known as the "Werther effect". It should be noted, however, that there is a dispute in academic research as to whether Goethe's text and its reception really triggered the suicide attempts.

spective societal and social context – merely being drawn into the text by structural performative elements seems too little for a change in self-world relations.[47]

Before we try our hand at examples, namely an elegy by the Augustan poet Tibullus and the *Letter to the Galatians* in the New Testament, we would like to show the links between the theory of performativity and emotion studies and Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory, which is also intended to place the mentioned literary theories in sociological discourses. In his resonance theory, Hartmut Rosa attempts to provide a possible answer to the question of what constitutes a good life. He holds that it is a certain responsive relationship of the subject to the world and to individual parts of it to that leads to a life that can be described as a "good" life. For such a resonant relationship, art seems to be a very central aspect, as Rosa often emphasizes.[48] He names four central points that enable such a resonant relationship with the world or a section of the world: 1) Affection – the world touches and affects the subject; 2) Emotion – the subject responds to this touch;[49] 3) Transformation – through this affection and emotion, both sides are transformed; 4) Unavailability – the three elements and thus a resonant experience and relationship can never be forced, which is represented by the concept of unavailability.[50] In his main text from 2016, Rosa never presents us with an analysis of a work of art and how it can provide the impetus for an experience of resonance, but the links to the theory of performativity and emotion studies should be mentioned here.

1) Affection. The aforementioned elements of structural performativity seem to be designed in particular to affect the recipients. The recipients are actively sought to be drawn into the work; immersion in the fictional world and the work itself in the act of reading thus seems central. They can become part of the performance in the form of a co-presentation. Emotion-generating structures are also used in texts in order to touch the lifeworld and thus the recipients themselves. When Tibullus, who spent a large part of his life in civil war-like conditions, speaks of war in his elegies, the term and the rejection of this term have a completely different meaning than the term has for modern recipients untouched by experiences of war.

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47 For the analysis grid, see Winko 2003 (for "thematization" 111–114, for "presentation" 114–119). For text structures that can trigger empathy and sympathy or their opposites according to Winko and Hillebrandt, see Hillebrandt 2011 (76–88 [empathy], 88–102 [sympathy], 102–103 [summary]).
48 Refer again to the chapter "The power of art" in Rosa 2016: 472–500.
49 Rosa does not use the term emotion as it is used in common parlance and also in emotion studies, but derives it from the "Latin" as "response" (*E→movere*). See Rosa 2016: 298.
50 Rosa 2020, especially 116–123.

2) Emotion. Just as structurally performative and emotion-generating elements involve the recipients, they demand a response. This is inscribed in the text as an offer: by participating in the performance, a reaction to it is usually pre-structured in the text. This can be related above all to emotion studies. Certain text passages are aimed at a response – in this case an emotional one – which can be seen as significant for the next point of transformation.

3) Transformation. For Rosa, the decisive point of a resonance relationship is the transformation of the relationship between the affecting section of the world and the responding subject: both sides no longer remain the same as they were before. This is an important point of reference, as the theory of performativity in the form of functional performativity also assumes changes and thus transformations of self–world relationships. An intratextual transformation appears here – with a view to the concept of "emotional immersion" as a central point for the offer of an extratextual transformation of the recipients.

4) Unavailability. A resonant relationship can never be forced. This is firmly anchored in the theory of performativity, if we think, for example, of the liminal state in ritual, for which the disposition of the initiator can be seen as central, or of Austin's *performative state.*

Performativity in conjunction with emotion studies thus seems to be able to answer at least part of the question of resonance, even if we have to take probabilities in reception theory considerations into account, especially where we consider antiquity. With resonance theory as a major superstructure in conjunction with the theories of performativity and emotion studies, texts can thus be analyzed for their implicit transformation processes and thus for their offers of resonance.

3.2 Tibullus's Elegy 1.3: Through the Night into a New Day

In the following, *Elegy* 1.3 by Albius Tibullus will be analyzed from the perspective of the above-mentioned theories for structures that can be described as performative on the one hand, and for structures that generate emotions on the other. Overall, the textual offers for the transformation of self–world relations will be analyzed. We will consider primarily the opening passage (v. 1–4), the middle section (v. 53–56) and the closing passage (v. 83–94) rather than the entire text, with transitional and summarizing comments on the other verses of the elegy.

The opening verses of *Elegy* 1.3 show the poetic I in a desperate situation.[51] Messalla's *cohors* will cross the Aegean waters without it (*Ibitis Aegaeas sine me, Messalla, per undas*, v. 1), leaving the I alone. Even the first verse is performative and emotion-generating, as it is addressed in the form of a direct call to the poetic I's companions. It employs the future tense:[52] However, the I already seems to be alone at the moment of speaking and will remain so throughout the elegy.[53] This brings, firstly, more liveliness and movement into the picture; secondly, the fiction of orality is maintained by the direct address of the companions in the future tense. The opening passage is again in the form of an inner monologue that seems to draw recipients into the "performance" of the text.[54] This first verse is followed by an emotional request to the *cohors* to remember the I (*o utinam memores ipse cohorsque mei*, v. 2). Once again, we have performative structures that offer the highly emotional theme of loneliness and distance and could therefore generate both empathy and sympathy in the recipient. This dramatic situation is reinforced in verses 3–4, when the I is left, having fallen ill, on the island of *Phaeacia* (*Me tenet ignotis aegrum Phaeacia terris*, v. 3), whereby its helplessness is further emphasized by the passive depiction: it is actively held back by the island of *Phaeacia* on unknown lands.[55] In addition to the general references to the *Odyssey*, the "remaining behind" on an island seems to allude to two episodes from the Trojan legends: on the one hand, Philoctetus, who was left behind due to his stinking

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[51] And in contrast to his ideal of life in *Elegy* 1.1, see Henniges 1979: 100–101 and Mutschler 1985: 67.

[52] This is noteworthy here, since the subject clearly presents himself as already abandoned; in the tradition of propemptica we often find the future tense here at the beginning (e. g., Hor. Epod. 1.1–2 and Prop. 1.6.34; see Keith 2014: 479 for the passages).

[53] Elter 1906: 270; Bright 1971: 198; Murgatroyd 1980: 99–100, 102; Maltby 2002: 184–185 and Kuhlmann 2006: 423 correctly emphasize here that this first verse follows the ancient tradition of the propemptica and takes up many elements of it, but applies it to the person left behind, not to the travelers, as Bettenworth 2016: 89 n. 4 holds. This generates interest and further intensifies the emotional situation of these first verses. Murgatroyd 1980: 99 additionally mentions the importance and frequent repetition of the themes of these first verses, namely death and distance, which have a particular emotion-generating character for the recipients of this period.

[54] For the term inner monologue see Multschler 1985: 51 and 66; Wimmel 1968: 183–184.

[55] Contrary to the activity of Messalla and the *cohors.* See Lee-Stecum 1998: 102–104 and Maltby 2002: 185. See also Mills 1973/74 for a detailed discussion of the importance of the island of *Phaeacia* for this elegy. The island of *Phaeacia* has often been interpreted as Corfu even in antiquity; Tibullus' travelling with Messalla on his campaign to the east depends on this poem and is not a tenable piece of information. However, this does not prevent many modern commentators from following the poet in this (see most recently Miller 2022: 99 ("Thus in 1.3, Tibullus recounts how he was supposed to join Messalla on his expedition to the East after the battle of Actium but fell ill and was forced to remain on Corcyra (modern Corfu) [...]")).

wound, which could be alluded to by the *aegrum* of *Elegy* 1.3; on the other hand, Elpenor, who was left behind without burial on the island of Kirke after falling from a high roof.[56] The mixture of intertextual references to the *Odyssey* in conjunction with the reference to Elpenor and Philoctetus further emphasizes the emotional character of these verses. The clarification of the situation is followed by an emphatic wish to personified Death that he hold off his greedy hands (*abstineas avidas Mors, precor, atra manus.*, v. 4), which seems to invoke Death as an additional "character" in terms of performative structures. In addition, the frequent use of *precor,* which gives the elegy a prayer-like character, should already be noted here. The frequent repetition at the beginning and end of the elegy (verses 4, 5, 83 and 93) almost turns the elegy into a prayer of the self, which reinforces the already emotional setting and makes it more tangible for the recipients. The combination of performative and emotion-generating structures not only creates a stage for the imagination, but also allows for emotional closeness, empathy and sympathy with the poetic I and, subsequently, identification with its situation and *persona.*

The clear connection between this depiction and the presentation of the I as a stranded Odysseus has already been analyzed many times.[57] However, it is worth analyzing these verses from the perspective of emotion studies and resonance. Not only is the theme of death in foreign lands highly emotionally coded per se,[58] the added intertextual level of the *Odyssey* seems to reinforce the emotional structures: As in the proemium of the *Odyssey,* a man is introduced, far from home and in constant danger of death, which invokes the emotional setting of the *Odyssey* and the situation of Odysseus. In addition, the relationship to *Elegy* 1.2 should be mentioned: the I, who in the last verses of *Elegy* 1.2 asked for mercy from Venus (*At mihi parce, Venus: semper tibi dedita servit / mens mea: Quid messes uris acerba tuas?*, v. 1.2.99 – 100) now seems to have been punished by a deity after all. The silencing of the vertical axis between man and gods could thus be prepared. The links to the *Odyssey* are found not only in the island of *Phaeacia* and the loneliness caused by the loss of the companions, but also in the situation as such: A god prevents and punishes the subject with loneliness, probably because he went on a campaign with Messalla. This is an action that the I had mocked in *Elegy* 1.2 and described as sacrilegious (*Ferreus ille fuit, qui, te cum posset habere / maluerit prae-*

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56 The reference to Elpenor was found by Lee-Stecum 1998: 103 – 104.

57 Eisenberger 1960: 188 – 197; Bright 1971 and 1978: 17 – 37; Murgatroyd 1980: 100, 103, whereby he sees the connections to Odysseus "not as extensively as some scholars"; Lee-Stecum 1998: 103 – 104; Maltby 2002: 186 and Kuhlmann 2006.

58 For the theme of death for the Roman recipients, see Maltby 2002: 186.

das stultus et arma sequi, v. 1.2.67– 68).[59] In the terms of resonance theory considerations, the complete alienation on the horizontal and vertical axes is noteworthy. Here, the I is not only abandoned by Delia, but by its comrades (horizontal axis). Similarly, on the vertical axis, it appears to be abandoned by the gods.

The situation is now further specified. Black death is to stay away when the last minutes of the I seem to have come; there is no family or loved ones here who could pay their last respects (*non hic mihi mater* / ... / *non soror ...* / ... / *Delia non usquam*, vv. 5 – 9). The verses in connection with this funereal mourning image create a gloomy, even desperate picture. The I finds himself in a completely alienated situation with regard to all four axes of resonance (vertical: loss of family and friends as well as the beloved Delia; horizontal: divine help is completely absent despite the danger of death; diagonal: the Roman's task as commander is a sphere of alienation for the I as well as the missing objects in the overall lack of a funeral ritual).

Delia and the poetic I, as is told in the following verses as a flashback, have tried everything to avert the journey, in various rituals. Unfortunately, the signs always pointed to a successful return (vv. 9 – 20). Cupid never lets anyone out of his clutches unpunished. Even the main goddess of chaste Delia, Isis, can only help to a limited extent. On the contrary, she works against Cupid through her rules of chastity (vv. 21 – 34). After a brief description of the Golden Age under Saturn and the current Iron Age of Jupiter, we return to the situation of the subject on the island. He is about to die and prays to presumably Jupiter once more (*Parce, Pater: timidum non me periuria terrent*, / *non dicta in sanctos impia verba deos*, vv. 51– 52).

After the conclusion of the Ages with a prayer, the I now reimagines his death. If the I has now already completed its given years, then a gravestone should be erected over the bones (*Quodsi fatales iam nunc explevimus annos*, / *fac lapis inscriptis stet super ossa notis*, v. 53 – 54). Once again, the text passage is extremely performative when we are pulled into the momentary situation of the poetic I by *iam nunc*, hear the imperative *fac*, whereby the gravestone is erected in our imagination. Another mediality, that of an inscription in stone, is brought into the text, underlining the eternity and final death of the subject. There is a lively discussion, which began with Elter in 1906, as to who the subject of *fac* could be. In terms of the performative structures of this elegy, this *fac* does not necessarily have to be addressed to Jupiter or Delia, but is meant more as a performative call in the style of Tibullus. One now sets up this gravestone, which leads to this

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59 Compare Alfonsi 1946: 27– 28; Bright 1971: 150; Mutschler 1985: 66 ("'Tibullus' has obviously gone against his previously expressed resolutions and has set out – like a second 'ferreus' (1.2.7 f) – to follow Messalla, wealth and fame") and Kuhlmann 2006: 423.

stone "being set up", at least in reading process of these verses through the recipients. The theme of death seems once again – as in the beginning of the poem – to be a strong emotional marker for empathizing with the subject, creating a connection to its situation. The I awakens from his dream; it lies near death on the island of *Phaeacia*.[60] This time, however, we even read his epitaph: *HIC IACET INMITI CONSVMPTVS MORTE TIBVLLVS / MESSALLAM TERRA DVM SEQVITVRQVE MARI*.[61] This inscription is particularly striking because of one special feature, namely in that it does not depict and immortalize the poetic I – although aware of the power and his own alleged disobedience of Cupid – as *miles amoris,* into which he saw himself transform in *Elegy* 1.1 and whose orders he at least tried to obey in *Elegy* 1.2, but as a classical soldier in Messalla's train, who was still depicted in *Elegy* 1.1 as the antithesis of the I's ideal existence.[62] The phrase *terra marique* in particular should be mentioned as a famous military phrase. The tombstone can be seen as a special marker for the end of a Roman aristocratic man, as this type of inscription and tombstone was the standard for members of the Roman elite.[63] The I now dreams of his own gravestone, but not in the idealized manner of its life in *Elegy* 1.1, but as a soldier in the retinue of a great general. Despite his loyalty to Messalla and his willingness to follow him – in other words, classical Roman aristocratic principles – the poetic I cannot escape his death, which shows the "futility", as Eisenberger calls it, of his deeds as a classical soldier.[64] The I thus erects the grave marker of a nobleman, something that it rejected completely in *Elegy* 1.1, one that does not even mention beloved Delia and the deities and in the style of a "classical" soldier.[65]

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60 However, Murgatroyd 1980: 116–117 correctly emphasizes that the epigram and thus the "death" of the I also looks into the "future": The passage into Elysium and Tartarus is thus already being prepared. Eisenberger 1960: 197 formulates: "The first part shows Tibullus looking backwards: it brings him only painful and repeatedly depressing insights that ultimately point to death as an undeserved but unavoidable end. The second part, however, is a look into the future: it leads him back to life precisely through the experience of death, then the memory of Delia: to existence in love, which is based on mutual fidelity."

61 For a detailed look at this inscription, see Bettenworth 2016: 88–100.

62 This is also shown by the fact that the structure and choice of words resemble those of ancient soldiers' epitaphs, as Maltby 2002: 202 shows using the example of *CIL* 6.16913 = *CLE* 1185.10 (*per mare, per terras subsequitur dominum*) and *CIL* 11.4991 = *CLE* 1845.3 (*per freta per terr[as sedula] dum sequ[itur]*). See also Bright 1971: 202 ("Tibullus accordingly gives a soldier's epitaph, not a lover's."). For the "transformation" of the I in *Elegy* 1.1 into a *miles amoris,* see Wurzinger 2023.

63 For the attempt of inscriptions to trigger an emotional effect on the recipients, see Chaniotis 2012: 91–130.

64 Eisenberger 1960: 192.

65 See Maltby 2002: 201 ("T.'s is remarkable for the absence of any reference to Delia or love poetry").

The path of the "hero" of our elegy seems to have come to an end – but as is so often the case in ancient literature, death does not bring an end to the poem, but rather opens up a new sphere, namely the sphere of the underworld. In contrast to the classical telling of the myth, this version is dominated by Cupid and Venus: Cupid as supreme god, Venus as *psychopome* (*Sed me, quod facilis tenero sum semper Amori, / ipsa Venus campos ducet in Elysios*, v. 57– 58). The Elysium is depicted as a perfect place as it was in *Elegy* 1.1, and at the same time above all as the heaven of lovers (*Hic iuvenum series teneris immixta puellis / ludit, et assidue prolia miscet Amor*, v. 64). Similarly, Tartarus, the place of sinners, is an underworld for those who have turned against the god Cupid. Apart from the beasts Tisiphone and Kerberos, only those who have sinned in love live here: Ixion, Tityos, Tantalus and the daughters of Danaos (vv. 67– 82).

The mental journey through the underworld ultimately leads the poetic I back home and to Delia. Once again, individual scenes are presented to us in a performative manner, introduced by the prayer that Delia may always remain chaste (*At tu casta precor maneas*, v. 83). The I thus brings Delia back onto the imaginary stage of the recipient and connects beginning and end through the socio-religious act of prayer. The entire poem thus almost takes on the character of a prayer, which seems to further emphasize the "mood" of the elegy.

Let us now look at the description of the fictitious return of the I, which once again reinforces the comparison with the basic structure of the *Odyssey:* just as the *Odyssey* is fundamentally divided into two parts – namely mythical Odysseys and the battle against the suitors in Ithaca – here the mythical beginning of the elegy is contrasted with an imagined return of the I. The first scene of this passage calls an old nurse to stand guard at his lover's side (*sanctique pudoris / adsideat custos sedula semper anus*, v. 83– 84). The scene refers to the *Odyssey* and recalls Penelope's situation: Delia's desire for chastity is reminiscent of Penelope, as is the old nurse who finally recognizes Odysseus.[66] Just as we encountered references to the *Odyssey* at the beginning of the elegy, they are also used here, although the situation has changed: In contrast to the grief and despair of the first verses, here we see the hope of a positive return to Delia. The transformation of the I and its thoughts seem complete. Although the scene is again framed in echoes of the *Odyssey*, we meet the I as hopeful and in a new relationship to the world, expressed through the references to the *Odyssey* and Odysseus' return home. Just as the references

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66 Now that the "Odyssean structure" of the elegy has probably become clear to the recipients, a reference in the nurse to the nurse figure in the *Odyssey* seems to me more likely than a reference to comedy; Herrmann 2011: 162–191 (n. 1308) points out the reference to comedy.

change, so does the poetic I's understanding of itself and the world in these final verses.

The image of the chaste Delia – who is also addressed in this passage – is now colored with the help of the old nurse in theatrical images. She helps Delia weave by the light of a lamp (*Haec tibi fabellas referat positaque lucerna / deducat plena stamina longa colu*, v. 85–86), an image that is probably intended to evoke the chastity and fidelity of Penelope at the end of the *Odyssey* as a prime example of a Roman *matrona.*[67] But there is more: while the wet nurses in the *Odyssey* ultimately betray Penelope, here we find the wet nurse as the guardian of Delia's chastity. The old servant evokes the nurse Eurykleia, who recognizes Odysseus by an old scar he bears and is one of the few servants in the house who believe in Odysseus' return and accept only him as master of the house.[68] After working on the loom, Delia immediately falls tiredly into bed (*at circa gravibus pensis adfixa puella / paulatim somno fessa remittat opus*, v. 87–88) – unlike Penelope, she does not have to waste her evenings unravelling the woven fabric.[69] It is worth noting Delia's rather sudden change from the person addressed to an image in the third person (*puella paulatim somno fessa remittat opus*, "the girl shall lie down wearily"). The form of address seems to transform, at least briefly, into a figurative description of the scene.

This perfect image of the return is completed by the imagined appearance of the I; it returns unexpectedly and as if sent from heaven (*Tunc veniam subito, nec quisquam nuntiet ante, / sed videar caelo missus adesse tibi*, v. 89–90), again in contrast to the *Odyssey.* Here, the poetic I does not need lies or a disguise as Odysseus did. Moreover, Delia recognizes it without checking his identity and comes to meet him as she is, in an extremely attractive manner (*Tunc mihi, qualis eris, longos turbata capillos, / obvia nudato, Delia, curre pede*, v. 91–92).[70] Once again, the scene is set against the model of the *Odyssey*, whereby the transformation of the I's world relations from the beginning of the elegy is clear: it believes in his return and reunion with Delia. The old I seems to have been left dead on the island of *Phaeacia.* In terms of resonance theory, the now resonating, and no longer mute, horizontal axis of the beginning is noteworthy. The impossibility of the relationship with Delia and the complete alienation of the beginning seem to have been erased. This is rep-

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67 Leach 1980; Murgatroyd 1980: 125; Maltby 2002: 210. Lee-Stecum 1998: 127 uses the following – very appropriate – formulation in n. 57: "[…] the blending of the Roman and the literary (Homeric) strands here."

68 Hom. *Od.* 19.467–489.

69 Hom. *Od.* 2.93–110 and 19.134–156.

70 It should also be mentioned that such "return scenes" can often be found in propemptica, which again emphasizes the reference to the beginning. See Murgatroyd 1980: 127.

resented by the renewed change in of Delia's position. Delia is addressed directly again in these last verses, which focusses on the commonality of the scene and the closeness of the two lovers.

The two final verses summarize the transformation and the connection to the Homeric epic once again. While we find a gloomy, dark and depressing mood in the opening verses, the hope of the subject is presented in the penultimate verse of the elegy. Interestingly, *precor* is used again (*Hoc precor*, v. 93), which almost presents the entire poem as a prayer – in contrast to the *precor* of v. 5, however, as this is not about the absence of death, but about the success of the return and shared love. Although the scene could almost appear as a "reality of the subject" due to its performative structures, the I can still only pray for such a return, he has not yet succeeded. The gloom of the opening verses seems to have vanished, which is further emphasized by the symbol of a Homeric formulaic verse for the beginning of the new day (*Hoc precor, hunc illum nobis Aurora nitentem / Luciferum roseis candida portet equis*, v. 93–94): Aurora or Eos as the bringers of the new day, the rose-like color of the horses and the horses themselves.[71] We end as we began, namely with a reference to the *Odyssey*. In contrast to the beginning, we find hope and light at the end.[72] The I has left its grief and despair behind in burying a heroic soldier in the middle of the elegy, it has once again become a *miles amoris* through his journey through the underworld of love and can believe in love and a happy return at the end of the elegy – just as we as recipients can follow the path of the subject through the performative structures and emotional immersion and thus change our relationship to the world.[73] This community is emphasized once again by a small word in the penultimate verse: Aurora shall bring us (*nobis*) – both the connection of Delia and the I and Delia, the I and the recipients – the radiant morning star. However, the mention of *Lucifer* seems to refer not only to the theme of light, but also to the theme of love. Cicero refers to *Lucifer* in *de natura deorum* as *stella Vereris*, meaning that Aurora is not only supposed to bring light to the recipients, Delia and the poetic I, but also love.[74] The poem con-

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71 For example, Hom. *Il.* 1.477 and *Od.* 2.1: ἦμος δ᾽ ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς.

72 For the darkness–light metaphor here, see Mutschler 1985: 73 and Booth and Maltby 2005: 124–125.

73 Eisenberger 1960: 190 formulates it appropriately here: "On the whole, Tibullus's poetic intention was to uncover a dichotomy between the life of an '*amator*' per se, which he claimed to be the only meaningful one, and the harsh demands of Roman reality. He is torn between these two extremes to the point of death. In the last part of the poem, however, he finds a solution to the conflict by coming to recognize death as the prerequisite for a supernatural happiness of love and imagining a purely utopian happiness. In this way, he experiences death as the splendor of a new life and as an unexpected reunion with Delia."

74 Cic. *Nat.* 2.53; see OLD s.v. Lucifer.

cludes with a wish for light and love instead of the darkness and death of the beginning.

Through all four structural performative elements mentioned by Velten, the elegy appears as a theatrical performance in which recipients can enter and become part of the play. As in an inner monologue, almost in the style of a chamber play, we find the I on the island of *Phaeacia*, completely abandoned; several theatrical image sequences later we find an I who can believe in love and happiness. The importance of the *celare artem* should be emphasized for this elegy: fluent and seemingly without effort, we follow the I through a simple, yet precise representation and thus become part of the performance. As recipients, we are taken on a journey through the emotional rollercoaster of the I, which is created in this elegy primarily through the interplay of darkness and light, alienation and later resonance on the horizontal axis and – probably the most important point – through the intertextuality of the *Odyssey.* Resonance theory can provide a new insight: The I – by the alienation on all axes – is completely lost and abandoned at the beginning of the elegy. In particular, the complete silencing of the horizontal axis is brought back to sound at the end by the return to Delia. The performative and emotion-generating structures of the text seem to contain an offer of transformation and thus a resonance. The recipient can become part of the "performance" of the text and approach the poetic I of the elegy in the form of an emotional immersion. Once again, it is crucial that a transformation is also presented within the elegy: As in *Elegy* 1.1, not only does the *persona* of the subject appear to have been transformed from the beginning to the end of the elegy, but also a Roman-Greek death myth. Once again, a funeral scene is a central point in the elegy, emphasizing the inner-textual transformation. At the end of the elegy, the I can once again believe in its return and in love – and the recipient is at least offered a transformation of self–world relationships.

3.3 Lecture as an Act: Paul's Letter to the Galatians

3.3.1 *The Letter to the Galatians* as a Real Letter with a Structural Performativity

The theory of performativity (*performance criticism*), which views a text as a script for a performance, is applied in New Testament exegesis primarily to the Jesus tradition and Paul's letters.[75] According to this approach, Paul's letters were recited to

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75 Cf. the overviews by Elder 2017: 327–331; Johnson 2017: 62–64; Perry 2016; Perry 2019; Reinmuth

their addressees. They were read aloud in the communities addressed and had the effect of speeches with a corresponding social impact on the group of listeners.[76] As the author, Paul anticipated the oral presentation of his letters and wrote them accordingly.

However, the model of oral performance has also been overused, and it should be noted in the more recent critical discussion of *performance criticism* that the Pauline letters are literary documents, real letters that were not intended as loose theatre scripts but as polished texts.[77] What at first glance appear to be spontaneous formulations dictated in the heat of the moment turn out to be elements of scholarly rhetoric designed to impress and win over the audience.

A perhaps somewhat distant but, in my opinion, revealing parallel can be found in action painting, where the performance of painting is very important. Painting becomes an event, sometimes even a public event. It is known, however, that Jackson Pollock prepared his seemingly spontaneous action paintings very carefully to achieve the intended composition.[78]

In Roman rhetoric, this procedure was called *dissimulatio artis*.[79] The two anacoluths in Gal 2:4–5 and 6, for example, are not syntactical errors on Paul's part, but intentional attention signals that simulate a hurried verbal situation.[80]

2012; Reinmuth 2018; Rhoads 2010; Rhoads and Dewey 2014. On the Jesus tradition not discussed here, see especially Iverson 2021; Kloppenborg 2012. However, performance theory is not only received in biblical theology, but also in systematic and practical theology; on systematic theology, see Hoff 2022.

76 For evidence of the ancient performance of letters and the reactions to them, see Oestreich 2016: 70–79, also Johnson 2017: 64–72.

77 On the close relationship between writing and performance in Roman religious history, see Rüpke 2003. Nässelqvist 2016 also emphasizes the connection between New Testament performances and the underlying written texts.

78 Cf. Darwent 2023: 102–123, especially 123: "Pollock's painting was entirely active, and all about control."

79 See Schmeller 2020; Schmeller 2023.

80 Cf. Bauer 2011: 272: "… the anacoluths in Gal 2:4–5 and 2:6, which are traditionally interpreted as a sign of stylistic carelessness or an expression of uncontrolled spontaneity and emotionality on the part of the letter writer. They are probably less the unintended consequence of Paul's emotional outbursts when dictating the letter than deliberate design elements that are due to the intended conversational style of the letter and at the same time are intended to draw the reader's/listener's attention to the content-related statements associated with them." 272: "Strictly speaking, the anacoluth in literary texts … is an element that is intended to create the impression of orality. … In this respect, the anacoluth fits into the cultivated epistolary style, which is intended to express simplicity and come close to orality." Cf. further Bauer 2011: 375–376.

For our purposes, it is important to keep in mind that a text still becomes "real" through reading – reading aloud in a group or reading silently alone.[81] *Performance Criticism* thus draws attention to the reception of the text by its ancient readers and listeners. The communicative interaction between sender and recipient is analyzed with the focus on the recipients. They heard Paul's letters above all when these were read aloud in the assembly. Thus the apostle writes in 1 Thess 5:27: "I solemnly command you (ἐνορκίζω) by the Lord that this letter be read (ἀναγνωσθῆναι) to all the brothers and sisters (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς)." Paul's command does not appear to be the exception to the rule, for we find a similar instruction in Col 4:16.[82]

3.3.2 Gal 6:11 as an Indication of the Intended Reading of the Letter Aloud in the Galatian Assemblies

The letters of Paul are literary documents, not loose compositions, but sophisticated texts that could be read aloud in a group, but of course also quietly on their own.[83] Jan Heilmann has argued for the latter option and is very skeptical about public, performative readings in congregations.[84] I would therefore like to recall an argument in favor of the thesis that Paul wanted his *Letter to the Galatians* to be read aloud in the assemblies. The basis for this is the handwriting note in Gal 6:11: "See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!"[85]

Until 6:10, the letter was written by a secretary, an amanuensis. Obviously, Paul dictated all his letters,[86] and, as in Gal 6:11, he also added the text τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί ("in

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81 Cf. note 24 above.

82 "And when this letter has been read among you (ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ᾿ ὑμῖν), have it read (ἀναγνωσθῇ) also in the church of the Laodiceans, and see that you read (ἀναγνῶτε) also the letter from Laodicea." In Acts 15:30 – 31 it is not clear whether the letter is read to the congregation or whether it is read by the individual members of the congregation. "When they gathered the congregation [of the church in Antioch] together, they delivered the letter (ἐπέδωκαν). When they read it (ἀναγνόντες), they rejoiced at the exhortation."

83 Cf. Heilmann 2021: 418 – 441.

84 Heilmann 2021: 446: "The idea that Paul expected performative readings of his letters cannot be upheld on the basis of the textual evidence." On the criticism of performance criticism, cf. also Heilmann 2021: 32 – 38; Heilmann 2022: especially 106 – 108.

85 Ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί. "The aorist ἔγραψα is an epistolary aorist – for the recipients of the letter, the writing of the letter is in the past" (Meiser 2022: 297).

86 Moss (2023a: 24 and *passim*; 2023b; 2024) calls for the contribution of the scribes – mostly slaves – to the early Christian texts to be reconsidered and recognized.

my own hand") in 1 Cor 16:21 and Phlm 19.[87] In Rom 16:22, Paul's secretary, Tertius, even speaks up: "I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord."[88] Robert Jewett comments on this verse as follows:

> The identification of this particular amanuensis was ... an integral part of the strategy of this letter, because Tertius was to accompany his owner Phoebe to Rome, where a skilled reading was required for each of the house and tenement churches. As the amanuensis of this letter, he was in the best position to present this complicated text orally, taking advantage of each stylistic nuance.[89]

The fact that Tertius was a slave of the messenger Phoebe (Rom 16:1–2) remains speculation, but the fact that the bearer of a letter should also interpret it for the addressee,[90] is well attested in many literary texts and in documentary papyri.[91] In *Galatians* and *First Thessalonians*, Paul does not name the messenger,[92] but this is not remarkable; it is consistent with the findings for ancient papyrus letters, in which the messenger only appears by name in exceptional cases.

We come back to Gal 6:11. Hans Dieter Betz represents the majority opinion when he says "that Paul wants to underscore the importance of what he has to

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87 1 Cor 16:21: Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Phlm 19: ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί, ... I, Paul, am writing this with my hand: ...

88 Ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐν κυρίῳ. Cf. Arzt-Grabner 2023: 61–65.
89 Jewett 2007: 979.

90 The technical rhetorical term *pronuntiatio*, which refers to the concrete organization of the speech through speaking and accompanying gestures, shows that the presentation of the letter should be rhetorically effective. The term originally referred to the way in which a message was to be presented to the addressee. Cf. Lausberg 2008: 527 (§ 1091); Rebmann 2005: 213.

91 As the *cursus publicus* was reserved for the state as a means of communication and transport, the sending of private letters had to be organized individually; a suitable messenger had to be found to carry the letter. This was usually done by giving the letter to people travelling on business or privately. Sending a messenger on one's own was a question of financial means. Cf. Arzt-Grabner 2010b: 135–137; Kovarik 2010. Based on an ostracon (SB XIV 11580 [second half of the second century CE; text: Arzt-Grabner 2023: 360–361]), a letter (BGU III 830,3–7 [first century CE; text: Arzt-Grabner 2023: 247–248]) and papyri (P.Lips. I 108.3–9 [second to third century CE; text: Arzt-Grabner 2023: 376–377]; P.Flor. II 156 [249/268 CE]), Arzt-Grabner 2010b: 144–146 shows that epistolary messengers were authorized to explain the concerns or orders mentioned in the letter in more detail if necessary. Supplementary cf. Botha 2012: 203; Mitchell 2017: 92–100; Oestreich 2016: 70–79.

92 In 1 Cor (16:15–16: Stephanas), 2 Cor (8–9: Titus and other brothers), Phil (2:25–30: Epaphroditus), Phlm (10–12: Onesimus) and Rom (16:2–3: Phoebe) the epistolary messengers are mentioned.

say in these last words" by referring to the large, handwritten letters.[93] It is true that this "formula of revelation" is primarily intended to attract attention.[94]

However, the formula ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί (Gal 6:11; 1 Cor 16:21; Phlm 19) is not documented in papyrus letters to indicate a change of scribe.[95] The comment about the large letters (πηλίκοις γράμμασιν) in Gal 6:11 is also absolutely unique, as the reader of the original letter could recognize when the scribe had changed when reading the letter individually.[96] This is demonstrated very well in Steve Reece's dissertation.[97] He analyzed 5,000 Greek papyrus letters, and around 425 show handwriting that differs from that of the letter corpus,[98] sometimes larger (around 15 %), sometimes around the same size (around 30 %), but in more than half of the cases smaller (around 55 %).

In an unpublished lecture at the University of Salzburg in 2019,[99] David Trobisch suggested that the comment on the capital letters was interpolated by the editor or editors of the Pauline collection of letters. In a copy of *Galatians*, the capital letters were of course no longer visible, and the editor wanted to preserve the original impression for the readers of his collection.

While this is possible, it would imply that the ancient editor of Paul's letters had access to the autograph, which seems rather unlikely.

I think it is more plausible that Paul himself added the unusual remark about his large letters because he knew that most of the Galatian believers in Christ would not see the letter he had written himself, as it was only read to them.[100] If this thesis is accepted, we would have an indication that Paul expected his letter to be read aloud in the Galatian house churches.

The performative quality of Paul's letters therefore depends not so much on the performance of a person who embodies the apostle when reading the letter

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93 Betz 1979: 314. Martyn 1997: 560 offers a very similar interpretation: "Paul writes with large letters in order emphatically to say to the Galatians: 'I now summarize, indeed sharpen, the import of my entire letter. Pay attention!'"

94 Arzt-Grabner 2003: 195.

95 Cf. Arzt-Grabner 2023: 180.

96 Arzt-Grabner 2003: 242.

97 Reece 2017: 203, also 108; cf. Arzt-Grabner 2023: 177–178.

98 An example: P.Oxy. LXXIII 4959 (second century CE) is a letter from a certain Ammonius concerning his brother Theon to his mother Demetria and his father Dios. Ammonius first dictated the letter to a scribe, but then corrected and completed it in his own hand. Text: The Oxyrhynchus Papyri LXXIII 2009: 154–161; Arzt-Grabner 2023: 353–356. Cf. Arzt-Grabner 2010a: 20–23.

99 15 May 2019: "Autographs in the Letters of Paul: The New Testament in the Light of the Ancient Book Trade". Cf. Arzt-Grabner 2023: 180–181. Arzt-Grabner refers to Trobisch 2023, but the thesis is not mentioned in this book.

100 Bauer 2011: 242 (with further references in n. 300), 245.

to the congregation, but on the text itself. Paul's letters convey a structural performativity with intended corresponding social effects in the group of listeners.[101] As the author, Paul anticipated the oral presentation of his letters and wrote them accordingly.

3.3.3 Bernhard Oestreich's Thesis on Paul's Performative Goal: Isolating Opponents and Winning Back the Insecure

The *Letter to the Galatians* has the characteristics of a philosophical didactic letter, which on the one hand contains friendly,[102] on the other hand polemical and accusatory elements.[103] In the tense communicative situation between Paul and the Galatians, it seems worthwhile to analyze the performative elements that Paul uses in his letter to win back his addressees and isolate his opponents. Ancient rhetoric, emotion research and psychology are of great importance here, as a closer look at Bernhard Oestreich's thesis on Paul's performative goal in *Galatians* can show.

The members of the ἐκκλησίαι τῆς Γαλατίας ("churches of Galatia", Gal 1:2) founded by Paul are addressed by him as ἀδελφοί ("brothers [and sisters]")[104] – Paul does not say: "Dear readers". The ἀδελφοί are the "we group". Paul always speaks of them in the plural, not in the singular. According to the term ἀδελφοί, the "others" are referred to as ψευδάδελφοι ("false brothers [and sisters]") (2:4). They are Paul's opponents at the Jerusalem conference, and there is probably a close connection between them and the τίνες ("some") in Galatia, "who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:7).[105] Nowhere in the letter does Paul address them directly, although it is likely that his opponents in Galatia – those who came from the outside – were among those in the house churches who listened to a reading of the letter, along with those in the Galatian assemblies who they had already convinced. Paul also assumed this situation and wrote his letter accordingly.[106]

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101 Cf. above in note 32 the reference to Velten 2009: 552.
102 Cf. Bauer 2011: 250.
103 On the epistolographic classification of Galatians as a whole, see Bauer 2011: 292–313.
104 Gal 1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18. In the same way, Paul refers to his fellow Christians who are with him while he dictates the letter as ἀδελφοί (1:2). Cf. overall Arzt-Grabner 2023: 88–97.
105 Cf. also Gal 5:7: "Who prevented you from obeying the truth?"; Gal 5:10: "Whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty."
106 Bauer 2011: 381–385 also assumes that Paul also wanted to address his opponents in Galatia with the letter. Similarly, Holland 2016: 254, but Ebner (2006: 111–116) differs in his stimulating fic-

Paul fights for the Christian communities in Galatia, who are now turning away from him and adopting Jewish Torah practices, especially circumcision.[107] The Judaizing teachers had probably already won over a good proportion of the Galatian believers in Christ. Paul's audience was therefore divided: On the one hand, the opponents – and their new Galatian followers – are cursed and mocked.

For example, the opponents are cursed twice in Gal 1:8 – 9.[108] Here, Paul uses a familiar formulation – ἀνάθεμα ἔστω ("let that one be accursed!") – from cursing rituals, to which a corresponding reaction is to be expected.

In 4:17, a beautifully composed chiastic sentence, Paul addresses his Galatian churches, but targets his opponents among them: "They make much of you (ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς) but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them (ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε)."

In Gal 5:12, Paul makes fun of his opponents by using an anti-Jewish cliché that was used by Roman authors: "I wish those who unsettle you (ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς) would castrate themselves (ἀποκόψονται)!" Here he equates circumcision with castration, which Eckart Reinmuth interprets as "textual violence".[109]

A final example of Paul's indirect address to his opponents is Gal 6:12 – 13, where he accuses them of only practicing the circumcision of the Galatians for very superficial motives. He also accuses them of not even keeping the law themselves as circumcised people.[110]

On the other hand, Paul is angry and disappointed with the Galatian converts. However, he does not write them off, but makes an urgent appeal to them to return to their original life in the Spirit, which is not based on works of the law, but on faith in the gospel proclaimed by Paul (3:2). Paul offers them the opportunity to identify with him and his theology.

He is not just pursuing a strategy of friendly reminiscence of better times. In order to win back his parishioners, Paul uses a mixture of insults and flattery, a pedagogy of carrot and stick – or in our case, better: stick and carrot. In 3:1, for

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tional depiction of the situation in one of the Galatian churches immediately after Paul's letter had been read out.

107 Cf. Gal 5:6, 12; 6:12.

108 "But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω)! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω)!"

109 Reinmuth 2021: 174; see also Meiser 2022: 245.

110 "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh (εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί) who try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh."

example, he calls his addressees "foolish" (ἀνόητοι) and asks them: "Who has bewitched you (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν)?" On the other hand, he describes the relationship between them and him in a very close and emotional way. In 4:12–20 the still undecided addressees are reminded of their earlier agreement with the apostle. Thus, he says in 4:15: "For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me." In 4:19–20 he writes: "My little children (τέκνα μου), for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone (ἀλλάξαι τὴν φωνήν μου), for I am perplexed (ἀποροῦμαι) about you."

Overall, then, I agree with Oestreich that Paul's performative aim was to separate the two sides in the Galatian assemblies and to win back those who were still undecided.[111]

3.3.4 Conclusions

In recent research on ancient religions, there has been a growing interest in the individual and their religious practice.[112] This is to be welcomed in principle and has also brought important and stimulating new perspectives. On the other hand, it would be regrettable if the approach of formal criticism were lost,[113] which considers the social dimension of early Christian literature, in particular its forms of communication, rhetoric and rituals. I am therefore of the opinion that biblical *performance criticism* has much to offer as a continuation of the form criticism, especially in the form of a BPC 2.0 formulated by Peter Perry, which incorporates findings from rhetoric, emotion research and psychology.[114]

Of course, we cannot analyze the ancient versions of *Galatians* because we only have the text. Moreover, as with all New Testament letters, we only have one side of the conversation; we do not know exactly what positions the other side took. However, we can analyze the rhetoric, the emotions, the historical contexts, and the performative techniques used implicitly in the texts. It is therefore possible to describe the "performative offerings" of a text.

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111 Oestreich 2016: 228–258.
112 Cf. Rüpke 2013; Rüpke 2019.
113 Cf. note 2 above.
114 Perry 2019.

4 Performativity and Reading Practice – A Conclusion

What Christina M. Kreinecker recently remarked in relation to the collaboration between New Testament exegesis and papyrology applies more generally: "Fundamental research has become more complex than ever, and it will remain so in the future, requiring the work of inter- and multidisciplinary teams of people collaborating beyond institutional and political borders as well."[115] Scientific work gains precision and clarity through interdisciplinary teamwork. This is especially true for the collaboration between scholars from classical philology and biblical studies.[116] Important representatives of both disciplines are often those that transcend disciplinary boundaries and examine ancient literature as a whole and without blinkers.[117]

Biblical studies primarily use philological and historical methods. It is a theological science in the sense that it works in the context of the church's faith and therefore reads the Bible with a critical and constructive view of the faith tradition and the current proclamation of faith. But the methods of biblical studies are the same as those used in philology and historical studies. It is above all at this methodological level that the disciplines can benefit from each other. There are many bridges here for mutual stimulation and support.

The resulting added value was shown in this article in relation to the theory of performativity, which can contribute to a better understanding of both Tibullus's elegies and Paul's *Letter to the Galatians.* Here, the theory of performativity – with an additional look at the theories of emotion studies and sociological theories of self–world relations – can offer a better insight into the structures of a text with

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115 Kreinecker 2019: 195–196.

116 Old Testament exegesis should also be included here, for example when looking at Septuagint research, which has experienced a major international upswing in recent decades. Scholars from Old and New Testament exegesis, classical philology and ancient history in particular are working together here.

117 The editors of the anthology "Divided Worlds? Challenges in Classics and New Testament Studies" call for even more intensive interdisciplinary collaboration at the end of their introduction: "Since disciplinary formation depends on shared research methods and topics as well as the company we keep, classics and New Testament scholarship will need to cultivate not only conversation but also relationships if we are to destabilize disciplinary boundaries" (Johnson Hodge, Joseph and Liew 2023: 24). The IGS "Resonant Self–World Relations Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices" (W 1275, GRK 2283), for example, serves this cultivation of academic conversations and personal relationships in an outstanding way.

a focus on the effect on its recipients – whether these texts were read silently or read out loud before an audience.

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Veronika Kolomaznik

What Constitutes an Object?

Initiated by the discussion "Ritual, Resonance and Objects" at the IGS Eisenach retreat and some brief conversations with Antonietta Di Giulio and Katharina Rieger I wanted to use the experience of the days as a spark for further discourse. Recalling the discussion and some of the complex topics raised in the initial paper by Rafael A. Barroso Romero, I want to re-enter and record some of the thoughts and issues. From a classical archaeologist perspective, it seems natural to start with and focus on objects.

Objects, artifacts, and images have long been the subject of debates and research in different fields of the humanities, be they archaeology, anthropology, sociology, history, art-history, religious studies, or the like. Lewis Binford argued that the changes of material culture reflect or indicate changes in human behaviors. He differentiated between human dynamic relationships and the resulting statics such as site structure, remains, and artifacts.[1] Since the 1980s the 'material-turn' and the 'visual-turn' have shaped and shifted the approaches to analyze objects within societies. Under the umbrella terms of material and visual culture the world of 'things' is frequently described as an active counterpart in human life. Things, objects, or images not only reflect on culture and identity, but they can create them. Ian Hodder pointed out that objects are always meaningfully constructed and used. Therefore, they have the means to influence and transform behavior, culture, and societies.[2] Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) made an impact within interdisciplinary research on things.[3] From this viewpoint, the dichotomy of subject and object, thing and person seems no longer accurate to approach the complex world and relations of things. In the last decades, several publications discussed this issue in an interdisciplinary setting and from various viewpoints. Many exemplify the question how objects, images, and material culture can communicate, influence and impact social and religious behavior.[4]

That objects can have a certain power over humans, that they can generate culture or interfere with one's identity is not a new idea. In his work on politics, Aristotle (Arist. *Pol.* 4.1336b) advocated for the protection of the youth from indecent speeches and crude jokes. Also, obscene pictures and sculptures should not be

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1 Binford 1983.
2 Hodder 1982; Hodder 1989; Hodder 2012.
3 Latour 2005.
4 DeMarrais et al. 2004; Barbiera et al. 2009; Universität Göttingen 2012; Bielfeldt 2014; Beck et al. 2017; Squire 2018; Barringer and Lissarrague 2022.

put on public view – as an exception he mentioned temple districts whose cult permitted such images and actions. However, he noted that a good citizen should practice such rites on behalf of his wife and children. Up to today societies have put in place many restrictions for minors regarding the use of specific objects and images, in the fear that they would intervene with a 'good' upbringing. But before understanding and describing how and why societies, individuals, and objects are relating to one another in specific times or case studies, a framework for common ground must be set out. Usually that means clarifying the terms and language used. A lot of definitions for complex terms and concepts such as materiality, agency, Actor Network Theory, or lived religion have been written, whereas the term 'object' often goes without clarification.[5] Therefore, I want to focus on the nature of an object. What defines an object can be a first approach to how they connect with humans and within ritual settings. It is also a question that for me as an archaeologist is fundamental to the understanding of material remains and human culture. Based on some examples I want to point out five objectives which constitute objects and their relations from the viewpoint of classical archaeology.

1 Objects are not *a priori* things in the world, such as natural materials (rock, trees, the sea, etc.), but they are (human-)made things that are created from material.

This includes small artifacts such as a nail, a gemstone or a carved amulet, a building such as a temple with its architecture and reliefs, or an image made of pigment and painted on a wall. But in Graeco-Roman times things could be also made by non-humans. Such as the Athenian *xóanon* of Athena that allegedly fell from the sky (Paus. 1.26.6). Also, in myths and stories the gods were equally producing things out of natural material. Such as Hermes who as a new-born child put together a couple of materials (including a turtle) to create the first *lýra* (Hom. *Hymn Herm.* 21–60).

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5 A simple definition can be found in dictionaries such as the Cambridge Dictionary. Here, objects are described as things that one can physically perceive, but are in contrast to plants, animals, and humans not alive.

2 There is (always) an idea or an intent that encourages the invention and production of objects.

For example, an amphora was made to effectively contain and transport goods in a measurable form. Maybe to indicate the origin of their products, the potters produced different shapes in different times and regions. Objects in a religious setting may refer to the intent of an individual, such as a personal votive relief at a sanctuary of Asclepius. Many objects of daily life were said to be thought up by the gods, the most inventive one being Athena. In the mid-5th century BCE, the famous sculptor Myron created a bronze statue group that reflected a story of the invention of the *aulós* by Athena. As she played a lovely tune, she saw her cheeks all puffed up and discarded the object, only for Marsyas to find it and condemn his fate using the instrument. Certainly, of all the gods Hephaistos is especially connected to the production of objects. Homer puts him almost constantly at work creating outstanding metalwork, for gods and mortal heroes alike (Hom. *Il.* 18.368 – 422; 468 – 473).

3 Hence, objects have particular functions and/or meanings.

There are basic objects of daily use, such as nails or a weaving shuttle (*kerkís*) that had primarily a specific function and often no meaning beyond that. But even such objects can establish personal significance. A woman might dedicate her weaving tool to a goddess to thank her or ask for a favor. A dedicational epigram reads: 'Bitto dedicated to Athene her melodious loom-comb, implement of the work that was her scanty livelihood, saying, "Hail, goddess, and take this; for I, a widow in my fortieth year, forswear thy gifts and on the contrary take to the works of Cypris; I see that the wish is stronger than age."' (Anth. *Lyr. Graec.* 6.47). Additionally, some objects can have specific meanings on a collective level. The primary function of a 5th-century attic cup is to contain and consume wine. But the form in which it is shaped, the decoration and images can attribute or display meanings. Within the setting of a symposium, the images visually communicated and contributed to the social-religious discourse of the event and the time the vessel was produced. Furthermore, we encounter objects which are seemingly without a practical function, such as miniatures of cups. They recall the specific form, but the size ridicules the drinking process. Since they are of no use for the living, such objects are often considered

in religious terms as dedicational gifts to the divine or the dead. Miniatures or replications of fruits and architecture can be viewed as a representations of significant things that are maybe too valuable to offer; or on the other hand the objects could be more precious than what they represent.

3.1 Objects can be tools to solve a problem.

In antiquity, a loom or a ship were created as tools to produce precious textiles or travel safely over the sea. Both tools therefore ensured commercial and social exchange. The fine cloth could act as a gift for the arriving sailor. Because both loom and ship were significant objects in daily life, they gained additional meaning for society. An image of a loom and a ship communicated more than their primary function. Homer set the scene with Penelope in front of her loom, weaving and forever producing a funeral shroud. She mastered her tool to postpone remarriage over years, whereas her husband was having trouble to control his ship over his journeys. Still, as a castaway, Odysseus was welcomed and fairly clothed by Nausicaa's textiles.

3.2 Objects can be 'Sinnbilder' to address or picture a problem.

Especially image-objects could provide a body for ideas and concepts that otherwise have no material form. On a collective level the imagery and ritual manifestation of Eirene in Athens can illustrate that phenomenon. Although the personification of peace was already mentioned by Hesiod, Eirene was first pictured as a young maiden within the imagery of the late 5th century. During the Peloponnesian War the desire for and the discourse of peace was growing and so was the need to apply a body to the concept. Aristophanes gave her a (mute) body on the theatre stage. Potters and painters pictured her accompanying Dionysian figures. At the beginning of the 4th century, a large bronze sculpture of Eirene holding baby Pluto was set up at the most visible and relevant place in Athens, the agora. In 375/74 BCE, an official cult was established for her, which enabled direct contact between the community and the concept that Eirene embodied. Throughout antiquity the statues of gods and the images of the dead provided material and social bodies that remained visible within society. Such images could ensure contact and connection on various levels. They were repeatedly visited, some dressed or adorned, others were carried around in processions.

4 Objects can relate to their surrounding world in different ways, or qualities.

Objects can form (potentially resonant) relationships with different elements in their world: with humans, with gods or the divine, with nature and animals, and with other objects. The way in which individuals, societies, (and the gods) use objects to relate to each other and their world, as well as to shape and transform it, is one of the core questions of classical archaeology. There are many methodological frameworks, approaches, and theories that raise and debate that question. Since objects can be very different and have specific functions and meanings which they express in various forms and styles, it is impractical to use only one methodological viewpoint to cover all sorts of objects and their possible relations. An appropriate analytical lens must be chosen for each particular object and research question. I want to concentrate on the angles that came up in the discussion at our workshop and are of interest to me and my project.

4.1 Affordance – based on John Gibson

Objects such as a sewing needle, a chair, or a sandal can prompt a specific action of the user.[6] A girl would use a needle to sew but she could also use the pointy end to annoy her sister. Apart from humans, gods also interacted and used objects. Many statues depict Aphrodite elegantly putting on or taking off her sandal. But one particular statue found at Delos shows her slapping the annoying Pan with it. Either way, the shape of the needle and the sandal provoked the two possible actions for girl and goddess. The form and the function of the object determine the particular possibilities of usage and relation to the object. But the object does not act by itself and is therefore not viewed as an independent social actor or agent.

4.2 Material/Art Agency – and Potency/Effectancy

Some objects can be attributed with social agency.[7] They can be viewed as social (f)actors or agents that can interfere and interact with the social life of individuals

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6 Cf. Gibson 1979.

7 Material/art agency based on Gell 1998; Latour 2005; Osborne and Tanner 2007. Potency/effectancy based Hölscher 2014; Hölscher 2017.

and societies. Within the social world or system, they are perceived as acting on the same level as living beings, expressing to some degree emotions, will, or independency. Poets such as Homer often referred to ships and weapons in such a manner, to add some life and vividness for the listener. On a visual level, these object-views were frequently manifested by attaching eyes to the 'body' of the ships or shields. Also, the so-called eyecups and jars of the Athenian symposium had the ability to gaze back at their users, and therefore to take part in the social meeting. The action of looking was understood to be an active mutual encounter of recognition. Having eyes, they demanded the attention of the individual and could offer direct engagement. Such mutual engagement between object and recipient could not only happen on a visual level but also verbally. Often inscriptions on grave statues, which were to be read aloud, suggested for the viewer to pause, look, read, and remember. In many instances it was the statue, not the deceased that was speaking. Beneath the famous grave statue of a young girl one can read: '*sêma* of Phrasikleia. Kore I must be called evermore; instead of marriage, by the Gods this name became my fate. Aristion of Paros made me.' The statue of the dead girl was demanding attention, placed their words in the mouth of the passer-by and was actively explaining its social existence as well as its materiality. Images and objects were also part of a bodily encounter, meaning that they could provoke emotions and affections in the viewer. The great columns of large temple structures could make one feel small and insignificant; the visiting of a grave could cause personal grief. The objects, especially images, could have a significant power of suggestion. To illustrate that emotional force, I would like to mention an anecdote about Cnidian Aphrodite. The statue made by Praxiteles around 340 BCE caused strong erotic desires in a man. He stayed with her secretly overnight at the sanctuary, but his actions left a mark at her thigh for the world to see (pseudo-Luc. *Erōtes* 15–16).

Another extreme example regarding material agency and potency often used is Pausanias' account of the statue of Theagenes from Thasos (Paus. 6.11.6–9). This statue caused a series of events and interacted with both individuals and society on a personal level. After his death, a statue in honor of the accomplished athlete was erected at the Agora of his hometown. A personal enemy still wanting revenge struck out at the statue instead of the deceased, but the statue reacted and fell on his opponent, killing him. In return, the sons accused the statue of murder and subsequently the town punished the statue by throwing it in the sea. Soon after, a famine spread within the town and the people reached out to the oracle of Delphi for advice. They had to bring home all citizens who were exiled including the statue of Theagenes, which became the center of a healing cult. In the end, the actions of the human-made statue were attributed (divine) potency or efficacy, hence the power to heal.

Special objects such as amulets or statues of gods were believed to have a powerful effect on individuals or societies. Often that is accompanied with the design and treatment of such objects as living things. Life, agency, and potency were ascribed to certain objects and are therefore cultural decisions made by society. Hence, they are not stable features of an object but can change over time. Additionally, they are not always visible through their form and function but obtain significance by being an active (f)actor within social-religious actions.

4.3 Memento

Objects were often created to remember.[8] Especially inscriptions and images were meant to function as everlasting reminder of one's titles, deeds, or simply of an individual existence. There are many different ways in which material culture can be used to construct and sustain collective and individual memories. As an example, I would like to bring to mind an element of the reconstruction of the Athenian acropolis. After the destruction of the sanctuary by the Persians, the Athenians reused pieces of the former temples and used them as pieces of the outside walls. The architecture was deprived of its primary function as building elements of a special house of the city goddess and gained a secondary function as part of the defensive wall of the sanctuary. The architectural remains of the two temples were carefully arranged at a placed that referenced their former position within the sanctuary and were highly visible for the public. The repositioning and reuse added and changed the meaning of the objects for the society that created them. Still part of the architectural program of the acropolis, the fractured objects gained the ability to act as a material memorial of the Persian War and the significance of the Athenian victory and helped to create collective identity.

5 The relationships of the objects can define the particular functions and meanings of the objects.

Due to special relationships, objects can be personally and socially significant, subsequently they also can become sacralized. The extreme example of the statue of Theagenes illustrates how the social status and life of the object changed over time

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8 Cf. Assmann and Hölscher 1988; Assmann 1992; Jones 2007.

due to actions and relationships that involve the image. Similarly, small and seemingly insignificant things of daily use could change their social status and become meaningful dedications to the divine, as was the case with Bitto's weaving tool.

6 Defining objects as things of human creation: problems and perspectives

The first objective, that objects are (human-)made material things, also includes things that are seemingly in the categories of nature and alive, such as an animal breed or a cultivated plant. Moreover, texts and literature are also objects of human creation that can sometimes gain material form or a body, maybe in the voice of a singer or the accounts of a temple written on stone. To perceive and analyze materiality and ritual appropriation of objects, we need a framework which takes into account that the borders between dead things and living material may shift and blur according to their specific functions or meanings within a particular society and time. The dichotomous thinking about objects as a counterpart to subjects and living bodies does not fit with the suggested definition. Instead, my argument is built on another dichotomy: human made vs. natural.

Although ancient societies might not have shared this dichotomy, it can still be a useful lens within materiality studies. In Graeco-Roman times, a typical ritual action such as a sacrifice assembled and used many different kinds of objects. Almost all were human-made: sheep, pigs, wine, fruits, and cakes, cups, jugs and baskets, the altar, knifes, cooking pots, the performed prayers, and songs, the fine garments and jewelry. Each had specific functions and related to one another and to the ritual in different ways. For instance, the living animal soon to be meat, bones, and odor for the gods had a distinct function, certainly layers of meaning, but little agency, and so did the fruits and cakes. For humans and gods alike, they are also an affordance, a necessity of life and nourishment. But the whole assemblage of objects and their usage within the ritual is closely linked with the human desires of divine effectancy and agency. Moreover, the ritual itself – or what is left – could act as a reminder for later communities.

By defining an object as a materialized human-made creation, it is possible to integrate a broader range of material and establish common ground between different fields of research. However, this wide definition can be problematic. To avoid dilution each particular object must be classified and analyzed in regard to its specific functions, meanings, and relations(hips).

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Sára Eszter Heidl & Marios Kamenou

Innovative Religion: A Comparative Study of the 'New' in Socio-religious Practices

1 Introduction

From ancient to contemporary times, in polytheistic or monotheistic environments, religious practices were always compelled to innovate, change and transform, to revive and adapt the ideas and beliefs that manifested and revalidated their relation to society. In order to have a successful and resonant impact on members of societies and communities, changes in religious contexts had to be appropriated in a way to reflect and respond to current societal values and structures. In this sense, an interdisciplinary study aimed at capturing religious innovation requires a perspective that focuses on the relational responses of social groups and individuals to new religious signs or practices, widespread in certain chronological and spatial contexts.

The current paper adopts this approach with the aim to emphasize how religious appropriation integrates new religious concepts into society by targeting specific social groups and shedding more light on the gender roles related to religious innovations. Namely, it focuses on the role of women within the framework of two historically and culturally different religious phenomena, the Hellenistic cult of Meter (Mother of the Gods) and a spiritual gathering that takes place in the 21st century in Hungary and guides people on their way to self-awareness. While ancient events are mapped using literary, epigraphic, and iconographic methods, contemporary festivals are analyzed using sociological and ethnographic methods. The different methodological approaches of the case studies provide a basis for interdisciplinary comparison, while a comparative approach allows us to reveal common features on how participants engage in new, appropriated ritual actions, how these reflect on societal structures and what the participants gain from attending the events.

2 The Role of Meter in Emphasizing Communal Values

Religious innovations can take many forms depending on the socio-religious context in which they take place. Such processes are traceable in different historical ages and both simple-structured societies and complex social systems. What stands

out while studying these phenomena are the appropriation strategies applied by societies to incorporate new gods, practices and concepts.[1] In order to be successful, religious innovations must resonate with society, respond to its demands, reflect its needs and overcome difficulties that make aspects of established religion silent.[2] This is achieved by means of appropriation, i.e., means that bridge innovation and society[3] – images, actions, words, expressions, paraphernalia, architecture, activities of religious specialists, gestures etc. that transform what can be alien to society into an inseparable and functional part of it. The Graeco-Roman civilization is exceptionally rich in such actions and expressions, and examining this long-standing, multicultural world can be very fruitful to understand new religious currents in today's western societies and the reasons that drive people to respond to the call of innovation in religious terms.

In Greek polytheism, the different cults of a city were directed at all social groups, creating civic identity in a functional and cohesive way.[4] Accordingly, any religious change had to respond to this necessary and unconditioned prerogative. Such was the challenge met by the 'Phrygian' cult of Meter, which was particularly widespread in the Hellenistic world, from Asia Minor to Rome. The popularity of this 'foreign dressed' goddess can be compared to the greatest religious currents of the ancient Mediterranean, thus her cult can serve as an excellent example for the social value of processes of religious innovation and appropriation.

Epigraphic evidence from Priene and Cyzicus reveals that local cults of Meter addressed female groups and functioned as means to enhancing their importance in the socio-religious nucleus of the city-states. A sale of priesthood for the cult of Meter Phrygia from the city of Priene[5] (around the second century BCE) records the duties and responsibilities of a civic position that had to be occupied by a woman for life. In the first place, the priestess was to oversee the sacrifices to Meter and the other gods of the sanctuary, performed on the 12th day of the month Artemision. Meter received a sheep, for Pan a cock and Hermes and Zeus two lambs. The inscription gives also important insight on the mystery aspect of the cult, by describing the requisites for the initiation into the cult that was exclusive to women (*teleisthai*).[6] Those who wished to be initiated by the priestess could do so by sacrificing an adult animal. This indicates that the ritual was addressed to women of high social status who could afford such expense. The public priestess

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1 Rüpke 2018: 263; Gasparini et al. 2020: 2.
2 Rosa 2016.
3 Sluiter 2017.
4 Parker 1996.
5 IK.Priene 145; Hamon *REG* 2012 BE no. 364.
6 On the term *telete* see Schuddeboom 2009.

herself had to be initiated before she began to perform initiations of other women – she was to be introduced ritually into the *prytaneion* and initiated at her own expense. Then the inscription goes on to say that the sacred precinct of the goddess was designated near the place called 'White and Black' and the shrines were to be constructed or re-erected by an obligatory donation by private citizens; the collection of the money was also a duty of the priestess, who could be aided by other female assistants, and it had to take place on the 4th day of the month Artemision. Moreover, the priestess was obliged to provide the money on the 6th day of the month Metageitnion and the contract was to be inscribed on a stele and erected in the sanctuary. The text finishes with the statement that the priesthood was bought by Philitis, daughter of Aristeas, for 430 drachmae.

Jan Bremmer associates these public mysteries of Meter with the mystery cults of the Kabeiroi, as in some cities this group of gods included Meter along with an elder and a younger god.[7] In these mysteries, often characterized by heavy drinking and ecstatic dances to the sound of frenetic music, women also played a central role. In these extraordinary, unconventional practices, Robert Parker sees the participation as a way for women to escape from the dull duties of everyday life and to participate in an exciting event where they are transformed into central figures – the protagonists upon which the whole ritual performance was constructed.[8] Moreover, the grouping of women of a certain status under the guise of initiation offered opportunities to communicate, exchange knowledge and share experiences regarding matters of everyday life, thus increasing the role of the participants as vital parts of communal life.

In Cyzicus, the cult of Meter had a long and distinctive history. In the Hellenistic period, the goddess appears in different onomastic forms, reflecting the existence of numerous cults dedicated to her. The existence of one such cult, that of Meter Plakiane, survives in public decrees. The first records a request from a certain Asclepiades Diodorou on behalf of the female cult officials – *tas syntelousas tous kosmous para te Metri te Plakiane, tas ieropoious prosagoreumenas thalassias and tas synousas met'auton iereias* – to set up a bronze statue of Kleidike Asklepiadou, the priestess of Meter Plakiane and former priestess of Artemis Mounychia, because of her donation of 700 staters for organizing the festival of Meter Plakiane on the 5th day of the month Taureon and because of her *eusebeia* (piety), *philostorgia* (affection) and *eunoia* (devotion) towards all the gods.[9] The statue was to be placed in the men's agora by the synedrion of her ancestors and beside the statue

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7 Bremmer 2014: 53.

8 Parker 1990: 244–248.

9 IMT Kyz Kapu Dağ 1432; CIG 2.3657; cf. van Bremen 1996: 171, 187 n. 157; Connelly 2007: 141.

of her brother, Dionysios Asclepiadou.[10] In the second inscription, the city permits the erection of a painted portrait of the priestess in the Parthenon of the sanctuary of Meter Plakiane. The inscription adds a further priesthood held by Kleidike, that of Kore and another Meter.[11]

The information provided by the inscriptions regarding the organization of the cult is very interesting. The sanctuary consisted, apart from the temple that hosted the statue of the goddess, of a parthenon, where the portrait of the priestess was going to be placed. The name of the parthenon suggests that female groups, such as adolescent girls of pre-marital age, were subjected to festivals and rituals related to the passing of age.[12] In the premise of the sanctuary three female groups served: *tas syntelousas tous kosmous para te Metri te Plakiane*, *tas ieropoious prosagoreumenas thalassias* and *tas synousas met'auton iereias* ("those taking care of the adornment of Meter Plakiane and female hieropoioi known as *thalassiai* and *hiereiai*"). The names of these groups reveal some of the practices that were taking place in the cult, such as the adornment of the statue of Meter Plakiane. However, the duties of the *thalassiai* and the priestesses that complemented them are not clear (it is possible that these were responsible for practices related to the sea, for instance a procession aimed at the washing of the sacred statue of the goddess).[13]

The subject of both inscriptions is the honouring of the priestess Kleidike; which in itself is revealing in terms of the high social status of her family. [insert footnote: Pilz 2013.] Her financing the festival of Meter Plakiane on the fifth day of the month of Taureon and also her numerous priesthoods show her active role in the public life of Cyzicus which was reflected in her political capital. Hence, also in this case, the cult of Meter appears as a space for the female members of the local society to actively express themselves and to reassert their roles through their religious duties, as individuals and as a group, in the shaping of their city's identity.

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10 It is not clear whether *synedrion* refers to a building (Lolling 1882: 154) or a family group monument (van Bremen 1996: 187).

11 IMT Kyz Kapu Dağ 1433; Lolling 1882: 154–159; cf. van Bremen 1996: 171 n. 132, 187. Connelly 2007: 141 erroneously states that the priestess was honoured with a statue.

12 Mylonopoulos 2013: 131–132.

13 On the possible duties of the three groups, Hasluck 1910: 216–217.

3 Everness: Embracing Personal Religion

In a contemporary context, the social role of religion is shifting from the communal and social to a more personal and individual sphere.[14] The role of religion is still integrated into society but focuses more on the shaping of individual identity and human nature. Religion must adapt to new social structures, giving space to new ways of interpreting the role and meaning of the notion, resulting in alternative approaches, such as new religious movements, non-institutional beliefs, spiritual, but not religious and similar approaches.[15] The presence of religious innovation and appropriation[16] can be also added to these. However, the study of emotional response to innovation in modern contexts differs from the research on past events. For ancient festivals, inscriptions incised on stone serve as 'fingerprints' of feelings, while in modern times we have the chance to document human sentiments first-hand through the eyes of the practitioners. The analysis of the participants' opinions and behaviors requires the use of sociological and ethnographic methods, including qualitative interviews, participation and observation and quantitative surveys. These modern methods can show the role of interdisciplinarity when it comes to comparison with ancient festivals, as these allow us to examine religious events on a more individual level, document in detail feelings and experiences of people from different socio-demographic backgrounds, and thus emphasize similarities and dissimilarities to ancient events.

In societies such as the Hungarian one, where traditional institutional religion played a determinative role and was always embedded in the social and political sphere, the understanding of religion and spirituality started to transform and resulted in many different and sometimes controversial interpretations.[17] Many people started to create their own, individual, belief systems, considering themselves as 'religious in their own way,'[18] and in many cases distancing themselves from the dominant religious institution and applying religious innovation and appropriation. In Hungary, since the predominant religion is Christianity, in certain groups this means adapting foreign, mainly Eastern religious elements, or the renewing of pagan Hungarian folk religious traditions, as well as going back to pre-Christian religions. Religious innovation is everywhere in society, in different socio-economic environments and different fields such as psychological or medical approaches

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14 Pollack and Rosta 2015.
15 Dawson 2006.
16 Rogers 2006.
17 Rosta 2020.
18 Tomka 1984.

and personal philosophy. The laic common agreement and the socio-political background of the country usually emphasize the Christian values and roots;[19] therefore, this kind of innovation is still not accepted in every situation and setting. This study aims to give insight into an event that gives an opportunity for people who seek alternative ways of understanding religion and spirituality. This gathering provides a place in society for these alternative approaches, helping the participants to meet others with similar mindsets and lifestyles.

The event is a festival called Everness, placed in Hungary, in a settlement[20] next to Lake Balaton and is held each year in the summer for 5 to 6 days. The description of the website of the event informs those who are interested that this festival strives "to give a grip on normalcy, real things, human relationships, and community. And, of course, for those involved in the path of awareness and self-knowledge, to show deeper understanding and new directions through [our] contributors."[21] To give an initial picture of the programs, the introduction mentions that "international, popular and well-known performers who are decisive in the world of spirituality, both in terms of performers and musicians"[22] are invited for the next event in 2022. The organizers want to create an intimate space, where there is equality, openness and no social boundaries. Usually, people attend the event because they want to get a break from everyday restrictions, rules and discover their inner self and spirituality.[23]

Programs at Everness include yoga, massages and meditation, calming music, ecstatic dance and intimate conversations on topics that can be interpreted as taboo in everyday life. There are also lectures on the role of women, sexuality and other intimate topics. An 'intimate area' appears at the festival area where only people over the age of 18, only men or only women can enter for certain talks or presentations so they can talk more openly about more difficult topics.

The addressed group, according to observations, is a specific layer of society that is attracted by an extraordinary belief system, different from the national religious habits, and tries to create a suitable setting by integrating 'foreign' religious elements, echoing the Greek Meter festivals. The refusal of any dogmatic religious forms allows a greater space of movement in the search for ideas, concepts and practices to be interpreted, appropriated and constantly re-adapted according to

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19 Máté-Tóth 2022.

20 Locations changed in the past, but they were always held somewhere on the shores of Lake Balaton; Balatonakarattya, Alsóörs, Siófok.

21 Everness n.d., 1st paragraph, my translation. Online access: https://citizine.hu/everness-fesztival-2022-visszateres-evernessiaba-2022-junius-21-27-siofok-sosto

22 Ibid., 3rd paragraph, my translation.

23 Heidl 2024.

the needs of modern society. By pushing national Christian elements into the background, as mentioned above, it mostly uses Asian religious elements from Buddhism or Hinduism and returns to the idea of pagan, ancient traditions. An explanation for mixing the different elements may be that the institutional structure often evokes conflicting feelings in those who experience their faith inwardly or subjectively, and the application of appropriation strategies opens the possibility to a new, 'pure,' unstructured, historically unfounded path for them where they can create their own belief systems.[24]

Women are addressed in a particular way to such practices that emphasize femininity and re-order the position of women in the world. This is usually connected to methods helping them to develop self-awareness and inner balance. It is common in such environments for women to be over-represented and for programs for them to be more diverse and more available than for men.[25] Particularly among single women aged 30–45, it is common to find alternative paths not only from a religious or spiritual perspective, but also from a psychological, self-awareness point of view.

Like many other contemporary festivals, entrance is subject to a ticket, but interestingly this small detail is already reflecting the Meter festivals, which were mostly attended by individuals of higher status who could afford to pay in order to take part in them.[26] The programs of the festival are most appealing to women in their middle ages[27] from the middle or upper class; correspondingly, sociodemographic data shows that in the past five years the visitors were mostly females (average around 65 %), mainly with higher education status (with a university degree, all genders together are around 55 %, high school degree 20 %) and from different age groups (18–29: 25 %, 30–39: 35 %, 40–49: 30 %). Regarding family status, participants in a relationship and singles were both around 35 %, followed by married (25 %) and a few divorced and widowed visitors.[28]

The festival aims to invite strong female characters to give a presentation on many different topics. An article was released to give an insight into the perform-

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24 Heidl 2024.

25 Woodhead 2007.

26 Note that the festival offers another option for those who cannot offer the entrance ticket: they can apply for the festival as a volunteer, so they get a free ticket for a few hours of work each day at the event: helping with organizing, giving information to visitors, cleaning the festival area, helping in the kitchen, etc.

27 35–45 years old is considered as early middle age, and 45–64 years old is considered as late middle age by Medley 1980.

28 In this paragraph, all percentages are approximate values that represent the cumulative average of 5 years of research.

ers invited for the next festival. The title of the article is 'Healing, Accompanying, Gentle-Strong Women at Everness'[29] and describes the role of women at the event. According to the article, the invited performers are

> [...] strong women, who, with their daily activities and their whole being, help their fellow females to find their own ways, their own voice, to heal themselves and thereby their environment.[30]

In other words, these female individuals play a crucial role in various performances, concerts, and workshops that aim to represent self-awareness, holistic harmony, sexual freedom and self-love.

The diversity of the programs and the role of women can be seen in the list of performers and the descriptions of their titles and professions. Even though there are male and female performers usually on similar topics, the presence and importance of women are always emphasized. The innovative approaches are not only present in the religious or spirituality-related themes, but also in the fields of psychology, music, and several healing techniques. Coaches, trainers, and mentors come to Everness mainly from Hungary, but also from a lot of other countries, including the USA, Portugal, Australia, Peru, Israel, and Austria to talk about their methods and to guide the participants in their own, sometimes special or unique, way. To name a few examples from female performers, spiritual topics are discussed at the festival by a soul coach, a sacred women's healer,[31] heart-soul healer, sacral female trainer,[32] a shaman, meditation guides and a sacral round dance instructor. Regarding topics connected to sexuality and intimacy, the visitors can listen to presentations and talks from an intimacy mentor, sexual psychologists, couple therapists, a sexological bodywork trainer, tantric touch- and motion-therapist, sexologist and relationship consultant, women's sexuality expert, holistic sex coach and a non-monogamist relationship consultant. Some of the programs are connected to movement, performed by dancers, musicians, music therapists, yoga instruc-

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29 Pintér 2021. Online access: https://www.evernessfesztival.hu/hirek/gyogyito-kisero-szelid-eros-nok-az-evernessen

30 Ibid., 1st paragraph, my translation.

31 To give an insight: topics discussed or practices held by this performer are ritual soul-song, women's healing, sound therapy, Tarot fate analysis (divination) or Mandala painting. Source: https://everness.hu/fesztival/programok/fellepok/papp-edina Last accessed: 16.04.2024.

32 A "female trainer prepares women to have a basic understanding of what can happen in life situations that bring change (such as menstruation, relationship crises, childbirth, engagement, divorce, breakup, menopause, death etc.)..." Asszonyképző n.d., 4th paragraph, my translation. Online access: https://asszonykepzo.hu/asszonykepzo/

tors and an NIA[33] dance trainer. Some other performers and guests are ethnographers, anthropologists, a human rights activist and a dietitian. In part, these experts are coming to the event to introduce their own self-help methods, analyses, and techniques.[34]

The diversity of performers promotes the importance of women within the colorful topics. What exactly the role of women is, however, is not always clear. Some programs may contradict each other, giving space to lectures on the 'traditional role' of women (mother, wife) and the 'liberated' woman (mostly sexual topics, including taboos and polyamory). The very strong distinction between male and female roles also leaves open the question of the placement of LGBTQ issues within the festival setting. Nevertheless, the new and alternative approaches aimed at women are emerging and increasing in recent years at the event. The aim is to find 'new' answers and 'new' methods regarding spirituality, self-help, and awareness, while emphasizing the importance of women not only in spiritual settings but also in society. Even if this 'new' rather means the 'previously unknown': practices, methods, worldviews of bygone ages or distant cultures. Reaching out to the unknown offers new emotions, beliefs and experiences to the participants, who cannot find solutions to their problems in the culture and belief system that surrounds them. Returning to ancient beliefs, methods, distant cultures and religions, and reinventing their practices and meanings helps the visitors to find themselves, by adapting these to modern problems and circumstances.

4 Conclusion

In sum, innovation seems to appear in different epochs and cultures through socio-religious practices, showing that experiencing and interpreting the 'new' is appealing for groups and individuals who need a change in their relationship with society throughout history. Their impact seems to be particularly strong for female individuals. The Greek Meter cult created a civic identity for female groups, integrating them into the local social-religious context. The cult was addressed to women of high social status, providing them with an environment to escape the restrictions of everyday life and finding entertainment and excitement in a community. The festival Everness not only reflects the freedom from everyday life's rules and structure of the Meter cult but also the importance of women's roles. In this setting,

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33 NIA: Neuromuscular Integrative Action.

34 All titles and professions can be found at the website of the festival which is updated each year: https://everness.hu/fesztival/programok/fellepok

women receive extraordinary attention that emphasizes their value in everyday life as well. The demand to discuss female roles, problems and perceptions in today's society show that these topics are still, if not even more, significant and topical in the 21ˢᵗ century.

In other words, the actions presented here are examples of religious innovation and appropriation of elements that take place in distant historical periods, cultures, and religions, but surprisingly, have much in common. In particular, these focus on creating new ways of spirituality for specific social groups that want to (re)establish their role in the community, often escaping from the main currents and predominant approaches of the time. It would be correct to say that regardless of cultural, geographical, or historical background, introducing and experiencing the 'new' will always give an opportunity for developing personal and social self-identity for everyone.

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Nancy Alhachem & Franz Winter

Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Contested Terms in Dialogue

1 Starting Ideas

In our contribution to this volume, we voice skepticism in regard to the often highly overgeneralized use of the concepts of antisemitism and Islamophobia, speaking from different disciplines, sociology and anthropology on the one hand, religious studies between Europe and Asia on the other. To get a more nuanced view, we look at possible entanglements, but we also conceptualize particularities of the two terms both in regard to their emergence and their actual use.

2 Written Conversation Part I

Nancy Alhachem (NA): The heated discussion of the use and abuse of the concept of 'anti-Semitism' (and how to write it: antisemitism/anti-Semitism...) has been resurfacing during the pandemic. Especially with anti-vaxxer campaigns and their claims of being victims of state policies (some to the point of equating their situation to that of Anne Frank). Before trying to sketch how the term developed and which definitions are still being debated, it is worth mentioning that antisemitism has become a melting-pot term going from far-right extremism to leftist solidarities to weaponized accusations, opening thus transatlantic debates, from Europe to the U.S., Australia, and Israel. This concept is in use since the 1800s and has been spread by nationalists and Judeophobes, as well as by their opponents and critics. Upon discussing with you, Prof. Winter, you mentioned that the term should not be equated with other concepts related to hatred and discrimination, such as Islamophobia. In this I see a return to the meta-argument, that racism and antisemitism cannot be studied interconnectedly. Do you see in your studies an extension of this claim? And how did the word Islamophobia emerge (especially in the European context), is it a modern concept or does it have historically deeper roots, maybe dating back to the Middle Ages?

Franz Winter (FW): As Nancy stated already, the use of the terms antisemitism and Islamophobia is extremely debated and it is indeed very difficult to pin down a generally accepted mode to deal with them. In this regard, it is impor-

tant to highlight that any reference to the historical development of the terms does not say anything about current problems. However, by trying to get to the roots we are able to gain additional insight, but we also have to take into consideration the various changes that occur in the further reception of the term. A good example is provided by the term 'Islamophobia' whose career is part of the changing attitude towards Islam and Muslims in general that has undergone many transformations in the last two centuries. The term itself has a history that goes back to the beginning of the 20th century with important first occurrences in writings on North-Western African Islam by French 'anti-colonial' Arabists and ethnologists.[1] Prior to the 1970s, the term was only used in an academic context,[2] thereby denoting two distinctive concepts, namely either a type of religious intolerance (towards Islam in general and in a more generic way) or a form of 'cultural racism'.[3] The term gained momentum after 9/11, thereby losing its first, not so spectacular notion and ending up as purporting a new kind of 'racism' that was obviously coined on the idea to have an equivalent to the term antisemitism. This was mainly introduced and emphasized in publications and campaigns of a non-governmental activist institution, the Runnymede Trust, a think tank that was founded in 1968 and is – from its self-perception and definition – devoted to race and equality issues. It was mainly responsible for this new phase of propagation and further development of the Islamophobia term in the second half of the 1990s in Europe with the seminal publication *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* as the starting point. With this publication the term became a "contested concept in the public space".[4] Considering the origin in the context of an activist anti-racist initiative it is no wonder that to date those who use the term define it as a variety of racism.

My major concern with the term is terminologically viz. etymologically motivated: By denoting a '-phobia' it suggests a kind of (mental) illness as the cause or outcome of certain developments and blames all those who might have concerns and dare to utter them of being in a severe and problematic mental condition. I cannot see any particular reason to legitimize this specific agenda as it invites to immunize the use of the term from any critique. These concerns might even be raised in publications that bear Islamophobia in their titles. A good example is provided by an edited volume of 2009 that was deal-

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1 For the early history of the term, see Hajjat and Mohammed 2016: 71–83; see also Bravo López 2011; Bruckner 2017, in the introductory section of his book.

2 Allen 2010.

3 Bravo López 2011: 556–560; Bravo López 2016; on this debate see also Moodod 1997.

4 Allen 2010: 20–22.

ing with 'Islamophobia in Austria' (and this was basically a seminal publication as it introduced the term in the Austrian societal and political debate). Therein, renowned Islamic studies scholar Rüdiger Lohlker problematizes – although publishing in the volume – its use as it denotes "a pathological illness that needs to be cured."[5] Taken from this very basic and terminological angle, I see major problems in equating the terms Islamophobia and antisemitism. Maybe an analysis of the use and history of this term might help to continue this debate. Which is also my question to Nancy now.

NA: The denotation of '-phobias' as mental illnesses and the use of this suffix in terms that try to conceptualize forms of hatred and othering reminds me of a recent study by the historian and psychoanalyst George Makari *Of Fear and Strangers: A History of Xenophobia.* By tracing the evolution and use of the aforementioned concept, Makari attempts through the writings of philosophers, psychoanalysis concepts, and history to show how xenophobia emerged alongside colonialism, migration, genocide and western nationalism. This study of irrational anxiety and attachment to identity, portrays the pathologies of modern societies as anchored in an obsession with the Self and at the same time, ways of escaping it, by projecting rational fears onto irrational forms of Othering once the tide becomes unstable. The common ground that bounds xenophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and cultural racism, in my view, is this element of scapegoating and projecting one's fears onto whoever comes to count as 'other' in a certain society. At times it might be the newcomers from a different land, at other times it is those who have been part of a society for centuries but are now alienated and dehumanized. If we look at the particularities of antisemitism, it differs from other kinds of racism in two major elements: first, its roots in Christian dogma and the monotheistic competition; and second, in the belief in a global conspiracy theory.[6] Although many insist on these particularities to differentiate antisemitism from other forms of racism, I argue that antisemitism is a form of racism (along with many others such as Judith Butler, Michael Rothberg, Moshe Zimmerman and Robert S. Wistrich), and needs to be studied in its interconnectedness, for an effective understanding of how images of the 'other' get shattered and altered to the point of demonizing and excluding certain groups from the social tissue. It remains, however, important to not decontextualize

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5 In German: "[...] *Krankheit, die es zu kurieren gilt*"; in Bunzl and Hafez 2009: 184.

6 A major study on the development of antisemitism in Europe: Philippson 1910; König and Schulz 2019.

these concepts from their specific characteristics – if we look at antisemitism, its long durée and centrality to the Holocaust – we can understand better how it emerges in the post-war era. The problem remains nevertheless that of definition and pertinence: what do we speak of when we speak of 'new antisemitism, Muslim antisemitism, Israel-related antisemitism, antisemitism of the Left' and so on? In the past years, two main definitions emerged from attempts to conceptualize these contemporary forms of Jewish hatred, double standards, and conspiracy related to Jews or/and Israel. One from IHRA (the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), which is criticized as political and abstract, and another from the Jerusalem Declaration with concrete examples, and more precise cases.[7] The center of current debates on antisemitism evolved around the legitimacy of criticism of Israel and to which point anti-Zionism and post-colonialism bear elements of the latter. It thus shifts the attention from what Micha Brumlik and Moshe Zimmermann see as the 'elephant in the room', that is, far-right extremism.[8] Antisemitism and Islamophobia are both seen as having special relevance in Germany today, by scholars such as Katharina Galor and Sa'ed Atshan, who find in Islamophobia a similar combination of religious, social, and racial arguments to that persisting in antisemitism. My question now is, how much can psychoanalysis help us understand how the 'other' becomes differentiated from an imagined 'we'? And whether Islamophobia can be replaced by more concrete terms such as 'Muslim-hatred' or another term that can capture the combination spoken of above?

FW: This was a great input, thanks for that. Before dealing with your questions, some remarks came to my mind when reading through your piece and this is just a kind of direct reaction: When trying to define the special status of antisemitism and its difference to other 'hatred' or 'aversion' concepts (to put it this way) you are referring to two specificities, namely its roots in the Christian context and the additional reference to a global conspiracy that seemingly supports the concept. I would suggest that both arguments could also be used in regard to the critical stance towards Islam as this is also about this religion's difference to Christianity or, to use your terminology, 'competition' with its monotheistic counterpart viz. opponent. This has a very long tradition in the European cultural context and makes part of the discussion to date. To a certain extent, it is quite natural that concepts such as these

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7 https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/
8 Benz 2020.

are connected to conspiracy thinking as they seemingly over-emphasize the importance and the 'harmful' influence of the other. I can see that in the debate on Islam as well when thinking of authors/political activists/journalists speaking of the 'great replacement', namely of the 'indigenous' European population (whatever that is) with a predominantly Muslim population,[9] or the infamous concept of 'Eurabia' as created by the British author Gisèle Littman (better known with her pen-name Bat Ye'or).

With this argument I would like to show that we are indeed speaking of comparable concepts and I do not oppose the general idea behind them, to make it clear. And this is obviously a major consensus between us, namely that we do not challenge the validity of the problems themselves. Or to put it in other words, there is a problem with antisemitic and 'Islamophobic' tendencies in society. What remains, though, is still the terminology problem. This brings me now to your questions at the end of your presentation, namely about the validity of '-phobia' concepts as they are connected to a specific, very generalizing, psychoanalytical mode of dealing with them. To be honest, I have to confess that I am not too familiar with psychoanalytical concepts particularly when it comes to their application in a very general, all-encompassing attitude, i. e., when these concepts are applied in historical periods, several generations and so forth. I personally do not think that this is valid as it oversimplifies or over-generalizes the problems. However, as I wrote, I am not familiar with this discussion and I still found your arguments very interesting.

Having now found my way out rather elegantly (just kidding!), there is still a major issue I would like to raise although I am absolutely aware that this is a very sensitive arena. And this is an argument you would find quite often against the use of the term Islamophobia, namely that it was used and even propagated actively by movements and currents that have a very specific agenda that is quite problematic. A prominent example that has recently been debated in Austria quite often is the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a highly diversified movement and has many differing aspects but is often blamed for introducing and popularizing the Islamophobia concept (with some critics even indicating that it was coined by the Muslim Brothers, which is actually not true). The major aim, though, as critics say, was not to point out the prob-

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9 This concept has its origin in a French debate where the 'grand remplacement' is a major figure of argumentation within the so-called 'nouvelle droite' movement. Its actual originator is the French author Renaud Camus who published *Le Grand Remplacement* in 2011, thereby continuing a specific tradition that has a long history of its own. Its message began to spread far beyond France and into other countries as well and became an integral part of current right-wing ideologies. See Polakow-Suransky 2017: in chapter 8.

lems that are obvious, but to foster a climate that isolates Muslims even more so that the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood might be even better received. I would be very interested in hearing your opinion on that.

NA: It is interesting to see how the epistemology of these two concepts, from the start, serves highly politicized agendas. For the problem in using the concept of antisemitism today returns to the claim that it was used proudly by self-identified antisemites themselves. On another level, if you want to shut down legitimate criticism of Israeli policies, you stamp them with this word, and the criticism (and the people voicing it) loses its legitimacy, people might even lose their jobs, and become isolated.[10] From this simplified observation we can say that the problem, the political side that connects the two, is: criticism. 'When is an Israel critic an antisemite? When is the critic towards Muslim practices, or Islamic ideologies, Islamophobic?'

I am not an expert on the emergence of the term Islamophobia in Western media, but I suppose you follow here Gilles Kepel's investigation that traced the origin of the concept to the Muslim Brotherhood in 'western-countries'.[11] I think there should be more research on this, to see if there are other stories, or more evidence to support this claim. Now if we want to test the hypothesis whether the term is used to shut down criticism, we could also say the same then when it comes to calling someone, or some institution, as adhering to 'far-right extremism', What I mean is that there are different ways of using 'shocking' terms to shut down valid criticism, and that critique itself is not always apolitical, in fact it is the tool by which the political is transformed. This is my general opinion on the matter, you might not share it, as you are more immersed in the study of the concept than me. But I think that the matter on which we could both agree is that the use of these two terms, especially in the media, is highly political. There is a need to change the discourse when it comes to criticism, and how far one can stretch a certain opinion before it becomes extreme. On the epistemological level, and regarding the scholarship dealing with these two terms, scholars should be using alternative concepts, that are more specific to their respective problems. For example, when is a certain opinion qualified as 'anti-Muslim', or when is a certain incident bordering on 'cultural racial discrimination' etc. Still, sometimes it feels that we are stuck in this web, in which we reproduce the same things that we are trying to change!

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10 Brumlik 2021.

11 Gilles Kepel, and Antoine Jardin in their writings on *Terror in France*, 2016, 2017.

FW: I think you pinned down the major problems and this could serve as an ideal compromise, viz. as a kind of provisional result of our brief encounter. The issues you are addressing in your research make up part of a highly debated arena which is or becomes a major aspect of the terminology/the terms you are dealing with. I could also agree that we are stuck in a tense web of implications/presuppositions/approaches that depend on various experiences, decisions, and probably biases (the latter became at least clear for me in the course of this enquiry). I personally was able to learn a lot as I had the opportunity to have a conversation with an expert, since I was dealing with the topics more or less from a distance (i.e., in the course of the preparation of a lecture series and some smaller publications) and as a person interested in societal and media debates. What I have to point out in addition is of course the fact that the whole matter is even more delicate when dealt with in a German-speaking environment – although I would like to point out the slight differences between Austria and Germany in this regard.

And: it does not make overall sense to fully focus on the terminological problems as they are often used as a pretext not to address the topics behind them. As a matter of fact, it is about the problem of discrimination and the various attempts to deal with this sensitive issue. On this we fully agree, as far as I can see.

Thanks for the very interesting conversation!

3 Written Conversation Part II

FW: After having dealt with a more 'hands-on' topic, i.e., differing views on the definition and particularly on the application of some debated terms I would like to continue our written conversation with some thoughts on the general setting viz. pondering what I call now different layers of reflection we both had. My first thought when reading our conversation anew was that it is quite obvious that we were finding a kind of consensus in some points; in other contexts, though, we were simply on different levels or coming from different angles with sometimes simply not being able to follow. This was, for instance, absolutely clear for me when you introduced your psycho-analytical-*cum*-historical approach (I hope I did not get this wrong) as I am (over-)skeptical about this kind of viewpoint.

So, this would be my first question to you, what do you think about the general 'flow' of our conversation and whether you share this general opinion I just introduced (and whether you were able to profit from it)? As I wrote at the beginning of our conversation, at some point I felt myself always in the

position of someone who could learn more from our conversation than you: I am simply not a specialist on these questions, but had some cursory contact with it (so to say) in the course of some smaller publications and particularly when preparing lectures or seminars on Islam in the contemporary context. Your work, though, is constantly dealing with these issues and naturally I was then in the position of the learner (from you). And this happened indeed as I was forced to leave some of my thoughts/presuppositions/fixed ideas aside and break them up. This was actually – at least for me – the most important aspect of our written dialogue (for which I am also very thankful).

NA: Thank you for opening the second round of this written discussion. I agree indeed that until now we were trying to find a compromise, but I think it is also important to have different views and counter-arguments. For example, the use of 'Islamophobia' in Austrian media was very new for me. I understand your part as coming from this background. So maybe we can proceed by asking how these two intersect or not in the two contexts of Germany and Austria, and how media and religious studies approach those intersections in comparison to historical and social theory... Do you think this is something we can proceed with, as I struggle to see our discussion as a process of inter-disciplinarity unfolding in the way (of argumentation?)?

FW: We can proceed this way meaning: dealing with the topic, but I suggest to give additional attention to the meta-layer, i. e., which angles are now relevant and not only dealing with the subjects. This is actually what you asked for, namely considering the different views on the subject that come with the disciplines we are both familiar with. As for my part, my frame is religious studies which has always been a very broad, not to say too broad and often rather ill-defined discipline when it comes to the inner core of its aims, concepts, and general approaches. This has very much to do with its history as it is closely aligned to the more specialized disciplines that are fully devoted to the various religions, which would be Buddhist studies, Islamic studies, and ancient religions, with the additional idea to focus not only on one religious tradition, but on various and from a comparative perspective. The issue is always what would be the angle, the method or the like to do this. I suppose that this is not so uncommon in other disciplines as well which often struggle with a kind of aporetic emptiness since the last decades of last century. By the way: what about the discipline(s) that are most relevant to you?

After this more theoretical (meta-)question, some remarks in regard to your question on the use of the term Islamophobia in Austrian media. It is indeed more than obvious that the term became a debated one since its introduction

to the general public attention which goes hand in hand with the above-described popularized use of it since its promotion through the Runnymede trust. I would even say that Austria plays an important role in this regard as one of the most prolific authors on Islamophobia and main editor of the *Islamophobia Studies Yearbook/Jahrbuch für Islamophobieforschung* is a political scientist who studied at the University of Vienna and is now based in Salzburg. He was also promoting the concept in public, thereby introducing the bold claim that Austria is a stronghold of Islamophobia due to several political developments from the 1990s onwards. You might know that what is usually referred to as '(right wing) populism', and allegedly important now in many European countries, began a little bit earlier in Austria. With this historical background he argues that Islamophobia grew eminently in Austria and is now a major societal problem. His position, though, did not remain unchallenged as he is said to be very close to the Muslim Brotherhood which brought him some legal problems recently. In general, the debate is not closed, as far as I can see.

NA: Rooting myself in one discipline is as challenging as debating appropriate definitions of any social phenomena. I come from international relations and political sciences, however, my academic life really began within social studies and history, as we can see here that the political still throws its shade onto everything, and the themes I dealt with so far are de facto interdisciplinary, especially where I research modern and contemporary phenomena. We started our informal conversation on interdisciplinarity and moved the dialogue towards the concepts of antisemitism, and Islamophobia, precisely because of these concepts' potential in spreading their branches into any field and every aspect of research and life. I will be honest, I deal more with the concept of antisemitism than with Islamophobia, and it is through our dialogue here that I came to see its debated roots and use, especially in Austria. I am not an expert on its use in German academia and media, but as far as I can tell, the term is used widely, and sometimes unquestionably, as a synonym for 'Muslim-hatred', fear, and discrimination towards Islam. You can see often in the titles of journals, books, and academic articles the terms of 'Islamophobia' and 'antisemitism' not always in association, but often relationally presented or debated; the term Islamophobia itself is used regardless of its origin.[12] In German public debates, civil society activities, awareness workshops, and media, the term is used as an umbrella term, occasionally replaced or accom-

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12 Some German references where the phenomenon is debated: Leibold 2009; Botsch et al. 2012.

panied by 'Muslimfeindlichkeit, Islamfeindlichkeit, Islamkritik'. From this angle, it is safe to say that the German debates are more concerned with the definition, categorization, and associations of Islamophobia with the forms of hatred and discriminations present on a social and political level, and much less with its origin, or affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. Although a possible connection would not surprise me, given that the Muslim Brotherhood itself has its origin in the decolonial movements in Egypt against the British presence, and Islamophobia is theoretically connected to decoloniality, I would not go so far as to say that the term itself is an expression of the Muslim Brotherhood agenda in the West. Many other scholars (than Hafez) made use of the term and its synonyms to study Muslim-related incidents and resentments.[13] Until now we have been discussing the conflicting beginnings of antisemitism, and Islamophobia, connecting their problematic use to their origins, bringing on a meta level the highly politicized agendas in these terms' application. I have still one question for you on this angle: would it be problematic to keep the term Islamophobia in use if it is very anchored in the Muslim Brotherhood politics in the 'west'? Especially since the case of antisemitism shows us continually that the term established itself generically in all fields, despite its foundation in antisemites' clubs! Another matter comes to my mind regarding conceptual creativity: can religious studies offer a better-defined concept of Muslim-fear and hatred, and, if so, would it be able to escape a Christian influenced 'authority' or is there a way to capture the experience from within, by the people who are most affected by this issue? I always struggle in finding terms that can preserve the universal aspiration and the respect for particularities without compromising either.

FW: We are still pondering the origin of the term Islamophobia and its use viz. the implications of its use. My own standpoint changed, to be honest, during our conversation due to your input and because I began to delve deeper into the matter. The question you were now posing is quite fascinating as it offers a new perspective, namely from which angle to evaluate Islamophobia. The first aspect you are mentioning, namely whether it would be 'a problem' if the term is intimately connected to the Muslim Brotherhood and its propagators, is challenging: I would say, yes, for several reasons. Although the origin of the Muslim Brotherhood, as you rightly point out, is rooted in anti-colonial endeavors viz. the struggle of Egypt for political independence and, therefore,

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13 An interesting publication dealing with transatlantic expressions and religion (mainly EU and US) is Polyakov 2019.

deeply connected to the highly problematic, not to say shameful, history of European colonialism in that region, the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood itself is still problematic and its history and the origin shall not be used as an excuse for not criticizing it. As a matter of fact, the Muslim Brotherhood operates as a secret organization particularly outside Egypt (which is actually the only country where the Muslim Brotherhood substantially gained political power and failed, obviously) and has a specific agenda. I concede that it is absolutely illegitimate to perceive its work and efforts in a reductionist way, meaning that it is a mere 'Islamist' movement with the sole aim to transform societies into communities that are solely governed by (a rather trimmed and poor) vision of 'Islam', effective on all levels of society (as the texts of the founding father, Ḥasan al-Bannā, might suggest). On the contrary, and particularly in Europe, the Muslim Brotherhood seemingly developed into a kind of meeting venue and organization for young Muslim intellectuals who want to reconcile their specific religious socialization and upbringing with the challenges of the societies they are living in. However, there is still the question what their agenda is. In my opinion and when surveying the situation in Austria, there is no way to find out what the Muslim Brotherhood's major points are, but one thing seems clear: it stresses the 'Muslim-ness' in opposition to society and propagates a frame that is averse to integration. We do not know more, since due to its secretiveness and the impossibility to gain real insight, it is simply not possible to study the movement sincerely.

This is true for a variety of other Muslim movements as well, such as the Turkish Millî Görüş which is highly active in Austria and often also referred to as part of 'political Islam' in the media. This movement could be compared on many levels (with the exception of its extremely nationalist agenda, but with the advantage of not being a secret organization) to the Muslim Brotherhood and, interestingly, there is a valuable major ethnographic study on Millî Görüş in Germany that tries to pin down exactly this aspect. Naturally, the book[14] was highly debated when it appeared. It was criticized for being 'too friendly' and 'too uncritical' of the movement and its agenda which is a kind of natural reaction when it comes to this kind of studies. To be honest, I do not see a chance to do that kind of research in regard to the Muslim Brotherhood since the access is even more restricted and the members will surely not leave their secretiveness behind – particularly after the current major juridical actions against some of its alleged members.

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14 Schiffauer 2010.

Having answered your first question, I would like to come to the second pro-
posal (closely connected to the first one) and this is about how to approach the
topic at hand with a focus on the people really affected by it. I am connecting
this question with the Muslim Brotherhood and would like to introduce the
whole thing with a personal experience I would like to share with you: In
one of my seminars I offered on "Islam in Europe" there was a young Muslim
student who began to talk about the way she perceived and used a text that is
commonly referred to as a highly problematic outflow of the Muslim Broth-
erhood-tradition viz. its radical wing, namely the infamous *Maʿālim fī ṭ-
ṭarīq* (commonly translated into English as *Milestones*) of the Egyptian intel-
lectual Sayyid Quṭb. From a mere outsider's perspective the book offers a rad-
ical worldview that is based on a fully-fledged and strict distinction between a
very closed and rather small group of 'real' Muslims totally devoted to the
cause (which would be the circle around Quṭb) and all the others in society
that are classified in the book as belonging to the realm of *jāhiliyya*, which
is a classical Arabic term denoting the dumb and morally depraved 'heathen-
dom'. In its current usage, it refers to the era before Islam emerged on the
Arabian Peninsula, denoting the ignorance in matters of religion and the wor-
ship of 'idolatry' instead of Islam, but it is used by Quṭb in regard to everyone
not following his narrow agenda (including Muslims as well). The book be-
came notoriously infamous outside the specialists' circle due to the fact
that some writings related to the terrorists of 9/11 are clearly connected to
its program, its language and vocabulary. The *Maʿālim fī ṭ-ṭarīq* is a radical
text and provided material for the emergence of the Jihadist movement
from the 1980s onwards. But now to my own experience: The surprising as-
pect for me was that this student who became acquainted with this book
in her Muslim youth group had a totally different reading of it, namely as
an intense 'spiritual' guide giving the opportunity to fully plunge into a coher-
ent and all-encompassing Muslim worldview. And she did not interpret it in
any way as bringing her to a 'radical' worldview, but to a deeper understand-
ing of her own religious longings and the troubles she had in society (which
is, by the way, also due to the fact that Quṭb was writing in very clear and
engaging style about religion and his take on the Quran without the use of
cumbersome theological terminology that is usually applied in this regard –
this is probably one of the secrets of his success).

This rather lengthy introduction should lead us to the answer to your ques-
tion, whether there is a way to grasp the term Islamophobia by solely taking
into consideration the standpoint of those (seemingly?) affected by it. What
we are embarking on now is the big issue of the 'insider'– 'outsider' problem
in religious studies but also in social anthropology. As a matter of fact, reli-

gious studies always had the idea to study religions and religiosities by focusing on the traditions themselves on the various levels relevant to them (be it the textual material, rituals, its history and doctrine etc.). We are – so to say – taking on the shape of a member or believer for the simple reason that we want to understand how religions work and function. Taken from this angle it would be quite easy to study Islamophobia from an 'insider' perspective. There is a *caveat*, though, and this is what I now introduce as 'critical distance' towards the object of the study. And this is not only about the contextualization of the various aspects or layers of religions but also about the own self-positioning of the scholar. And this is even more relevant for a sensitive arena such as Islamophobia with its many implications. From a mere insider-focused perspective I see the danger of an apologetic stance that is automatically partial. I would like to add that this issue was prominently debated within religious studies (and still is an issue) in regard to the question of how (or whether) to address obvious problematic tendencies within religions and what religious studies can or should do about that. In other words: how critical should religious studies be in regard to its object of research? This debate was heavily fought over in regard, for instance, to the so-called new religious movements where scholars of religious studies had the tendency to defend these movements against the allegations coming from society or/and from mainstream religious traditions. In the case of our topic, I also see the problem/the danger that a study as you proposed becomes very uncritical and even naïve. And this we shall avoid.

I hope this rather lengthy presentation was not too convoluted. But I can see that we arrived at an interesting point in our conversation as we are presenting 'our' disciplines and their agendas in a comparative manner. We might even speak of interdisciplinarity in a very basic sense. My question now: would you agree and how would you define your own approach when compared to the thoughts I brought in right now? Is there any insider–outsider debate or is this conceivable for you at all? We could continue on that aspect (with additional literature from religious studies), but you might, of course, address other aspects of our conversation as well.

NA: At this point your last response deserves a study of its own! As you started with many entanglements, I will try to give my understanding of your argument before sketching an aspect to which I can respond. Religious extremism and terrorism in western societies is a wide topic to which I can say very little at the moment. However, I would like to link this to the outsider–insider aspect. It seems to me that the problem starts when we make a cut of 'western' societies' modern problems instead of bridging them with western politics

and influences in the 'Global South'. Like the problem of the 'new antisemitism' that is allegedly debated as an import by the migrants, especially Muslim migrants to post-Nazi societies.[15] If we look shortly at the history of ideas, we can see closely how anti-Jewish prejudices were circulating between East and West for many centuries as 'thin ideas' before settling in firm state ideologies. I will not indulge in a historical analysis of the matter for lack of space and time, but it is safe to state that anti-Judaism is and was present in Christian and Muslim societies. Antisemitism as a political ideology attached itself to many regimes (Nazism, Iranian regime, Trumpism...)[16] in the past decades, however when we look at the European discourse we find this constant positioning of 'us' and 'them' and this is (my) problem when we talk about European identity, we see the need for an 'other' of a cut between what is happening 'out there' and what is happening 'here'. Furthermore, the treatment of these modern problems of religious identity is observed as either 'White extremism' or 'Muslim extremism', dismissing the common elements found in both, and thus the possibility of a joint remedy. For the society in which 9/11 happened is also the society that is suffering from deep systematic discrimination and racial profiling. I definitely do not equate the two or pretend that the one happened because of the other. Rather I see in the study of these atrocities, precisely in their intersections, the possibility of a way out; instead of this constant finger pointing at the 'others' as a source of trouble, we should look at the problems 'these others' are suffering from, for they might be the same as ours (put in layman terms). In the same way, the attacks of Halle and Hanau demonstrate the empirical liaison between anti-Judaism, anti-migration, and anti-Muslim hatred. I want to go back here to what you mentioned earlier: "the Muslim Brotherhood seemingly developed into a kind of meeting venue and organization for young Muslim intellectuals who want to reconcile their specific religious socialization and upbringing with the challenges of the societies they are living within." I can identify two aspects in your statement that reflects not merely a specific academic view on the matter, but also state policy: the first part highlights how political Islam is becoming a 'meeting venue' and thus risking the formation of parallel responses to society's problems. This is not only a visible phenomenon in a secret organization (as the Muslim brotherhood or the aforementioned Turkish Muslim Movement in Austria), but also can be observed in metropolitan

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15 Develop on the import–export theory, see Özyürek 2016.
16 Not to reduce it to a sheer universal ideology, we should always take the particularities of each society into account.

cities like Berlin where the activities of organizations close to Hezbollah and Hamas are flourishing. Now the second point I find interesting in your statement is this contrast between 'their upbringings' and the 'challenges of the societies they are living within' as this follows on the question 'whether Islam belongs to Europe, and how to integrate Muslim youth in European societies?' You might object to this interpretation, then why not replace 'the societies they are living within' with 'societies they are (actively) part of'? As much as it is important to have a critical and sharp view of ideological organizations and the luring vocabulary they use, we should not dismiss the intimate relation between the flourishing of these venues on both sides (White Christian extremism, and Radical Islam) and the modern problems facing the different groups of European societies.

Now to the second part of your response, which is as challenging as the first, I must admit I am also surprised that you see the Sayyid Quṭb text as only a source for Jihadist movements. I remember reading it for a university project (on anti-British movements in Egypt) many years ago, and what I remember most is its Western-critique and anti-colonial aspects. Of course, again we should not dismiss the ambiguous affair between anti-colonialism and religious extremism, but also not limit all anti-colonial works to the echoes they have in extremist movements. As this brings also into question the author–oeuvre differentiation, for example, can we look at Heidegger's work with innocent eyes, as a purely philosophical oeuvre or should we take his Nazi sympathies into account? For now, I limit my response to this, if you wish to come back more deeply to the work of Sayyid Quṭb I have to re-read the text thoroughly to be able to answer your concerns, furthermore I would be interested in your own take on the cause–effect relation between colonialism and religious extremism, but maybe this is going too far from where we started. To conclude my argument I would like to point out that interdisciplinarity and modern social phenomena require us to look at anti-Judaism, anti-migration, anti-Muslim, and religious extremism in their *histoire croisée* to be able to identify the specific responses to each, now whether we call it 'xenophobia, antisemitism, and Islamophobia' should not only depend on interrogating the origins of these concepts respectively, but also lay the foundation of proper substitutes that can reflect the implication these concepts have on society and politics.

FW: As our written conversation now must reach an end, I have to say that I learned a lot from your responses. I found it to be very fruitful and my own points of view have changed a lot in the course of this process. There is one major, albeit trivial outcome for me and this is about the two sides

of the coin and the necessity to look at both (or even more) ways. And this might also be something that is directly related to the 'interdisciplinary' topic, which is the frame we are working within: getting in touch with differing angles and viewpoints and trying to find new perspectives.

4 Concluding Remarks

When it comes to interdisciplinarity in regard to our conversation and in general I would like to add that this dialogue was interdisciplinary in a special way: in our case, it is not about trying to bridge the gap between, for instance, modernity and antiquity, but we both dealt with a topic that is intimately related to contemporary issues despite their grounding in wider historical trajectories and the different disciplines that are represented: on the one side it is religious studies with a focus on historical questions and major trajectories, on the other side it is mainly sociology with a keen interest in psychoanalysis combined with historical perspectives. In addition to the challenges (and sometimes necessity) of interdisciplinary studies, regional particularities still play a major role in how we approach certain topics, especially in the aforementioned subjects we see that national sensitivities still shape academic approaches tremendously, perhaps an important aspect for the future of interdisciplinarity will be on how to transcend national borders of thinking. Although we were not able to cover the full approaches of our respective fields regarding the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia in this short paper, it remains an important conversation on which further reflection is needed.

Furthermore, what is worth mentioning is the fact that both dialogue partners were sometimes surprised by the highly differing angles or viewpoints that became relevant in the course of the conversation. In the end and from a mere outsider's view this was closely connected to postcolonial issues that sometimes opened up totally new perspectives on the area of interest. This is, though, also related to the question of how to reconcile these differing viewpoints. Often, the discussants found themselves in a kind of deadlock with no proper solution, but with a fresh and refurbished version of their own thoughts. In the end, both profited a lot from this kind of contact.

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Part III **Applications**

Marcus Döller & Markus Vinzent

Retractationes or Taking A Step Back from Oneself: A Conversation

'... as if Nature could support but one order of understandings.'
(Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*)[1]

1 Markus Vinzent

Scholarship seems to be based on stating, supporting, endorsing or refining one's insights and research conclusions, yet likewise, different from any ideological or religious adherence and conviction, it presupposes freedom of thought and independence of dogmatisms, ritualized obedience and social or institutional constraints. It is "the creative powers of imagination, ratiocination, and observation, traditions of one kind or another in any field of intellectual activity" which need to be "sought out, even when they are contemptuously rejected," as we will see in some cases below.[2] This, however, becomes critical when we not only think about "intellectual conviviality"[3] or about competition and the ambition to develop an ever clearer view of a given problem or a question that has been discovered, but when it comes to one's own previous hypotheses and outputs.

Paul Feyerabend who advocated a 'pluralistic methodology,' in order "to improve rather than discard the views that failed in the competition," commented upon his own previous *Against Method* (and *Science in a Free Society*):

> It is not a systematic treatise; it is a letter to a friend and addresses his idiosyncrasies. For example, Imre Lakatos was a rationalist, hence rationalism plays a large role in the book. He also admired Popper and therefore Popper occurs much more frequently than his "objective importance" would warrant. Imre Lakatos, somehow jokingly, called me an anarchist and I had no objection to putting on the anarchist's mask. Finally, Imre Lakatos loved to embarrass serious opponents with jokes and irony and so I, too, occasionally wrote in a rather ironical vein. An example is the end of Chapter 1: "anything goes" is not a "principle" I hold – I do not think that "principles" can be used and fruitfully discussed outside the concrete research situation they are supposed to affect – but the terrified exclamation of a rationalist who takes a closer look at history.[4]

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1 Thoreau 1966: 270.
2 Shils 1981: 162.
3 Shils 1981: 163.
4 Feyerabend 1993: vii.

Yet, it is precisely this 'anything goes' that has been interpreted as Feyerabend's core statement of both of his books, a misunderstanding which he himself tried to fight not only in this preface to the third edition of *Against Method*, but also in his *Science in a Free Society* of 1978 where the first chapter is 'Against Method Revisited' and a subsequent chapter addresses 'Anything Goes'.[5] The strategy in these chapters is quite revealing. By beginning to reflect upon his critiques, elaborating and further explaining his original assumptions, arguments and conclusions, and, later, by adding elements like "the problem of the relation between reason and practice" that "was never explicitly discussed in *AM* though it underlies all its arguments", demonstrates that even in revisiting his previous work, he does not stick to the principle of 'anything goes.'[6] By raising the question, "how shall we localize faults and carry out changes" he is asking others rather than himself.[7] And yet the very criticism targets himself: "Obviously there is no simple way of guiding a practice by rules or of criticizing standards of rationality by a practice."[8] 'Anything goes', as he demonstrates in this chapter by sticking to his basic assumptions and not radically overturning his previous theories, is not a rule that guides either his own rationality or his very practice. By doing this, however, he becomes his own opponent, undermining earlier insights, when he stated in *Against Method* that,

> Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness. Nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account.[9]

How can we advocate for multi-perspectivity or multi-disciplinarity in an ever-increasing ocean of knowledge when we not only deal with complementary, but mutually exclusive or contradictory scholarship, but withdraw ourselves from such demands? If Feyerabend struggles to live and practice the depth of the field, are people who are committed to firm views and closed theories better equipped to admit alternative views?

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5 See Feyerabend 1993.
6 Feyerabend 1978: 16–17.
7 Feyerabend 1978: 16.
8 Feyerabend 1978: 16.
9 Feyerabend 1993.

Thoreau, a precursor of Feyerabend in the anarchic lifestyle he led and commended, frightened readers like Thomas F. Gieryn who meditates upon the quoted lines by Thoreau (1817–1862) from his autobiographical report *Walden:*

> Thoreau's celebration of the multiplicity of understandings – spiritual, metaphysical, political, empirical, geometrical, or commonsensical – is a curse sometimes. Just when we are most desperate to find out which among several competing understandings of nature may be trusted, we find it most difficult to sort out justifiable assertions from unworthy candidates. "Credibility contests" are a chronic feature of the social scene: bearers of discrepant truths push their wares wrapped in assertions of objectivity, desirability, precision, reliability, authenticity, predictability, sincerity, desirability, tradition. People often take shortcuts when faced with practical decisions about how to allocate "epistemic authority," the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality.[10]

Not only sceptics violate their own rules, the non-anarchic colleagues start already from the firm view that credibility has to and can be established. Who, then, are the people who take it as "a set of simple attitudes and healthy habits" to decide "to ignore disciplinary boundaries and traditions,"[11] or to opt for a kind of multi-disciplinarity where "no one approach or method" is seen to be "superior to all the rest"?[12]

In what follows I first want to contradict a kind of coherentism in scholarship more generally with its claim that "our web of belief should *be free of contradiction* and bear *explanatory relevance* among the different claims,"[13] to then reflect upon the need, if not pressure, on personal coherence as a scholar.

Even if one tries to avoid the "vexed issue of the underdetermination of theory by evidence" by "the dynamic observation requirement," we will see below that observation, even if thought of as being not caught in "dogmatic belief systems" and admitting "other theories that fit the evidence equally well," cannot always harmonize, or even make coherent, contrasting and contradicting views,[14] be it in competitive scholarship, be it even in one's own approach.

Max Jammer in his *The Conceptual Development of Quantum Mechanics* speaks about two representatives of scholars arguing about the same problem from different perspectives and judging each other's work:

> It is instructive to compare Schrödinger's wave mechanics with Heisenberg's matrix mechanics. It is hard to find in the history of physics two theories designed to cover the same range of

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10 Gieryn 1999: 1.
11 Boyer 2018: 297.
12 Geertz 2017: 38.
13 Gangl 2021.
14 Gangl 2021.

experience, which differ more radically than these two. Heisenberg's was mathematical calculus, involving noncommutative quantities and computation rules, rarely encountered before, which defied any pictorial interpretation: it was an *algebraic* approach which, proceeding from the observed discreteness or spectral lines, emphasized the element or *discontinuity:* in spite of its renunciation of classical description in space and time it was ultimately a theory whose basic conception was the *corpuscule.* Schrödinger's, in contrast, was based on the familiar apparatus of differential equations, akin to the classical mechanics of fluids and suggestive of an easily visualizable representation: it was an *analytical* approach which, proceeding from a generalization of the classical laws of motion, stressed the element of *continuity:* and, as its name indicates, it was a theory whose basic conception was the wave. Arguing that the use of multidimensional (>3) configuration spaces and the computation of the wave velocity from the mutual potential energy of particles is "a loan from the conceptions of the corpuscular theory," Heisenberg criticized Schrödinger's approach as "not leading to a consistent wave theory in de Broglie's sense." In a letter to Pauli he even wrote: "The more I ponder about the physical part of Schrödinger's theory, the more disgusting ('desto abscheulicher') it appears to me." Schrödinger was not less outspoken about Heisenberg's theory when he said: "... I was discouraged ('abgeschreckt'), if not repelled ('abgestossen'), by what appeared to me a rather difficult method of transcendental algebra, defying any visualization ('Anschaulichkeit').[15]

From this story one can not only draw the lesson that highly respected scholars in their fields can come up with different concepts which they seem to regard as contradictory or opposing, but, like Gerald Holton, use the story to illustrate the different levels on which scholars publish their results, on the one side, what he calls "public science" with their work made public "in journals, textbooks, etc.," on the other "private science" with the "earlier stage of their effort, the scientist's individual activity during the nascent period."[16] The latter point he extends, as the story tells us that 'private science' also applies to the private correspondence of scholars or to informal discussions they have.[17] Holton asserts that, "one is likely to discover" that "some scientists, consciously or not, use highly motivating and very general presuppositions or hypotheses that are not directly derivable from the phenomena and are not provable or falsifiable."[18] However, when they transfer their work from the private to the public sphere, these motivating aids, which Holton has termed *thematic presuppositions* or *thematic hypotheses*, "tend to be suppressed, and disappear from view."[19]

What seems rather surprising for Holton is what we would expect. A policy of objective empiricism "has amputated from science innate properties, occult prin-

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15 Jammer 1966: 271–272.

16 Holton 1996: 454. Similarly already in Feyerabend 1993: xii; Feyerabend 1975: 274.

17 Holton 1996: 456.

18 Holton 1996: 454.

19 Holton 1996: 455.

ciples, and other tantalizing, 'metaphysical' notions," as Holton acknowledges.[20] To get those back into scholarship is not "a plea for irrationality, an attack on the undoubted effectiveness of empirical data and experimentation, or means for teaching scientists how to do their job better."[21] Scholarship is always contextual just as every piece of evidence has an environment and context in which we have to assess it. And yet, scholarship is portrayed as if it were carried out in an operating theatre, cleansed of any bacteria to keep away infection.

Such inner motivations are fundamental for scholarship, without which science were merely scratching the surface, but without any depth. Scholarship is not the product of robots, not of scripts or programs, it is the result of people who work in specific environments at certain stages in their career with specific training and preconditions, presuppositions that Holton calls "themata."[22] These constitutive conditions often "persist for long periods in the individual case as well as throughout long periods of history," and are "not derivable from either observation or analytic ratiocination."[23] If scholarship were to operate

> entirely in terms of sense observation and logical argument ... it does nothing to explain why at any given time the choice of problems or the reception of theories may be strikingly different among individuals or like-minded groups who face the same corpus of data ... It also overlooks both the positive, motivating, and emancipatory potential of certain presuppositions, as well as the negative and enslaving role that sometimes has led promising scientists into disastrous error.[24]

As historian of science, Holton points to what one sometimes comes across when looking at notebooks or drafts and sees a firm attachment to initial insights and ideas, "sometimes at great risk" of "what can only be called a suspension of disbelief about the possible falsification of their hypotheses, emerging from the data before them."[25] This differentiation between "thematic concepts," "thematic positions or methodological themata" and "thematic propositions or thematic hypotheseis" seems applicable to all forms of scholarship that need encouragement "to make their methods more explicit," as they "normally resist doing this."[26] John Lewis Gaddis, historian and Cold War expert, uses an architectural counter-example for highlighting the need to show one's mental infrastructures: "We recoil from

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20 Holton 1996: 455.

21 Holton 1996: 459.

22 Holton 1996: 456 – 464.

23 Holton 1996: 456.

24 Holton 1996: 455 – 456.

25 Holton 1996: 456.

26 Gaddis 2002: xi. See for a similar quest Geertz 2017: 36.

the notion that our writing should replicate, say, the design of the Pompidou Center in Paris, which proudly places its escalators, plumbing, wiring, and ductwork on the *outside* of the building, so that they're there for all to see."[27]

With freedom being claimed as one of the prerogatives of scholarship, Holton shows that this applies to a freedom to make a chosen leap, but not "to make any arbitrary leap whatever."[28] According to Holton "the choices available are narrowly circumscribed by a scientist's particular set of themata that filters and constrains, and shapes the style, direction, and rate of advance on novel ground ... And insofar as the individuals' set of themata overlap, the progress of the scientific community as a group is similarly constrained or directed," and he adds the strong admonition: "Otherwise, the inherently anarchic connotations of 'freedom' could indeed disperse the total effort."[29] Even the freedom to construct the past is, therefore, limited, is not in itself a random process or the process of chance, but rests on prescripts that are shared with, and by, others. To have these prescripts available and to be able to negotiate them, scholarship must be more than a community that communicates and criticizes results from the surface or their underlying data, it also needs to be vocal about motivating substructures and the prerequisites of individuals, about institutions and their ideological agendas.

Pointing to the hidden scripts of others, however, is easier than applying methodological theory to one's own research agenda. It is even more difficult for a scholar in the humanities than for scientists in laboratories to make the "pathways of the creative process" transparent,[30] and pretend that one's data speaks for itself. Once data is no longer seen as raw material[31] or as an element that can be claimed for a particular discipline, the multiple approaches and the perspectivity that can be learned from Schrödinger and Heisenberg, becomes an urgent question for oneself. Is revisiting one's work only a demand by one's critics and reviewers, or is it indeed necessary by the very nature of scholarship?

If, however, as in the example of Heisenberg and Schrödinger, two serious and eminent scholars come to opposite results, what about the revisited work? In a recent article, Dario Krpan makes the important case that we should dare not only to expand our knowledge by drawing on the work of preceding scholarship, as this "restricts the total amount of knowledge that could eventually be produced and

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27 Gaddis 2002: xi.

28 Holton 1996: 459.

29 Holton 1996: 459. A positive connotation of anarchism is present in Feyerabend 1993: 9.

30 Holton 1996: 456.

31 "On closer analysis we even find that science knows no 'bare facts' at all but that the 'facts' that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational", thus Feyerabend 1993: 11.

therefore limits the potential of the discipline," but that one should also develop a "disconnected" form of scholarship whereby "researchers develop their ideas ... disconnected from a 'field' ... and do not follow the discipline's norms and conventions."[32] While stated by Krpan with regard to the scholarship of other people, his appeal becomes imminently important when we apply it to ourselves.

Can we disconnect with our previous views, give up our used "paradigms" (as Thomas S. Kuhn put it), not in light of other people's, but of our own research, can we advance in a revolutionary way?[33] Just as retrospection is a reversal of the order of time leading to discontinuity, can we read our own scholarship in any other way than we have done before?[34] Kuhn himself is a great example, as in later writings he moved away from "revolution" and embraced "evolution."[35]

In his later, unfinished book on incommensurability,[36] based on a few lectures he had given, he seems to have learned from post-modern misuses of his revolutionary ideas, against which he now reacted:

> No other aspect of *Structure* has concerned me so deeply in the thirty years since the book was written, and I emerge from those years feeling more strongly than ever that incommensurability has to be an essential component of any historical, developmental, or evolutionary view of scientific knowledge. Properly understood – something I've by no means always managed myself – incommensurability is far from being the threat to rational evaluation of truth claims that it has frequently seemed. Rather, it's what is needed, within a developmental perspective, to restore some badly needed bite to the whole notion of cognitive evaluation. It is needed, that is, to defend notions like truth and knowledge from, for example, the excesses of postmodernist movements like the strong program.'[37]

We note that Kuhn does not simply move on, nor even develop his argument further and thus argues against misinterpretations of earlier suggestions, but rather advocates evolution and development together with the personal admission that he himself does not always manage what he is striving for. This self-skeptical revision brings us back to Latour who, like Kuhn, had seen the excesses that were drawn from his earlier position that truth was a social construct, leading to the fascists' conclusion that undermines scholarship in general.[38] On the other side, auto-criticism is no easy remedy either, as it provides an open flank to its opponents. When Charles A. Beard ended one of his presidential addresses to the

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32 Krpan 2020: 1042.
33 See Kuhn and Hacking 2012, first edition 1962.
34 On the compartmentalization of scholarship, see Feyerabend 1993: 11.
35 Wray 2011.
36 Which reminds me of Rosa 2018.
37 Kuhn, Conant and Haugeland 2000.
38 Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 2005; Rosa, Henning and Bueno 2021.

'American Political Science Association' in 1926, he optimistically, almost triumphally encouraged his audience to admit major mistakes that one has made in the past:

> Let us put aside resolutely that great fright, tenderly and without malice, daring to be wrong in something important rather than right in some meticulous banality, fearing no evil while the mind is free to search, imagine, and conclude, inviting our countrymen to try other instruments than coercion and suppression in the effort to meet destiny with triumph, genially suspecting that no creed yet calendered in the annals of politics mirrors the doomful possibilities of infinity.[39]

Even if we ignore the pathos of the speech, Beard's striving for "methods of more creative Thinking"[40] and "daring to be wrong" implies the question whether he also wants us to face the moments and instances where we went wrong. Perhaps this would have toned down his rhetoric and altered the notion of "genius," to seek less the possibilities of infinity, but more the freedom of disconnectedness from one's own solutions.

Some sense of this is already present in Feyerabend,[41] when he reduced his anarchism by calling it a 'mask' put on him by his – unfortunately deceased – interlocutor Imre Lakatos[42] and when in his preface to the third edition of *Against Method* he explicitly rejects being one of the relativists "for whom there are no 'truths as such' but only truths for this or that group and/or individual."[43]

2 Marcus Döller

I am also very interested in the discussion between Feyerabend, Lakatos and Kuhn related to the question: What does it mean to come back to one's own scholarly writing, that is, not to repeat it, but in coming back to the work that has already been written, to revise the work and to go back to the methodological foundations, its conditions of possibility, and how it came about.

Giorgio Agamben provides two methodological reflections:

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39 Beard 1927.
40 Beard 1927: 10.
41 Feyerabend 1993: xii.
42 Feyerabend 1993: vii. See also, for example, Feyerabend 1993: xi. Imre Lakatos (1922 – 1974) died before he could write the planned response to Feyerabend's text. For the intellectual exchange between the two see Lakatos, Feyerabend and Motterlini 1999.
43 Feyerabend 1993: xii.

In 427, three years before dying, and after having already produced a vast work, Augustine writes *Retractationes.* The term *retractio* – even when it is not used in the juridical sense of taking back a statement given at a trial or declaring it untrue – has today only the pejorative meaning of recanting or repudiating what one has said or written. Augustine rather uses it in the sense of "treating anew." He humbly returns to the books he has written not only, or not primarily, to amend their flaws and imprecisions but to clarify their meanings and aims; for this, he takes up again and somehow continues their writing.

Almost fifteen centuries later, between the end of 1888 and the beginning of 1889, Nietzsche repeats Augustine's gesture and returns to the books he has written but with an emotionally opposed approach. The title he uses for his "retraction," *Ecce Homo*, is certainly antiphrastic, since the words with which Pontius Pilate presents Jesus to the Jews – a naked and flagellated Jesus who is wearing a crown of thorns – are here turned into a self-glorification without limits or reservations. After declaring that in a certain sense he considers himself to be already dead, like his father, he asks "why I write such good books" and, retracing one after the other the books he has written up to that point, not only explains how and why they originated but also suggests, with the authority of the *auctor*, how they need to be read and what he really meant to say. In both cases, retraction supposes that the author can continue to write the books he has already written, as if they remained until the end fragments of a work in progress, which for this reason tends to blend with life. A similar intention must have motivated the legendary gesture of Bonnard: we are told that, armed with a brush, he used to visit the museums in which his paintings were exhibited, and, taking advantage of the attendants' absence, he adjusted and improved them. The theological paradigm of divine creation shows here its other face, according to which creation was not accomplished on the sixth day but continues infinitely, since if God ceased to create the world even only for one moment, it would be destroyed.[44]

What Agamben impressively states here about Augustine's and Nietzsche's methods seems to be a model with which we may explain the difference between one's earlier work and a later return to earlier, published, texts.

It is a movement of an always irreducible moment of stating the "I", as Ernst Tugendhat called it: that of the first-person, autobiographical reference back to their own experiences that led them to not having been able to write something differently or to having written something in the way they did. There is a point where autobiography and philosophy become indistinguishable, because in referring back to what I wrote earlier, I ask myself why something could not be said without having the structure of the necessarily unsayable. It is rather something that has remained "unnecessarily unsaid", as Stanley Cavell put it. It has the structure of what I could *not yet* say at that moment because I did not yet dare to say it, because I could not yet say it exactly this way. Stuart Hall talks in this context about a "manufactured silence" in his autobiography to describe the subtle experiences of colonization and everyday racism.

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44 Agamben 2017: 89–91.

Indeed, Paul Feyerabend follows these trajectories in his autobiography *Killing Time* – the title of which is as ironic as it expresses resignation – when, in chapter 12 on 'Against Method', he looks back on how such a fragmentary work as the mentioned *Against Method* was possible in the first place.[45] His thoughts include political and strategic remarks about conversations with Imre Lakatos about the appropriate publisher as well as stylistic reflections on form about the constitution of what a work means.

In Wittgenstein's occasional papers,[46] the idea is further radicalized; in writing, Wittgenstein asks himself whether what he writes must not already be crossed out and suspended in writing. Here, Wittgenstein writes "~~Schmutz~~ Dreck (~~rubbish~~, dirt), i.e. something that should be wiped away", so that if the term *Schmutz* is not drastic and dramatic enough, he crosses it out to replaces it with *Dreck.* This supplementation, however, is a process that counteracts and subverts what he claims to be a process of writing. Writing is always confronted with its own suspension and self-denial, against which it is at the same time able to become itself.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the *Tractatus* at the end of 2021, I published a small essay about Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "the form of writing", which takes this idea further.[47] And in a conference on "Philosophy as Transformative Practice," I ponder how to think of a unity of philosophy and autobiography taking Stanley Cavell and Didier Eribon as interlocutors. These are all preliminary studies and preliminary considerations, and material for further writing tasks.

3 Markus Vinzent

Before you go on to develop your thoughts further on Cavell and Eribon, let me interrupt the initial flow by going back to the quote of Agamben. He seems to juxtapose two contrasting authors (Augustine and Nietzsche) and a painter (Bonnard) against the negative contemporary connotation of "retractions." Instead of interpreting it as recanting, repudiating or perhaps even dismissal, he rather shows its innovative character. Going over one's own work anew, one continues work that hitherto was "fragments of a work in progress." Even though I am impressed by the fragmentary nature that Agamben attributes to one's achievements in life – who cannot sympathize with the authors who open their freshly printed book and

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45 Feyerabend 1995: 139–152.

46 Wittgenstein 2003: 34.

47 Döller 2021.

discover a spelling mistake or, even worse, a grave error on whichever page is opened –, I have difficulties to think of work as being one "in progress" that "tends to blend with life." Life, in my eyes, no matter how long or short, is not fragmentary, but continuous, lived, just as a book that is finished, especially when printed, is done. The example of Bonnard and his "legendary gesture" of going to museums and clandestinely bettering his works sounds neurotic, even pathetic and self-indulgent. Sharply put, such actions annihilate the dramatic fact that an individual life covers only a rather short time frame, just as both the time and the space that is given to fill the pages of a book is limited. Even more, they undermine the radical nature of retraction. Not in the sense of either a positive or negative understanding of retraction, but its true nature, on which I have reflected thinking about retrospection.[48] Returning to one's work at a later stage in life does not simply reverse a timeline as if one were able to think or even write backwards.

Just as our brain seems to be hard-wired to always think, speak and write from the present into the future by turning future into present and past, a mentally going back to an already existing work reveals the discontinuous character of any retrospection. Any past work, like the past itself, is inaccessible to us via Ariadne's thread. Such threads lead only into the future, but are cut into countless pieces when we try to retrace the way we have made by writing a book and that the book has made since we let it go. Such letting go is what Bonnard was incapable of. And such letting go is downplayed by Agamben when he gives the impression that retraction is a mere continuation of what was left as a fragment. My inclination would be to radicalize the final form of what was done and to mark the novelty of what the retraction is doing with something that already exists.

For this, Agamben has given already a nice start in quoting Augustine and Nietzsche. Let me just pick up the first of the two – where I also slightly disagree with Agamben's view about Augustine's modesty. In contrast, I think, it was a dogmatic anxiety and a further attempt at defining how Augustine wanted his previous works to be read. Prefaces were not enough, he was even more pathetic than Bonnard in stitching his readers into his own orthodoxy. Yet, another reader of Augustine, Meister Eckhart in the 14th century, also reflects on Augustine's *Retractationes.* In his homily 89 he states:

> Moses had composed four books that are of use. Then he produced the fifth. This was the smallest and the best, and it has been called the truth of the entire Scripture. This, God and Moses ordered to put down into the ark. Augustine, too, produced many books. At last, he also produced a small booklet, in which was written everything that one was unable to

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48 Vinzent 2019; Vinzent 2021.

understand in the others. This he always carried with and close to him, and it was the dearest to him. So it is also with man: God has made him His notebook, to look into it, play with him and have pleasure of him. That is why man commits a gross sin when he destroys such holy order. As on the day of judgement all creatures must cry 'halt!' to the one who does this.[49]

Eckhart adds to Augustine other authors, first Mose, then God. All create works with the later ones seeming the smallest, but also the dearest, as they contain all that in the past had been produced. This is a different notion of retraction. Here, it does not mean going back to fragments to ensure that the whole is brought to fulfillment, but an admission that be it Scripture, be it the height of Christian late antique or medieval philosophy, be it God's own creation, everything is incomplete, imperfect, even faulty, unless it is revisited, critically reviewed and seen as missing a tiny addition that explains what was left with misunderstandings and was marked by shortcomings. The handbook, here understood not as a textbook or comprehensive compendium, but rather as a pastime, is the opposite of a time killer – it is a holy order that acknowledges time, renders time worthy and raises the question of accountability and responsibility. To put it another way: there is never a way back to the point where the pen dropped or the document was saved or the computer crashed. In retractions we will always find incongruency, so that a start is a full start, and the final stop is a full stop.

4 Marcus Döller

I also think that life is not fragmentary and cannot be dissected into separate parts as maybe a particular work could, because life is a unity even if it is always limited in time. But life is always constituted not through presence – what I do and experience right now is always already withdrawn – it is constituted though the way in which I refer to my future as forward-looking (with all our hopes and fears) and at the same time the way in which I refer to my past as backward-looking (with all

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49 Eckhart (2019): "Moyses hâte gemachet vier buoch, diu nütze wâren. Dar nâch mahte er daz vünfte. Daz was daz | (41) minste und daz beste, und hiez ez die wârheit von aller der schrift. Daz gebôt got und Moyses ze legenne in die arche. Sant Augustînus machete ouch vil büecher. Ze leste machete er ouch ein kleinez buochelîn, in dem was geschriben allez, daz man in den andern niht verstân enkunde. Daz hâte er alle zît mit im und bî im und was im daz liebeste. Alsô ist ez zemâle umbe den menschen: den hât got gemachet als ein hantbuoch, dâ er în sihet und dâ er mite spilet und lust ane hât. Dar umbe tuot der mensche grôze sünde, swenne er dise heilige ordenunge zerstœret. Wan an dem jüngesten tage suln alle crêatûren 'wâfen' schrîen über den, der daz tuot."

that I regret and melancholically wish to have back).[50] In this twofold process of forward-looking and backward-looking we create what we understand to be meaningful life. I would even go so far as to say that I can never know who I am right now. I can only now know who I want to be in the open future and who I was in the past. Right now, I am writing something *to you.* But I am not what I am writing right now to you. My self is *more* and *less* than what I am able to do in my performance in this very moment in time.

Kierkegaard was very clear about this in saying that we can only understand ourselves in looking backward. But this does not mean that our past is fixed and we can melancholically regret what we were able to do, but missed to do. It means rather that we understand ourselves only in the transformation of what we did. In this description, life is a unity, creatively constructed by how we interpret our past. The unity of life constitutes itself through my interpretation and strong evaluation of how I want to be and how I want to be seen.

But when I look back at my fragmentary work, I can always say this is in the work and this is an experience outside of that work. I can separate life and work, even if life and work depend on each other. In a way, authors like Fichte or Thomas Bernhard wrote the same work again and again, because the act of writing their texts made them able to experience how disappointed they were with the written book. This forced them to write the next one. For the form of the work that means that the work is constituted through both interruption and repetition. Looking back at what I have written so far, I think there is a truth moment in something that Feuerbach called "Entwicklungsfähigkeit", but then I experience also that I am able to say it with more clarity and I have to start all over again. This would be the secularization of the *creatio continua.*

In the short story *Nachmittag eines Schriftstellers* by Peter Handke, both moments – that of rupture, of interruption and that of having to go on, of repetition – are related to the relationship between life and work. Poetry is described as a form of life in which activity does not *prescribe* "a certain order of life". In Peter Handke's case, this refers to the anonymous writer of the short story, but it also applies to philosophy. This says two things: it says that poetry is an activity that can only exist as a form of life. But it also says that this form of life is an "activity that does not prescribe a certain order of life", and even opposes ideas of life as an order. The form of life of thinking and writing is thus oriented towards certain orders of life because no order of life is a given. That is also the difficulty of this form of life, that this kind of freedom imposes the shaping of each activity on itself. That

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50 The difference between forward-looking and backward-looking see Allen 2016.

is why the writer must also *become radically incapable*, lose language, in order to be able to say at all.

> Aber war diese Furcht vor dem Stocken, dem Nicht-weiter-Können, ja dem Abbrechenmüssen für immer, nicht schon ein Leben lang dagewesen, und nicht nur, was das Schreiben anging, sondern auch all seine anderen Unternehmungen: das Lieben, das Lernen, das Teilnehmen – überhaupt alles, was es erforderte, bei der Sache zu bleiben?[51]

Only in the "fear of stagnation, of not being able to go on, even of having to break off" can there be a work at all "in which the material was almost nothing, the structure (*Gefüge*) almost everything",[52] because the work is the way in which the inability of the subject to speak and to act is represented.

This distinguishes philosophy and poetry from other activities in which it is mostly a matter of carrying out these activities in such a way that one realizes the success of this kind of activity in its performance. Now, the success of the kind of activity – philosophy or poetry – consists in turning against the order of life that makes it possible and conditions it in the first place. The work is the form in which this contradiction presents itself, the form in which it destroys the material almost to nothing.

If philosophy and poetry converge in the understanding that "activity does not prescribe a certain order of life", then the kind of activity we are dealing with here must be of a different nature than activities that prescribe a certain order of life. Philosophy and poetry are forms of life that align themselves against any "certain order of life", therefore they are activities of a different kind. They are activities that do not allow for a certain order of life because they open up the order of life to a disruption of that order.

The fear of not being able to go further than the "fear of faltering" and "having to break off" cannot only be thought of as the participation in social practices of a "certain order of life". The form of life of loving, learning and participating can only be constituted from a radical break with loving, learning and participating. The break, however, then urges us to continue. In the break, however, we never know whether we are stuck or whether we (can) continue.

There are activities for which "no particular order of life is preordained", which is why the "movements of the day, however insignificant" require a construction, a drive. The construction and the drive come from the idea and thus from the thought.

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51 Handke 1987: 5.

52 Handke 1987: 27.

> Ungewöhnlich lange stand der Schriftsteller an der Wegkreuzung. Es war, als brauche er, dem durch seine Tätigkeit keine bestimmte Lebensordnung vorgezeichnet war, auch für manche noch so geringfügige Tagesbewegungen eine Idee – und diese kam dann mit dem Gedanken, beides, den Rand und die Mitte, zu verbinden; durch das Zentrum hinaus an die Peripherie zu wandern.[53]

The idea and the thought are described as a "slight daily movement", a movement that is able to connect two extreme points, the edge with the center, i. e., the center with the periphery. The movement as a way of connecting edge and center or center and periphery is, however, not predetermined by a certain order of life. Rather, it must first be constructed by an idea and a thought.

Activities, such as writing, that "do not prescribe a certain order of life" – and even go against conventional and habitual orders of life – require an idea or a thought; they cannot take "even the slightest daily movement" as given or predetermined. The movement that is able to connect edge and center, center and periphery with each other requires creative construction, it is only possible on the basis of an idea and a thought.

In his reflections on the form of life (*forma di vita*), Giorgio Agamben takes up the cartographic procedures of the social pedagogue and ethnographer Fernand Deligny, who tries to express what cannot be expressed and speaks of a form of life with the concept of misdirected lines.

> "It is clear," he writes, "that the routes – the lines of drift – are transcribed and that the ring area each time appears as the trace of something else that was not foreseen or pre-thought by those doing the tracing nor by those being traced. It is clear that it is a question of the effect of something that is not due to language, nor does it refer to the Freudian unconscious" (Deligny, p. 40).
>
> It is possible that this striking tangle, apparently indecipherable, expresses more than any account not only the mute children's form of life but any form of life. In this sense it is an instructive exercise to attempt to mark on the map of the cities where we have lived the itineraries of our movements, which prove to be stubbornly and almost obsessively constant. It is in the tracks of that in which we have lost our life that it is perhaps possible to find our form-of-life.[54]

Agamben describes here, retrospectively and resignedly, that our life is only revealed through the way we look back on it retrospectively, objectifying and looking at it topographically, as it were, from above, understanding it. What we then understand are repetitions and superimpositions, but also aberrations, as Ferdinand

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[53] Handke 1987: 19.

[54] Agamben 2015: 229.

Deligny describes. Both the repetitions and the superimpositions of the thick lines of the paths we have walked over and over again, however, as well as the thin lines, the wrong paths and detours we have only rarely dared to take, allow us to understand life as a past and wasted life. However, life is not past and wasted because it has failed, but because possibilities appear in life that we did not seize even if we could have. Only from these irretrievably past aberrations and deviations can we understand our life, which is a prerequisite or condition for the work, but which is never fully represented or positive in the work – it is life before the work, life without work.

In his 1964 Brussels lectures on 'Literature and Language', Michel Foucault describes in a fascinating way how both authors and readers are able to experience literature.

> When is the work, in a sense, literature? The paradox of the work is precisely the fact that it is only literature at the very moment of its beginning, [with its first sentence, with the blank page. No doubt, it is truly literature only at that moment and on that surface, in the preliminary ritual that provides words with their space of consecration]. Consequently, once this blank page begins to be filled up, once the words begin to be transcribed onto this still virgin surface, at that moment, every word is in some sense absolutely disappointing in terms of literature, for there is no word that belongs essentially, by some natural right, to literature. In fact, once a word is written on the blank page, which must be the page of literature, from that moment on it is already no longer literature, that is, every real word is in a way a transgression, which transgresses with respect to the pure, white, empty, sacred essence of literature, which makes every work not the fulfillment of literature but its rupture, its fall, its violation. Every word without status or literary prestige is a violation, every prosaic or ordinary word is a violation, but every word as soon as it's written is also a violation.[55]

We can never distinguish literature from non-literature and everyday language by means of language and words, if only because literature often reproduces the prose of the everyday. So there can be no ontological distinction here that can distinguish the being of literature and thus of the work from the being of non-literature and thus of life. But Foucault's description makes it clear that there is a literary act that both the author and the reader must be able to perform. The inscription of a word on an empty blank page, as the soul has been thought of since Aristotle, is the inscription into an indeterminacy. In this act of inscription, literature does not say, "Look, this is literature!" It rather says: "Look, I am destroying literature!" Foucault's concept of "transgression" makes it clear that modern literature since Cervantes and Hölderlin is constitutively linked to madness because the gesture of inscription is at the same time the gesture of self-denial.

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[55] Foucault 2015: 49–50.

The act of literature is paradoxical. The work says: "Look, I am a literary work because I am still able to turn against literature." Literature has the courage of its own self-denial and self-extinction, but it still says that of itself. That is why heroes like Don Quixote in Cervantes and Bartleby in Melville give up writing. They leave literature without giving any reasons for doing so. But in so doing, they transform the non-literary, the world into literature, which is what drives them mad. They turn their life into a work and in this they break with the work of life.

For the ontology of the work, this means that a work only exists if it simultaneously claims that it is not possible for it to exist. This is a paradoxical act that Rimbaud and Beckett radicalized. I think the literary act is an act that must somehow objectify and positivize itself. Something has to inscribe itself here. The act of inscription must thus always draw on given and predetermined word material, which already presupposes cultural formation acts of attributing meaning. The literary act, however, only constitutes itself – and this exposes it to paradox – by dementing, inhibiting and suspending itself. When the narrator in Joyce's *Ulysses* no longer knows how the narrative continues and then, in the mode of interrogative explorations, questions himself about how the narrative could continue, this is such an operation. Or also in the scene at the end of the second chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where there are sentences in which the text struggles to achieve pure form, but at the same time it eludes it.

> His hands clenched convulsively and his teeth set together as he suffered the agony of its penetration. He stretched out his arms in the street to hold fast the frail swooning form that eluded him and incited him: and the cry that he had strangled for so long in his throat issued from his lips. It broke from him like a wail of despair from a hell of sufferers and died in a wail of furious entreaty, a cry for an iniquitous abandonment, a cry which was but the echo of an absence scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of the urinal.[56]

This is a scene of a literary act. The literary act consists in the fact that language itself opens up to something inexpressible. I use the term inexpressible here in a terminologically sharp way, just as Meister Eckhart did. There is a suffering in the 'agony of is penetration' which clearly means the sexual perverted act of penetration. Penetration is a literary act. What else should it be in a text? As a literary act of penetration, penetration is also inscription. But an inscription that interrupts, inhibits and dements itself. The text, however, vacillates between inscription and self-denial of inscription. The formulation with the SCREAM that is echoed and scribbled on the "oozing wall of a urinal", as it were, resists inscription as inscription, represents a form and creates a form that undermines itself and hands itself

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56 Joyce 2001: 76.

over to the unavailability in its act of formation, just as the hero Stephen, in the act of penetration with the prostitute, resists penetration, in which the traumatic constitution of the subject consists. The trauma is not the penetration as *penetratio*, the trauma is the inhibition, interruption and resistance to the penetration as *penetratio.*

The text constitutes itself as a literary act by configuring both movements in their paradoxical unity as a "readable constellation"[57] – as Adorno describes it at the end of *Negative Dialectics.* There is a desire for penetration here. But penetration is a "dark presence moving irresistibly" that simultaneously flees and retreats from itself. The failure of the inscription, however, presupposes the inscription. The denial of the inscription can never again reach the innocent primordial state of pure unwrittenness, because it never existed.

It is not without irony that Foucault takes up an idea here that goes by the name of *creatio ex nihilo.* Since the 18th century, the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* has often been understood in the aesthetics of genius in such a way that the poet is able to enter sovereign forms into matter out of the nothingness of materials and forms. But it seems to me that Foucault reminds us here of a cabalistic or Eckhartian reading of *creatio ex nihilo,* which says that God's creation consists not in bringing forth something from nothing, but rather in bringing forth nothing. Thus the nothing gains a certain form, it is no longer the primordial formless and form-dissolving nothing of chaos, rather, after the creation, we are dealing with a formed, a produced nothing, which both constitutes and dements the act of literary inscription. This is precisely why this produced and created formlessness is a formlessness that is able to change, transform and revolutionize the established forms.

God's creation consists in destroying the grass angels again and again, as it says in the Sohar chapter translated by Scholem. In his first letter to Gershom Scholem, Theodor W. Adorno calls this thought "mystical nihilism". The thought says that God represents himself in the grass angels who praise and honor him. But God can never be adequately represented even in praise and honor, so God must destroy the grass angels who praise and honor him after only one day.

> *Zur Metaphysik der musikalischen Zeit.* Den Schluss der Arbeit beziehen auf die Lehre der jüdischen Mystik von den Grasengeln, die für einen Augenblick erschaffen wurden, um im heiligen Feuer zu verlöschen. Musik – nach der Lobpreisung Gottes gebildet, auch und gerade, wo sie gegen die Welt steht – gleich diesen Engeln. Ihre Vergänglichkeit, das Ephemere, ist eben die Lobpreisung. Nämlich die immerwährende Vernichtung der Natur. Beethoven aber hat diese Figur zum musikalischen Selbstbewusstsein erhoben. Seine Wahrheit ist eben die Vernichtung alles Einzelnen. Er hat die absolute Vergänglichkeit der Musik auskom-

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57 Adorno 1970: 399.

poniert. Das Feuer, das seinem – gegen das Weinen gerichteten – Wort zufolge Musik in der Seele des Mannes entzünden soll, der Enthusiasmus, ist das "Feuer, das Feuer [die Natur] verzehrt".[58]

What interests me about this fragment – with which Adorno's preliminary studies on Beethoven break off – is the concept of the "perpetual annihilation of nature" and the "annihilation of everything individual" – which Adorno coins here to reformulate a phenomenon from the Sohar. It is about the fact that the grass angels, which only exist for one day, are destroyed again by God at the same time, but that this is the way in which God is able to represent, express and show himself. This is a paradox that we find again radicalized in modern art. It is this paradox that constitutes the work in both moments: as a break in the work with the work and as a repetition of the work through this break.

> Die Zäsuren ..., das jähe Abbrechen, das mehr als alles andere den letzten Beethoven bezeichnet, sind jene Augenblicke des Ausbruchs; das Werk schweigt, wenn es verlassen wird, und kehrt seine Höhlung nach außen. Dann erst fügt das nächste Bruchstück sich an, vom Befehl der ausbrechenden Subjektivität an seine Stelle gebannt und dem voraufgehenden auf Gedeih und Verderb verschworen; denn das Geheimnis ist zwischen ihnen und anders lässt es sich nicht beschwören als in der Figur, die sie mitsammen bilden. (...) In der Geschichte von Kunst sind Spätwerke die Katastrophen.[59]

Adorno describes here the definition of form in modern works. Modern works, as Beethoven's late work shows in his string quartets, are catastrophes because they allow the form to open up onto something that is not itself the form of the work. It is the unform of the work in the form. In this, it is a dissolution of form that presents itself in the immanence of form. The dissolution of form, which is not itself like form, but which shows itself in the form of the work, is neither before the work nor is it after the work. It presents itself in the musical work, which is paradigmatic for Adorno because of its immanent processual form of progression, as a non-work-like silence. It is an interruption of the work in the form of the work. In the interruption of social practices of success, the aesthetic processes of the form of the work open up in it to the dissolution and production of forms that are not themselves constituted in the same way as the form of these entities. Catastrophe is the name for the unform of the simultaneous dissolution and production of forms from unformity.

With the concept of 'evolvability' introduced by Feuerbach in his study of Leibniz, Giorgio Agamben attempts to grasp the movement of the indistinguishability

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[58] Adorno 2004: 254.
[59] Adorno 2004: 184.

of the original text and the evolving text in order to account for the method of philosophical interpretations.

> After many years spent reading, writing, and studying, it happens at times that we understand what is our special way – if there is one – of proceeding in thought and research. In my case, it is a matter of perceiving what Feuerbach called the "capacity for development" contained in the work of the authors I love. The genuinely philosophical element contained by a work – be it an artistic, scientific, or theoretical work – is its capacity to be developed; something that has remained – or has willingly been left – unspoken and that needs to be found and seized. Why does this search for the element liable to be developed fascinate me? Because if we follow this methodological principle all the way, we inevitably end up at a point where it is not possible to distinguish between what is ours and what belongs to the author we are reading. Reaching this impersonal zone of indifference, in which every proper name, every copyright, and every claim to originality fades away, fills me with joy.[60]

The point here is to find a point of indistinguishability at which it is no longer clear how the original text and the text of development can be distinguished: that is, the text of interpretation and displacement relate to each other. Certainly, it is still legally distinguishable who is the author here: Agamben does not want to give the word to plagiarism as a methodological principle. But philosophy takes place when it makes something clear in a text that has been handed down to us and speaks to us, something that is somehow said, but was not expressed in this way. A good systematic development would try to transfer this unsaid element or moment into sayability, that is, to find a language that points beyond that of the 'original text' in order to make it readable in the first place. In this mode, however, it is no longer about criticism or affirmation, but about finding a moment in which what is unsaid in the text becomes sayable and both texts, the original text and the interpreting text, move towards a point of indifference for each other.

The source text and the interpreting text move towards what Agamben calls a common "impersonal zone of indifference". The concept of the "impersonal zone of indifference" is not, however, a denial of the author's subjective experience of texts, which is why Agamben also writes that he only succeeds in this procedure with authors whom he likes. It thus requires a subjective experience of the text in order to relate the text to something about itself that it is trying to say but does not succeed in expressing. Agamben refers to this moment as "unfoldability" or "evolvability" as something in the text that the text is not able to say, even though it pushes to say it. From this "impersonal zone of indifference" of becoming indistinguishable between the original text and the text of development, philosophical "thinking and research" is constituted as a procedure of suspending a sub-

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60 Agamben 2017: 34.

jective experience from which the movement of becoming indistinguishable takes its starting point.

In the passage from Meister Eckhart's *Sermon* 89 that you quoted, I find interesting precisely the passage that speaks of the interruption as he cries *Halt!*

> God has made him His notebook, to look into it, play with him and have pleasure of him. That is why man commits a gross sin when he destroys such holy order. As on the day of judgement all creatures must cry 'halt!' to the one who does this.[61]

I understand this to mean that God's creation can only be preserved and continued when it turns against that which seeks to destroy creation – evil, sin. Creation can only be preserved and continued when it turns against that which seeks to lead creation into the abyss of sin. But this has another dialectical point: the creatures who turn against the sinful realization of what it means to destroy creation and let it decay are always themselves already decayed and fallen from creation. They are not like God and cannot be. At the same time, however, they cry *Halt!*, as if they could keep creation pure from sinful creatures.

In two autobiographical remarks, Habermas tries to bring together the results of his unpublished dissertation on the Absolute in Schelling. He does this by returning to his unpublished work and giving it a new interpretation after having turned to what he calls "Hegelian Marxism".

> Eine große Bedeutung hatte für mich übrigens ein Lehrstück der mystischen Spekulation Jakob Böhmes über die durch Kontraktion entstandene "Natur" oder den "dunklen Grund" in Gott. Später hat mich Gershom Scholem auf das Gegenstück, Isaak Lurias Lehre vom Zimzum, aufmerksam gemacht. Interessanterweise sind über Knorr von Rosenroth und den schwäbischen Pietismus diese beiden unabhängig voneinander entwickelten Spekulationen in das Denken von Baader und Schelling, überhaupt in den nach-Fichteschen Idealismus eingegangen. Schelling hat jedenfalls in der erwähnten Freiheitsschrift und in seiner Philosophie der Weltalter an diese Tradition angeknüpft und das Spannungsverhältnis von "Egoität" und "Liebe" in Gott selbst verankert. Die gewissermaßen "dunkle" Tendenz zur Verendlichung, zur Kontraktion soll Gottes Fähigkeit zur Selbsteinschränkung erklären. Das hat mich schon in meiner Dissertation beschäftigt.

> Und zwar geht es um jenen entscheidenden Moment der Erschaffung des ersten Adam, als das Weltalter der idealen Schöpfung – die sich ja wie die Bewegung der Hegelschen "Logik" nur im Geiste Gottes vollzogen hat – vollendet werden soll. Gott muss sich, damit er sich in seiner Freiheit durch ein Alter Ego bestätigt sehen kann, in eben dieser Freiheit einschränken. Er stattet nämlich Adam kadmos mit der unbedingten Freiheit des Guten und des Bösen aus und nimmt dabei das Risiko in Kauf, dass Adam von dieser Gabe den falschen Gebrauch macht, sich versündigt und die ideale Schöpfung im Ganzen mit sich in den

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61 In Sturlese and Vinzent 2019.

Abgrund reißt. Er würde damit auch Gott selbst vom Throne stoßen. Wie wir wissen, ist dieser GAU, dieser größte anzunehmende Unfall eingetreten. Diese Erzählung löst das Theodizeeproblem um den Preis, dass mit jenem ersten schrecklichen Akt der Freiheit ein neues Weltalter, die Weltgeschichte eröffnet wird. In diesem zweiten Weltalter muss der erniedrigte Gott selbst der Erlösung harren, weil sich die Menschheit die Last der Resurrektion der gefallenen Natur auf die eigenen Schultern geladen hat.[62]

Richtig ist auch, dass mir die Lektüre von Scholems *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen* nicht nur die Augen über die Verwandtschaft der protestantischen Mystik eines Jakob Böhme mit der jüdischen Mystik des Luria von Safed die Augen geöffnet hat. Aus diesem Rückblick habe ich auch gesehen, welche Bedeutung das Motiv der "Natur in Gott" oder einer "Kontraktion Gottes" für das spekulative Motiv meiner Schelling-Dissertation gehabt hatte: Adam reißt mit seinem Fall eine im Intelligiblen bereits vollständig ausgebildete Welt mit in den Abgrund, woraufhin Gott sich in sich selbst zurückzieht, gewissermaßen ein Exil in sich selbst antritt und so den Wiederaufbau, die Rekonstruktion der zertrümmerten Schöpfung *ganz dem Menschen überlässt.* Die alleingelassene und auf sich selbst gestellte Menschheit wird von Gott zur Selbstermächtigung genötigt – zu einer Befreiung aus selbstverschuldeter Unmündigkeit. Nun verstand ich auch, warum mich die Dissertation unbefriedigt gelassen hatte. Denn aus den Ruinen der ersten Schöpfung konnte die alleingelassene Menschheit wenigsten das ursprüngliche Programm entziffern – der Vorschein einer zu restituierenden Welt. Das Motiv der *Re*surrektion der Natur! Aber woher sollte heute – nachdem die Quellen von Religion und Metaphysik versiegt waren – eine solche normative Anleitung gewonnen werden? Das war die Ratlosigkeit nach Abschluss der Dissertation, die mich – unter anderem auch – von der Philosophie zu Soziologie und Gesellschaftstheorie, d.h. zum Frankfurter Hegelmarxismus geführt hat. In diese zweite Hälfte der 50er Jahre gehören die vom frühen Marx inspirierten Überlegungen zu einer empirisch falsifizierbaren Geschichtsphilosophie in praktischer Absicht.[63]

Habermas refers to his unpublished dissertation by interpreting the autobiographical experiences that led him to and from that dissertation. There is something that had 'left him unsatisfied' and this is an idea that he can only understand after he believes he has overcome his 'perplexity' using a social theory that chooses a different stake than that of the unpublished dissertation. It is about the idea of the 'contraction of God' which consists of God withdrawing from the world in disappointment, turning away from the world and thus bringing the possibility of the new, of revolution, of freedom into the world. This means that God's creatures are able to turn against their Creator, this is the structure of freedom but also of sin. Freedom always means the possibility of sin, otherwise it would not be freedom. But God himself recognizes that his creation is imperfect because it has cocreated finitude, suffering, misery. But God's turning away from his creation is not a purely resigned gesture, just as the liberal state resignedly withdraws from civil

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62 Habermas 2001: 187–188.

63 Habermas 2014: 345.

society; it is a true act of liberation, because it opens up the possibility for his creatures to be able to distinguish between good and bad, good and sinful, just and unjust, without being determined in this.

> *Fortschritt*, *Krise* und *Selbstbefreiung* durch Kritik bilden das grundbegriffliche System der bürgerlichen Geschichtsphilosophie und der späteren Evolutionstheorien der Gesellschaft. Ich kann an dieser Stelle an den Zusammenhang mit Denkfiguren, die in jüdisch-christlichen Überlieferungen, vor allem in der jüdischen und der protestantischen Mystik (Isaak Lurias und Jakob Böhmes) ausgebildet waren, lediglich erinnern. Mir scheint, daß die Idee des Gottes, der sich in sich selbst zurückzieht, eine Kontraktion vornimmt, ein Mythologem darstellt, das für das heilsgeschichtlich radikalisierte Theodizeeproblem dieselbe begriffsstrategische Rolle spielt wie das Konzept der sich selbst konstituierenden oder erzeugenden Menschheit für die Philosophie der Geschichte. Ob als Natur, Vernunft, Geist oder Gattung konzipiert, stets wird der Geschichte, die in jenem konzeptuellen Rahmen als Emanzipationsgeschichte konstruiert werden soll, ein Subjekt unterstellt, das, wie der Gott der häretischen Mystik, eine durch und durch paradoxe Leistung vollbringen muß: sich zu dem zu machen, was es in gewisser Weise schon, aber in anderer Weise doch auch noch nicht ist. Die begriffliche Motivation ist in beiden Fällen komplementär: von dem Gott, der Ein und Alles ist, muß begreiflich gemacht werden, daß er sich unter die Schwelle seiner Allmacht herabsetzt; von der Menschengattung, daß sie sich aus eigener endlicher Kraft über sich selbst erhebt.[64]

The subject of history cannot already be presupposed, it must first be produced. But how is the subject of history constituted? Habermas' answer is: by self-constitution. The subject of history only exists as self-production, but the act of self-production is paradoxical. The act of self-production is paradoxical because the revolutionary subject is "in a certain way already, but in another way not yet" – this means that the self-constitution of the revolutionary subject cannot already be given or presupposed, on the one hand, but on the other hand requires an "in a certain way already" in order to be able to carry out, and produce the "in another way not yet". It is precisely the tension between the "in a certain way already, but in another way not yet" that is the locus of self-constitution.

For the relationship between work and life, this results in two conceptual yields: On the one hand, the form of the work is always tied to a creative act of bringing it forth, which is able to give the work a certain form. The creative act of production, however, interrupts itself and demotes itself. On the other hand, through the interruption and in the self-denial, the work opens up to that which is different from the work: life. Life penetrates work. Life is something that can never become work. At the same time, however, life is the precondition of work. Both moments, that of interruption on the one hand and that of self-negation on the other, need to be worked out in order to understand the process of creation

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64 Habermas 1972/1982: 533.

as a process of bringing forth that is still able to open itself to that which constitutes it and at the same time withdraws from it.

From here, Hartmut Rosa's idea of unavailability can be applied to the philosophy of history. Unavailability would then be the name for the possibilities that could have been realized but were not. When Marx writes that the "enigma" of the French Revolution is that it did not take place, this is an ironic sentence meant to express the truth that the revolution did take place, but it took place in such a way that it denied or negated itself. To understand history retroactively, we have to put the objective possibilities into a "readable constellation". To bring the objective possibilities into a "readable constellation" would then mean to interrogate history for what could have taken place in it.[65]

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[65] Benjamin 1965: 79.

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Winfried Kumpitsch & Gabriel Malli

Ancient History and Sociology in Dialogue: A Conversation with a Dialectical Thrust

Gabriel Malli (GM): The IGS is characterized by an intriguing juxtaposition: it draws upon a sociological theory developed within the context of modern phenomena, yet most of its research projects delve into the realm of classical studies. This apparent contrast, however, finds historical precedent. When we reflect on the history of sociology, we discover that many foundational studies and influential thinkers from its early days drew inspiration from ancient societies or formulated theories based on historical findings. For instance, consider the Marxist theory of history, which traces its origins to ancient slave-owning societies.[1] Likewise, Max Weber's scholarly endeavors extensively explored ancient social formations, closely examining historical evidence.[2] In a similar vein, Michel Foucault's later work also leaned heavily on themes and sources from ancient history, albeit with a heightened focus on discourses and forms of subjectification.[3] Curiously, despite this historical precedent, the sociological mainstream has gradually shifted away from engaging with ancient sources. On one hand, this phenomenon can be attributed to the waning popularity of grand historical theories within the field of sociology. On the other, it may be linked to a declining interest in the study of antiquity in academia. Once revered as the very essence of scholarly pursuit, classical philology and ancient history now find themselves relegated to the status of 'orchid subjects' – beautiful, but perceived as delicate and niche.

Moreover, within the collaborative contexts of the IGS, I sensed a subtle tension: sociologists steeped in theoretical frameworks alongside ancient historians who meticulously analyze primary sources.

Winfried Kumpitsch (WK): Indeed, the academic interest in the classical period is in no way comparable to the prestige it held during 19th and early 20th century. However, especially within wider non-academic society, antiquity still possesses allure, distinct from other time periods of human history. This was demonstrated last August, when a peculiar trend on TikTok saw women

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1 Cf. Vittinghoff 1960 on the 'ancient historian' Marx.

2 Cf. Meier 2016.

3 Foucault 1989a; Foucault 1989b.

ask their partners how often they thought about the Roman empire.[4] The main problem is therefore not that antiquity might have lost its appeal, but rather to connect academic with non-academic interests and goals.

In regard to this subtle tension my approach was to ask myself: "Where, within this difference of approaches, lies the potential for my own research?" Naturally, the inclusion of sociological theories has the greatest potential for historical studies in those topics and questions that deal with concrete social phenomena and structures. However, their potential in regard to topics which are only marginally connected to social factors should not be dismissed lightly. For in such cases, the inclusion of a sociological perspective possesses the potential to lead to a greater awareness of underlying societal mechanisms and their importance for one's own question and research topic, which otherwise have remained unnoticed. This is not because we historians are unaware of social networks, social constraints and the like, for these are also explicitly and implicitly addressed in the sources and therefore studied by us; but it is due to two simple main reasons: 1. As a historian, one is not normally used to always put individual aspects and phenomena into a context with larger social/overall social discourses, expectations and structures (reaching beyond the specific social groups whom one may already be considering in concrete research projects), and interpreting them against this background; and, 2. due to its intensive preoccupation with the underlying mechanisms of a society, sociology has a rich pool of theories and concepts that makes it possible to draw well-founded conclusions even with sparse sources. Due to these factors, the application of a sociological perspective to already known social phenomena and structures makes it possible to establish connections or to discover underlying mechanisms that are not described in the sources because they appear irrelevant to the author or are unconsciously at work. Ideally, this new perspective on what is already known, together with new results, will lead to previously overlooked factors entering the consciousness of the researcher. However, since the different nature and information content of the sources does not allow the simple adoption of most sociological methods and concepts, it must be considered case by case how they can be applied to one's own research object. This open approach to the reception of sociological methods and theories means that one can generally speak of the influence of sociology in historical sciences, but there are no generally ap-

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4 Washington Post: "How often do men think about ancient Rome? Quite frequently, it seems" September 14, 2023 https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/09/14/roman-empire-trend-men-tik tok/.

plicable specifications as to how the connection between the two subjects must be designed. Instead, it is discussed in each individual case whether the combination of the disciplines was successful and led to an increase in knowledge.[5] An example from my own dissertation might serve as an illustration:

My theory of the continuity in the role officers played as cult functionaries after the cultic reform of the Constantinian army was a consequence of my involvement with the social sciences. Though O. Stoll had already elaborated that the cultic tasks of the officers of the Roman army were not only to be represented as an expression of their hierarchical position within the army, but were also to be understood as part of the social role model of the correct behavior of an officer,[6] he saw this as a given only for the pre-Constantinian period, whereas I, on the basis of the assumption that there was a resonance potential in this exercise of cultic duties, question whether the Constantinian shift had really led to the end of the officer's role as cult functionary. My hypothesis in this case is that because of the social importance of this role, its abolishment under Constantine seems very unlikely. One argument in favor of this hypothesis lies in the fact that while in ancient historical research it was assumed that the end of bloody sacrifice also brought about the end of this role, what has been overlooked was that other aspects of this role, such as the instruction in prayer and oaths, continued to exist and thus, on the social level, the end of sacrificial practice did not necessarily imply the end of this self-conception. This insight, in turn, offers the possibility to see the late sources that report on the cultic tasks of the officers in a different light, namely that despite the introduction of a Christian cult in the Roman army in the course of Late Antiquity, the officers continued to be cult functionaries.[7]

GM: If I understand this correctly, one could assume that the sociological paradigm, with its emphasis on social contexts, has indeed permeated the domain of ancient history within the framework of the IGS. The pivotal concept of the IGS, namely Rosa's theory of resonance particularly promotes thinking in terms of relationships and relational dynamics. How has this theoretical perspective influenced your research in concrete terms?

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5 Cf. Timpe 1971; Spickermann 2016.

6 Stoll 2011.

7 Kumpitsch 2022; Kumpitsch 2023.

WK: Apart from the above given example, I engaged with the theory of resonance mostly in the context of the problems of applicability, mainly the difficulty to grasp resonance experiences. This is already evident in topics where one can still ask people about their own experiences, but poses an insoluble problem for historical retrospection in which one can only determine external facts. For example, it is hardly possible to determine to what extent the criteria for a resonant experience are given in historical cases. Take the Roman imperial cult: It is *communis opinio* that the imperial cult aimed to strengthen the loyalty of the population to the emperor and promoted the awareness of being part of the Roman Empire. In the Roman army, this cult furthermore strengthened the soldiers' sense of unity and the Roman identity was marked off from the barbarians. At the same time, the dividing line between Romans and non-Romans was only partly a matter of birth. Throughout the existence of the Roman Empire, thousands of non-Romans constantly served in the army and participated in this very cult without any problems.

GM: That sounds to me as if ancient historical research may serve as a critical mirror for sociological inquiry reflecting the limitations and gaps inherent in our theoretical constructs. It invites to revisit theories, expand our lexicon, and engage in cross-temporal dialogues. Is this the special potential of this cooperation – or in other words, that the results of historical research can become the starting point for examining and further developing sociological theory?

WK: I would say, yes. For the weak point of any theory is naturally the limited data set available or used for its development. This problem grows in prominence the more holistic and universal the theory becomes, and is the main reason that concepts that sound good on paper show weaknesses when used in practice, because data emerges which was not considered/unknown when the theory was developed. With regard to the theory of resonance, historical sciences are a good source of examples that can be used to check individual aspects. Since there is no internal view, the great weakness of the resonance theory becomes apparent, namely the determining of resonant action without moral evaluation. The keyword here is: echo chamber, i. e., the distinction between real and fake resonance.[8] Discussions of historical examples within the IGS have shown time and again that disputants tend to negate the possibility of having resonant experiences in contexts which are morally judged to be negative and instead attribute these actions to the sphere of echo chambers.

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8 See Rosa 2020: 398 – 399, 401, 407– 410.

One does not have to go as far as to cite the marches in the Third Reich when even the association of Christian rituals in preparation for battle can lead to this attribution. Because of this lack of objective criteria for assessment, the value of the resonance theory for historical sciences can perhaps only lie in being an explanatory model for why certain practices have endured through the ages and others have ceased to be practiced.

GM: I share these objections regarding the theory of resonance. The dichotomy between 'real' and 'false' resonance, coupled with the tendency to disqualify certain practices as inherently 'incapable of resonance', indeed poses challenges from a sociological vantage point. I always think of the section of 'Resonance' in which Rosa asserts that shopping practices lack the capacity to create resonant world relationships.[9] In my opinion, the values and ideals of a post-materialistic social milieu are theoretically objectified and naturalized. Herein lies the crux: by relegating shopping to a realm of deficiency, we inadvertently perpetuate certain orders of inequality. Subjects who derive pleasure from shopping find themselves positioned as deficient when juxtaposed with those who revel in the harmonies of classical music. This binary, however, oversimplifies the intricate tapestry of human experience. If we want to take the theory of resonance seriously, we also have to acknowledge that resonance axes may emerge in unexpected quarters – places where our moral and aesthetic compasses quiver. This certainly implies that, in addition to shopping, religious rituals in the military context also enable potentially resonant forms of relationship. The solemnity of ritual, the camaraderie forged in shared devotion, and the echoes of tradition – all this may create resonance axes. Admittedly, the available material cannot definitively prove the existence of resonant world relations. However, scholarly rigor demands that we at least entertain the fundamental possibility. To analyze this meaningfully, we must assume that resonance can be a thread in the fabric of human interactions also at shopping malls and battle fields.

WK: This assumption is in fact very significant in relation to my project. Because the question as to what extent the rituals of the Roman army cult included a real resonance offer or were just an echo chamber, is extremely important within the framework of the IGS, since the army cult existed and was practiced for centuries. An assessment in the context of an echo chamber would question the meaningfulness of the qualification of resonance as a

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9 See Rosa 2018: 425–428.

modus of stabilizing relations to the world, which lies at the core of resonance theory. But that is just my impression. What impression do you have from your academic perspective and how did you find the contact with the source-based research approaches?

GM: The proposition that findings from antiquity serve as some kind of litmus tests for theories forged against the backdrop of modern historical developments indeed renders collaboration fruitful. However, I confess that my initial encounter with classical studies within the ambit of the IGS elicited a form of personal culture shock. The official project description hinted at a multidisciplinary landscape – one where social sciences, cultural studies and humanities intersected, and a common methodological framework was shared. Yet, as a sociologist, I grappled with the realization that this was not the case. While I found the archaeological work accessible, the methodologies employed in ancient history and philology appeared markedly unfamiliar. Here, the source material assumes primacy. Scholars dissect inscriptions, decipher original texts, and scrutinize artifacts. Only then do they develop hypotheses. In sociology, theory leads: the selection of empirical material should be theoretically justified, as should the research question and the method to be used.

Perhaps this irritation is also typical of interdisciplinary exchange: When scholars from disparate disciplines intersect, they encounter translation problems. These challenges arise as each discipline speaks its own dialect – its unique terminologies, methodologies, and priorities. The negotiation process that ensues is akin to bridging linguistic gaps. It involves decoding unfamiliar lexicons, aligning conceptual frameworks, and fostering mutual understanding. This process, while intellectually stimulating, can also generate conflict. Disciplines guard their self-image and their distinctiveness tenaciously. When confronted with foreign paradigms, established norms can be unsettled. Herein lies the paradox: confrontation with the unfamiliar – whether it be ancient history, philology, or any other field – yields unexpected benefits. Not least, it hones soft skills that are essential for the academic field: Adaptability, empathy, and cross-cultural fluency emerge.

Each discipline carries their professional culture woven from years of inquiry. Their terminologies, like dialects, may seem incomprehensible to outsiders. Yet, within their enclaves, these lexicons are justified. They encapsulate nuanced insights, epistemological nuances, and methodological rigor. The IGS, akin to a multilingual stage, trains its members in a perpetual 'translation performance'. Here, sociologists learn about ancient history, and historians grapple with sociological theories (and let's not even start with the the-

ologians). At the same time, this interdisciplinary endeavor sharpens the contours of each subject.

WK: Yes, I fully agree with you that dealing with other methods can have a stimulating effect. In Graz, the classical studies (ancient history, classical archeology, classical philology) fortunately do not only foster cooperation among themselves but attach importance to the fact that their students are, at least somewhat, knowledgeable in all of the three sub-disciplines. However, such an emphasis on understanding neighboring disciplines is not found at all universities offering classical studies. Because of this background the engagement with sociological methods was per se no unfamiliar activity for me, although the concrete language and scientific practice applied, was unfamiliar. But you are not done with your reflection yet...

GM: Moreover, the presence of classical studies and its artifacts has posed the challenge to apply sociological frameworks to other contexts. I consistently engaged in interpreting and analyzing the research shared during colloquia by my colleagues in classical studies. This process prompted me to consider how I could address specific questions and objects using contemporary sociological methods and theories. These intellectual exercises heightened my awareness of both the potential and limitations inherent in my own analytical approaches.

Furthermore, the discourse surrounding ancient historical inquiries enriched my work. It fostered knowledge exchange and, importantly, encouraged a broader historical contextualization. I developed a keen sensitivity to the realization that even seemingly modern research topics have deep historical roots. For instance, Islamic gender discourses and practices, including veiling, can be traced back to ancient Mediterranean cultures. The interdisciplinary collaboration facilitated by the IGS has amplified my consciousness of these ancient origins, which continue to shape contemporary practices in profound ways.

In summary, my sociological thinking, in general, and my perspective on my research object, in particular, have significantly evolved through continuous engagement with classical studies. While contemporary sociology predominantly focuses on current phenomena, emphasizing the modern era since the Industrial Revolution, this interdisciplinary interaction has opened up new avenues for mutual recognition. The historical contextualization of our research objects has revealed shared insights and enriched our understanding across disciplinary boundaries.

WK: I take it that we basically agree on the benefits of working together. The central point here is that one does not treat the relationship between disciplines as a contest for superiority, but as an offer to take on new perspectives and to the subsequent experiment whether these can lead to new insights. Of course, you always have to consider what makes sense in the context of your own research project. For social phenomena of post-industrial societies, in most cases it makes sense not to extend the historical context beyond the Industrial Revolution. However, as you yourself pointed out, it is also important to keep in mind that certain phenomena in the present day may nevertheless have their origins further back in the past. At the same time, as an ancient historian, I have to be aware that despite the different social structure of Roman society, certain basic social mechanisms were at work in the lives of ancient people then, just as they are today.

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Hartmut Rosa & Ramón Soneira-Martínez

Resonating in a Multi-Perspective Forum: A Cooperative Reflection on Interdisciplinary Research

1 Building on a Question, Not an Answer

Interdisciplinarity is one of the most discussed topics in contemporary research groups. Curiously, the quest to define and understand what one means by "interdisciplinarity" has been approached from multiple disciplines. One could even point out that the understanding of interdisciplinarity research has generated interdisciplinary conclusions. This characteristic, which may be defined as the *meta-interdisciplinarity* of interdisciplinary research, demonstrates that the approach to an object of study from the multiplicity of academic disciplines has an important practical component. In our view, interdisciplinarity is easier to explain and experience when this practical component is addressed. Certainly, we could start by discussing the interesting publications that different authors have devoted to defining and understanding interdisciplinarity. The great diversity of approaches to comprehend such a complex academic praxis shows that there is a growing interest in this type of pluralistic research and how it should be applied in academic research groups.[1] Nevertheless, in this paper we suggest approaching the debate on interdisciplinarity from our experience and research work, leaving abstract methodological, theoretical, or conceptual comparisons between different disciplines aside, even though their relevance is undeniable to comprehend interdisciplinarity.

Firstly, we must clarify our position in favor of interdisciplinary research. Despite being at different levels of the academic career and having different academic backgrounds, we both have experienced the difficulties, but above all the advantages, of interdisciplinarity. The moment one has to deal with a human phenomenon, the disciplinary limitations expand, especially when research starts from a question, rather than from an answer. The necessity for different disciplines to study a given phenomenon is immediately apparent when one considers the ways in which such phenomena emerge. It is practically impossible to ap-

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[1] See, for instance, Amey and Brown 2005; Bruce et al. 2004; Derry, Schunn and Gernsbacher 2013; Hübenthal 1994; Klein 1990; Klein 1999; Klein and Newell 1997; Newell 1998; Newell 2001; Stember 1991; Vick 2004.

proach a subject such as religion, violence, or identity without considering different disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, history, philosophy, or sociology, to name but a few. This multidisciplinary need that underlies any humanistic research alludes to a practical argument in favor of interdisciplinarity.

The holistic and intellectual perspective of analyzing human activities as expressions of complex social systems breaks the bonds of traditional disciplinary classifications. The quasi-positivist tendency to classify human behavior into "watertight" disciplines (economics, politics, history, philosophy, philology, anthropology...) only distorts a complex, interconnected reality. Human praxis is complex and multi-causal; therefore, it must be approached from an eclectic perspective. The contextualization of human events, if it is to be truly comprehensive, must address elements that are the subject of study in different disciplines. Without any doubt, such an approach is complex. This is likely attributable to the prevailing tendency towards ultra-specialization within in academia.[2]

In the face of this narrowing tendency, interdisciplinary work should definitely be encouraged. Certainly, the application of an interdisciplinary approach is far from easy. As several scholars have pointed out, interdisciplinarity requires enormous organizational work, structuring, and collective reflection.[3] However, these complexities have not prevented the development of interdisciplinary studies. One example is the International Graduate School (IGS) "Resonant Self-World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices", where we have experienced interdisciplinary work very closely. The diversity of individual studies from different disciplines to address the question "how human beings relate to the world" and the possibilities of understanding this social relationality in terms of "resonance" has generated stimulating interdisciplinary debate.[4] Based on this collective experience within the IGS, we propose a reflection on the development of interdisciplinary work highlighting the importance of successful academic coexistence in a multidisciplinary group.

In our opinion, successful interdisciplinary research needs a primary research question from which the members of the research group can build their individual approach to a given topic, e.g., violence. However, the establishment of an initial question is just the first step, and its framing presents epistemological issues. Undoubtedly, interdisciplinary and collective work needs more than a common research question. Even if the question is consensual, how to answer it (and even

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2 Little 2017: esp. 9, and Frost and Jean 2003.
3 Defila and Di Giulio 2015; Defila, Di Giulio, and Scheuermann 2006.
4 All the information concerning the International Graduate School can be found on the website: https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/max-weber-kolleg/forschung/forschungsgruppen-und-stellen/research-groups/igs-resonant-self-world-relations

how to formulate it) suffers from the multiplicity of academic perspectives that seek to address the object of study. Faced with the common question of the IGS – how human beings relate to the world – a historian might ask which historical context we are referring to. An anthropologist might question the notion of "world", while a sociologist might add that the study of relationality with the world requires considering social class, power relations, gender studies, and so forth. Therefore, discussions of how to formulate the initial research question require an interdisciplinary debate in itself to establish an agreed framework from which to approach the research topic.

In fact, the main issue of applying an interdisciplinary perspective lies precisely in this argument: how can common ground be built satisfactorily for all disciplines involved? Surely, it would be extremely naive to think that one can arrive at a universal epistemological framework. Because of what has been called "the priority of the paradigm", one cannot create a "super-paradigm" which integrates all disciplines.[5] Nevertheless, the "bridge" between disciplines can still be created, or even provided, exactly by the discussion of the research question. Here we might reach something that can be called an "integrated interdisciplinary approach". Obviously, this task is extremely complex. Nonetheless, the discussion on the formulation of the initial research question clarifies the limitations to be established in order to address a particular topic. To put it differently, the discussion of the initial question generates an "elenctic method" that refutes those elements that weaken the "bridge" between perspectives reinforcing those elements that unite and strengthen that connection. In this sense, the collaborative engineering to build the bridge by discussing the research question results in the establishment of an interdisciplinary shared framework; what we can define as a common "lens".

Ultimately, interdisciplinary debate on the creation of this common ground has two interrelated consequences. First, it allows to improve the theoretical and methodological approach of the individual projects of the group members. Secondly, it shows the interrelations between the disciplines that shaped the interdisciplinary group. As Newell points out, "the creation of common ground involves the modification or reinterpretation of components or relationships from different disciplines to bring out their commonalties."[6] In other words, the creation of a common framework allows a two-fold dialogue in which not only individual research can improve but also the members of the group can build interdisciplinary

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5 This idea can be found in Wittgenstein, Kuhn, and Gombrich. See Gombrich 1950; Kuhn 1962; Luckhardt 1978.

6 Newell 2001: 20.

interconnections that enhance individual approaches. Obviously, it is complicated that the discussion on the initial research question concludes in the elaboration of a common ground, a common "lens". However, the tools we have developed within the IGS can help us not only to elaborate on our point of view but also to suggest a normative interpretation of interdisciplinary praxis.

2 A "Resonant" Mode of Interdisciplinary Research

Since the IGS began in 2017, it has been a laboratory of interdisciplinary debate between disciplines as far apart (and at the same time as close) as sociology, philology, history, philosophy, anthropology, theology, and archaeology. The IGS aimed from its inception at how human beings in both ancient and modern times relate to the world and how these relationships could be perceived in socio-religious practices. In this regard, two concepts, seemingly disconnected from each other, came to the fore: "resonance" and "ritual". The former is based on a sociological analysis of the establishment of self–world relations in late modernity. In the face of the increasing "social acceleration" that characterizes the societies we live in and its alienating consequences, the search for "resonant" relationships with the world serves as a counterbalance to develop a good life.[7] This social leitmotiv of seeking to develop a "resonant" mode of being-in-the-world not only allows us to analyze our current social life but also proposes to be a theoretical tool that enables transhistorical comparison. In this sense, the term "resonance" refers to the normative code that individuals and social groups have developed in different historical contexts in order to establish positive relations with the world. Consequently, the notion of "ritual" alludes to those socio-religious practices that reflect this normative code. To elucidate, an examination of both historical and contemporary rituals allows the observation of how individuals have projected their worldviews onto their daily lives. Hence, resonance and ritual are two essential tools for answering the question that unites the individual research interests of the IGS members: "how do humans relate to the world, including their communities, their social spaces, nature, their god(s), or even themselves?"

　Based on the arguments we have made in the previous section, we can share some reflections on interdisciplinary work within the IGS. The theoretical framework of the IGS has not only allowed self–world relations to be explored in a multidisciplinary way, but the sheer diversity of individual projects has also managed to

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7　Rosa 2005; Rosa 2010; Rosa 2012; Rosa 2016.

nuance the common object of study. The application of the concepts of resonance and ritual in individual projects has generated the two-way dialogue previously mentioned. On the one hand, researchers have discovered aspects of the phenomena studied which they would not have seen without the shared "lens" of resonance and ritual and, on the other hand, the "lens" itself, i.e., the theoretical framework based on the concepts and theories of resonance and ritual, is sharpened and improved as well. Therefore, the fact that very different individual projects and approaches start a dialogue with each other about the tool (ritual and resonance) will (or at least: might) lead to an additional benefit as the projects profit from others' findings, perspectives, and methods.

Undoubtedly, this dialectical relationship between disciplines requires avoiding impositions of one discipline onto the other, while at the same time developing the necessary channels for creating the common "lens" shared by the members of the research group. In terms of resonance, interdisciplinary research requires an "adaptive transformation" (*Anverwandlung*) that allows a reciprocal exchange. Firstly, the adaptive transformation enables the malleability of theoretical concepts when applied in individual projects (reinforcing thus their meaning and introducing new variables).[8] Secondly, it implies the alteration of academic perspectives of researchers who, by observing the usefulness of the common theoretical framework, discover new possibilities in their work. Naturally, this "adaptive transformation" is difficult to develop. Keeping with the vocabulary of resonance, experiences of "alienation" in a multidisciplinary group are unavoidable. We all have them in the course of our work. Sometimes one feels that the other (i.e., our interlocutor) does not understand our language at all, that we steadily talk past each other, missing each other's points. However, these alienating moments do not prevent the building of common "bridges", quite the contrary. These "negative" episodes are part of the "elenctic" process of rejecting those aspects of the theoretical framework that do not work in order to discover those that do. In sum, there would be no "resonant" interdisciplinary praxis based on "adaptive transformation" without these alienating momenta.

A correct praxis of interdisciplinarity must attach importance not only to the shared results of research but also to these moments of doubt and collective debate since it is here interdisciplinarity shines. Emphasizing disagreements in order to build a common path requires a "predisposition" on the part of the researchers to assume that such an effort will improve not only the collective work but also

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8 In the case of the IGS, the second phase of the project was focused on the concepts and ideas that emerged from the collective debate. Notions such as "second order resonance", "repetition", and "power relations" acquired a key role in the development of the common framework.

their own personal research. It is from the creation of this common ground that we understand the potential of interdisciplinary research. Thanks to the experience of the IGS, we have learned to weave the necessary links to establish a vibrant interdisciplinary agora whose academic results are visible in the individual research works developed by the different members of the group.

3 An Interdisciplinary Example: The Historical Role of Unbelief in Resonant Self–World Relations

The unifying question of the IGS – how do humans relate to the world, including their communities, their social spaces, nature, their god(s), or even themselves? – can be approached from an enormous multiplicity of perspectives. In our case, the religious phenomenon is a meeting point in the analysis of world-relations: what role does religion play in the establishment of world-relations? The theorization of the term "resonance" specifically addresses this question. According to resonance theory, religion presupposes a sphere in which a resonant relationship to the world can develop. Human beings perceive certain religious ideas as "constitutive goods" with which it is important to establish a positive relationship, e.g., God.[9]

Hence, religion is a key element to be analyzed in a sociology that aims to understand "our relationship to the world." However, religion is not monolithic. Not only does the plurality of beliefs and rituals demonstrate a broad religious landscape that is difficult to homogenize, the plurality of perspectives is rendered more intricate when philosophical stances that challenge, negate, or disavow, religious tenets are taken into account. In this sense, the complex analysis of the role of religion in the establishment of self–world relations cannot leave aside possible differences that exist between subjects who follow a religious belief system and those who reject it. It is enough to look at texts on the sociology of religion and "non-religion" to see how differently subjects are situated in the world depending on how they construct their religious or non-religious identity.[10] This difference between believers and unbelievers not only arises at the level of ideas but also materializes in their "bodily habitus".[11] Unbelief, as a religious related phenomenon, modulates the way in which subjects construct their vision of the world and, con-

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9 Rosa 2016: 435 – 452. On the notion of "constitutive good" in the analysis of religious ideas, see Rosa 2016: 228 – 229, especially n. 186.

10 See, for instance, Lee 2012; Quack and Schuh 2018; Taves 2018; Cotter 2020.

11 Rosa 2016: 29 – 30, 647 and especially 128.

sequently, the relations they establish with it. Thus, the idea of resonance and the phenomenon of unbelief are two elements that can weave a common ground for studying how subjects relate to the world.

However, both concepts, resonance and unbelief, have a specific genealogy. Both are terms with an obvious modern charge. Both conceptualizations of resonance and unbelief demonstrate that their historical applicability must be equally discussed. In other words, if we add a historical perspective to our common question – what role does religion play in the establishment of world-relations? – then we must develop a theoretical apparatus that not only unifies the terms resonance and unbelief but also allows their interdisciplinary relationship to be equally applicable in different historical and cultural contexts without imposing alien notions. In other words, we need to build a common "lens".

The process of modernization has led to a separation of the religious sphere from other socio-cultural spheres such as politics and economics. Already in classical sociological studies, the "processes of rationalization" (*Rationalisierungsprozesses*) and "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) have been addressed in order to understand this separation of religion from the fundamental aspects of everyday life.[12] It is undeniable that these eminently modern processes have constructed not only how religion and unbelief develop in our days, but also demonstrate that the epistemological categories are charged with this modern emancipatory process. Therefore, the modern religious field, its genealogy, and its structure, following Bourdieu,[13] is not applicable in every historical context, for example in ancient Mediterranean societies, where there is not even a term that is homologous to our term "religion".[14] Thus, the phenomenon of unbelief in "pre-modern" societies cannot be understood outside the religious field but as part of the dynamics that exist within it. If we understand religion as a "lived phenomenon", not only today but also in the ancient world, then the expressions of atheism and doubt that we can observe in historical sources can be analyzed as part of the dynamics of religious appropriation.[15]

Therefore, the vestiges of unbelief, despite their historical differences, can be used to construct a comparative historical thread that illuminates the question initially posed in this section: what role does religion play in the establishment of

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12 Rosa 2016: 549–550.

13 Bourdieu 1971.

14 Regarding the difficulties of applying the category "religion" in antiquity, see Barton and Boyarin 2016; Nongbri 2015; Touna 2017. For an analysis of the bibliography concerning this issue, see Roubekas 2014: 226–228.

15 On the application of lived religion and unbelief in antiquity from a relational perspective, see Soneira Martínez 2020; Soneira Martínez 2022.

world-relations? By analyzing unbelief historically with the framework proposed by resonance theory, we are not only delineating the periphery of the religious field from which subjects establish self–world relations, but also its core. The questioning of normative narratives in order to establish positive world-relations in different religious and historical contexts demonstrates the need for historical contextualization of the phenomenological perspective that characterizes resonance theory. The historical study of unbelief emphasizes this idea by stressing the relationship between religious and irreligious expressions whose point of union can be the one proposed by resonance theory: the negotiations to establish relationships to the world. In this way, the historical perspective complements the sociological theoretical apparatus from which the term "resonance" emerges. The interdisciplinary relationship that we observe in this example on unbelief, religion, and resonance materializes in a complementarity between two perspectives that, although quite different in their origin, can reach a common ground which seeks to explore the way in which human beings relate to the world.

4 Concluding Thoughts

Considerations on interdisciplinarity have proved to be as multifaceted as the potential paths that interdisciplinary work itself can take. In this way, we allude to one of the main conclusions we have reached in our reflection. One of the most positive modes of approaching the debate on interdisciplinarity is at the practical level. When interdisciplinary research that unifies many projects is pursued, as in the case of the IGS, the difficulties but also the solutions arise in practice. When several interlocutors do not reach a theoretical or methodological agreement, scientific debate serves not only to reach an agreement between parties but also to build a common bridge from which the whole research group benefits. This interdisciplinary praxis that we have called "an adaptive transformation" requires facing alienating moments as part of the collective creative process.

The example of the historical study of unbelief from the relational perspective of resonance not only serves to approach irreligious positions from a distinct perspective but also allows us to refine the conceptualization and terminological apparatus of resonance theory. This reciprocal and transformative relationship has proved essential in arriving at conclusions that no longer belong to sociology or history, as it has transcended disciplinary expectations. Ultimately, the group composed of diverse backgrounds, in its quest for individual answers, has built a common "lens" to address the question that unifies the whole group.

Surely, this cooperative reflection does not seek to be the last word in a debate that, as we have noted, is highly complex, lively, and ongoing. Nevertheless, it was

our wish to share these reflections in order to enrich a debate that is not only necessary in an increasingly pluralistic and globalized academy, but also because interdisciplinarity stands out as one of the most fruitful future paths of collegial research.

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Interdisciplinarity from the Perspective of the Coordinating Team

An interdisciplinary international graduate school is a complex structure which requires a high degree of organization and coordination due to the number of participating people and institutions as well as its aims.

The following observations from the three coordinators reflecting their viewpoints on the structural challenges, advantages and difficulties from Erfurt and Graz are meant to bring into the discussion of interdisciplinarity the aspect of how its coordination, its practical aspects of creating a framework for interdisciplinary studies, can be seen. The three of us responsible for the following paragraphs are – this must be said for reasons of a better assessment of our opinions and observations – all from the field of antiquities (archaeology, history and philology). However, our long-term experiences in interdisciplinary institutions or research groups allow, we dare claim, for general statements.

From our point of view, it is of significance to state clearly that an interdisciplinary graduate school is not a cooperation of abstract disciplines, but of individuals, often very individually acting individuals, many of them in the critical phase of the first steps into an academic career. These individual researchers represent disciplines and methods, often rather implicitly, which need to be clearly defined and discussed in order to match people, topics, interests and approaches and create an interdisciplinary research environment.

1 The Mediating Roles of a Coordinator: Communication between Doctoral Researchers, PIs, Disciplines, Funding Institutions, and University Administrations

Coordinating an interdisciplinary international graduate school entails, for the coordinator, a constant sitting between different chairs. The job description is first of all to make the school run, to enable the doctoral researchers to do their research and write their theses in a well-organized and stimulating environment, to set up the term schedules, to administer the financial means of the project and to communicate and clarify issues with the funding institutions, to inform the PIs about events and problems, to look for synergies and bring them to bear on

parts of or the entire project, to mediate between individual members and groupings in such a school, and to mediate between the school and the administration of the universities, to organize and interact with the partner institution, and to organize and arrange workshops, lecture series and conferences.

However, the coordinating team has to not lose sight of the people involved, the doctoral researchers, PIs – as supervisors and collaborating researchers –, the university's administration and their options for synergies and associations, the strong and strict collaboration with the partner institution, support for the spokespersons to fulfil the proposal, and last but not least the funding institutions, and, in the best case, also the wider public. The described requirements refer to the implicit tensions in the process from a successful proposal to the successful implementation of a research project as complex as an international graduate school. How can a coordinator or coordinating team deal with the requirements of optimal organization, of mediating supervision, of giving practical advice in academic life, of coping with every level of the university's apparatus?

One could argue that every position in a larger research endeavor has aspects in its work that deal with connecting different people, communicating various topics, organizing regular or singular events from job interviews to conferences, and all this for the fulfilment of the overall task – teaching or researching, broadly spoken: science and education. Yet, the coordinating team of an international interdisciplinary graduate school can reach limits if it is not capable of or trained in mediating competences.

The variety of obligations, requirements and tasks shows every normal day at the office. Organization and communication are the main elements of the work of the coordinators. However, many tasks and competences that do not easily find their way into job descriptions are necessary to make a success of interdisciplinary work which includes young and experienced researchers, and to satisfy members, universities, and funding institutions alike. The point is to create an environment where people of different academic, cultural, and disciplinary backgrounds can interact meaningfully with one another other. And where existing, pre-dispositioned, and growing tensions can be transformed so that they either also teach, not hinder, or in the best case even enhance the work of the graduate school, all its members and bring the envisaged advantages for them and the hosting and funding institutions.

If the term environment is not only to be understood in its physical space (work place, departments, libraries) but also in its social meaning (regular meetings, funding for research and exchange), "atmosphere" is an often used characterization for the "immaterial", rather than concrete, environment in which good work and research can be conducted, collaborations are enabled and good thoughts and ideas can be produced and discussed. But what could be the advice

or manual for creating such an "atmosphere"? What abilities must a coordinator or a coordinating team have, what competencies can they achieve to make the atmosphere for interdisciplinary work happen and what practical factors play a role? How can the coordinating team deal with possibly rising tensions? What do tensions mean for the "atmosphere", and in how far can they be productive?

Sometimes tensions are difficult to deal with as we all know from many areas of collaborative work or other areas where colleagues closely interact. They arise between the accepted proposal which covers topic, organization, and planned outcome of the interdisciplinary graduate school and the inhomogeneous, not yet tuned group of the numerous people collaborating, and freshly hired doctoral researchers. This happens in institutional frames which are to a great extant fixed and somewhat inflexible (university and funding institution). However, what sounds difficult and negative at first has huge potential. Tensions can have a dynamic capacity, they keep partaking parties elastic and flexible.

If mediated, tensions pin down problems and push developments forward. For acute cases where tensions develop into conflict, the ritualized procedures of open debates, four-eye or six-eye meetings bring relief. With a partner institution, the IGS is in the lucky situation that for first conflict-resolving steps people not entirely from outside, but not involved in direct supervision or the cohort/group of doctoral researchers, can be addressed as mediators. The coordinators' role is to look for matches and to accompany the process. At Graz, there is the Doctoral Academy which backs the work of doctoral researchers, but is also helpful for coordinators, who meet, exchange their problems and views on common issues (such as financing, contracts, or of course recently, coping strategies in pandemic times). At this Doc Academy, more formally installed ombuds persons are accessible. For general tensions due to the frictions between individuals or disciplines in view of how to work, ideas, traditions, or approaches, every opportunity is given by regularly repeated meetings (supervision meetings, presentations by doctoral researchers to the entire group, organization of conferences/workshops, hiring processes) and adaptations are possible in the long run of a project's operational time. Here the coordinators' awareness of possible or impossible combinations, situations and topics is paramount. The coordinator optimally knows the doctoral researchers and the PIs, the graduate school's program, its history and aim best and with a perspective to its continuous development. Tensions in the form of scholarly frictions that foster discussion and skeptical questioning can bring synergies. The dynamics of the interdisciplinary group changes continuously with incoming new members, first of all of course the doctoral researchers of the different cohorts, but also through the combination of various generations of doctoral researchers in the year-long exchange with the partner institution and the inclusion of new PIs over the course of the project phases. Tensions of the positive and negative kind

change accordingly. The positive outcomes of tensions, synergies on various levels of collaboration, exchange, and openness that we could observe over the last four years, exceed anything negative.

To put it briefly and simply, the mediating and communicative role of the co-ordinator or the coordinating team consists in

– making the informal formal, but not too much,

The central capacity of the coordinator is making the informal parts and dimensions of the project as such and all junior members part of his or her daily work. Door-to-door talks are a crucial means of the informal-formal work, according to the needs and individual situation of the doctoral researchers. In many cases, the coordinators know best the members, especially the doctoral researchers, due to their regular contact over the period of their contracts. This knowledge can be a valuable source for decisions concerning problems, for advice concerning their work on the theses, for further steps in academia etc. This informal work – depending on the academic and disciplinary background of the coordinators – includes the ability to understand how research, work and possible problems of certain topics or disciplines function.

– considering that you never walk alone,

A graduate school rarely has more than one coordinator because of the number of participants and the supposed workload that can be handled by one person. Only few graduate schools have a coordinating team (e.g., Climate Change, Graz, subdivided into organizational and academic coordination). Even if the IGS, on which these experiences and statements are based, does have "only" one coordinator per institution, the advantage for the project as such and all its members is that there are two partners involved (the Universities of Erfurt and Graz) that both have a coordinator. This entails that there are two personalities, two experiential backgrounds, two opinions based on thorough knowledge of the graduate school. There is always a counterpart to ponder a situation with or to ask if clarification is needed, that is also an insider to the entire endeavor.

– not losing sight of the whole – as well as the end,

The academic mediating role of the coordinator requires a huge amount of openness and adaptability to other disciplines and their ways of working, doing research, and their research questions (see Part 2. below). Also, a certain degree of understanding of their general or university-related problems ranging from number of students to ongoing teaching and research activities, as well as influential or interesting researchers in their fields is necessary. The input the coordinators receive depends on the PIs and their own willingness to gather information themselves. The coordinator is then able to accompany for example the selection of new Ph.D. projects, topics for conferences, initia-

tives to look for external trainings (methods, soft skills, and the like) or researchers to be invited. In the end, the coordinators use this overview in the report of what the school achieved, what the funding was spent for, what measures turned out to lead to successful and less successful developments and outcomes.

The continuous presence and sensitive work of the coordinating team can make the success of a graduate school and most importantly of the individual doctoral researchers more effective or valuable. What is needed on the side of the doctoral researchers is that they stick to the decision they took in joining an international and interdisciplinary graduate school and that they build up a trustful relation to its members and aims. The simple rule is: No risk, no gain. In academia, this also means that without this (calculable) risk, no new ideas can come up. The challenge of interdisciplinary research and graduate training lies in communicating its usefulness, which is not easy in a fast world where mostly utilitarian strategies on all levels count. However, the will of all members of the graduate school to engage and to think and talk with each other is the key to practice interdisciplinary synergies that form critically-thinking, well-trained researchers who develop their own ideas. Based in their individual disciplines, trained in an interdisciplinary environment, they do research compatible to or recognizable in other areas of sciences.

Persons and groups working in an interdisciplinary project or group can be appropriately compared with those training for a decathlon: Training hurts at the beginning, many technical skills must be learned from scratch, some are more apt to the various abilities, others are not, many units of circuit training must be completed for a better (intellectual) condition. However, in the long run, there is real progress in abilities and success. The coordinators are the ones who make the training plan.

2 Interdisciplinary Graduate School from the Structural Point of View: Integrating People, Interests, and Disciplines and Writing a Proposal as Challenge and Opportunity

The IGS 'Resonant Self–World Relations in Ancient and Modern Socio-Religious Practices' is a cross-boundary project. A faculty and coordinator in Graz and a faculty and coordinator in Erfurt work together to facilitate the program and support junior researchers in their individual research projects. In a word, with applying

for the project in the first place, they framed the context, which is then to be filled with the individual projects of the doctoral researchers. To this end, each PI formulated two showcases as suggestions for the individual research projects that could be worked out by the junior researchers. However, most theses that were and are written did not develop out of these showcases, but people applying to participate in the IGS proposed their own projects, reflecting their research interests, that fit beautifully into the context of the overall project, thereby adding perspectives and topics that were initially not thought of. We had in the beginning planned with "an inventory and typology of socio-religious practices" in the first funding phase, followed by the analysis of resonant and mute self–world relations in these rituals. Many of the projects already considered the latter aspects, however, which added a further layer of unintended, but much welcome, development from the start.

To conduct the project at two different sites and across a wide range of disciplines together, it is of great aid that a number of colleagues across the faculties (as well as the coordinators) already knew each other and had worked together before in other research contexts. The most relevant of these is the Max-Weber-Kolleg, which is the host of the program on the Erfurt side and of which the speaker in Graz had been a fellow (and interim director) a few years earlier. Indeed, the study program for the IGS was modelled on the study program of the Max-Weber-Kolleg, with its basic structure of weekly colloquia, pre-circulated papers and extended, interdisciplinary discussion. This was easily implemented at the Max-Weber-Kolleg, where it was basically just another research group that was to be integrated into a research program that already existed. The greater difficulty lay in integrating the colleagues from the Faculty of Humanities, who had, in addition to being involved in the IGS, of course also regular teaching duties, administrative tasks (committees) and BA and MA students to take care of. Finding a time slot (and venue) at which all members of the faculty had the time and opportunity to attend was the easier task in this respect, but we also found throughout the program that it was nearly impossible to have the full faculty gathered for any one of the colloquia, as a number of duties demanded the attention of the PIs over the years. The same situation applies to the University of Graz, where all PIs are full members of their respective faculties. Dates for conferences had to be carefully negotiated to not overlap with the start of two different terms, with the commitments of a greater number of established researchers and dates for conferences and congresses that were relevant for the junior researchers to attend in order to not cut them off – despite all interdisciplinarity – from their disciplinary fields or to open new fields (and contacts). In this regard, it was both blessing and curse to have so many leading and well-connected researchers as part of the IGS. However, at both sides the number of participants at the colloquia regularly exceeded the number of people being involved in the IGS, as the different research projects drew the inter-

est of other researchers, associated or affiliated by subject, who provided further input to the doctoral researchers.

Our decision to hire a smaller number of doctoral researchers on a yearly basis instead of larger cohorts every three years was based on a decision to aim for continuity: By starting with smaller groups, we hoped to intensify discussion within the groups – which worked especially well in the first year at Graz with a reading group of three people plus coordinator that ferociously dissected the *Resonance* book –, aimed to perpetuate institutional knowledge, provide fresh input on a yearly basis and build upon the research level that had been developed in earlier cohorts. On a very practical level, we expected that this would also aid new doctoral researchers to find their way around the program and the institutions more easily. In addition to the 'natural' growth (by annually adding new colleagues), we introduced tandem partners, i.e., a doctoral researcher at the partner institution that would lend support when preparing for the year abroad (e.g., in finding housing, helping with known administrative questions, giving tips on various matters of coming to a new city), while on the academic level they would be the point person for interdisciplinary exchange between the two sites. Here, we tried different things, teaming researchers based on their topics (e.g., event religion), based on their background (same disciplines, e.g., sociology), method (text interpretation) or even contrary points of departure to create (creative) friction. Sometimes, this worked, sometimes, it did not, as the human element must, of course, always also be taken into account. Some junior researchers found that they had a lot to say to one another, others found it much harder to find common ground. But the concept became lopsided early on, as the number of researchers that could be hired even in year one was not equal on both sites, so that some researchers were left without a tandem partner for the first year and had to be teamed up later on. Here, inter-group communication about practical things as much as content, became, once more, relevant.

Still, our concept worked to a degree. Communication among the doctoral researchers has been intense and continuous, across and within the cohorts, across and within the sites, and across and within the disciplines. But of course, not everything worked equally well. The University of Graz has a strong focus on the antiquities, which is not so prominent in Erfurt. So that, while researchers on antiquity found it helpful to engage with current research and theories in sociology, philosophy, and the like, especially the material (objects and texts) which classics scholars engaged with was often a black box to scholars in more modern fields. That is not to say that the interaction was without value. A philosopher might have found that a more philological approach to his material aided his reading and interpretation of a text, or a sociologist discover the material angle in her research data. As such, the program worked, and worked well.

But another challenge, if only of the minor kind, was the fact that both (and now all three) coordinators come from a background of antiquities and are alien to the collecting of survey data (beyond the archaeological collection of material remains). How do you prepare for interviews? How do you read a text that is interpunctuated with pauses and stresses to indicate the speech situation with an interview partner? How do you even find these interview partners? Which incentives could (or should) be offered? Here we were lucky, not only that some formats to provide the necessary support were already in place outside the program (such as methodologies workshops), but that the doctoral researchers themselves were eager to propose new formats to add to the program (reading groups, research methods groups, workshops). Another challenge was the need to adapt the program to provide for the needs of the individual researcher (such as postponing the exchange year abroad – or dropping it altogether when the administrative hurdles became too high to overcome – or fitting in periods of travel to collect the data). We had to find a balance between addressing individual needs (and disciplinary traditions) while also preserving the integrity of the program which was outlined to follow a certain structure, with relatively stable cohorts and the exchange year 'inbetween'. This required extensive communication, not only with the junior researchers and their supervisors, but also with the speakers of the program and the funding institutions to make sure that we were acting in everyone's interests and that whatever we would decide to do was doable under the terms of our grant.

A challenge of another kind was the re-application for our research program, which was due fairly early in the program: Due to the different periods of funding by FWF (four years) and DFG (four and a half years) for International Graduate Schools, we began preparing for the reapplication before the first cohort was finished. That we could count on (most of) our doctoral researchers at this time to support the process, provide whatever we asked of them, and get into the spirit to have the program prolonged and thus allow new generations of researchers to write their theses, is much to their credit. We began with the writing of the re-application in the spring of 2020.

As the yard stick by which all doctoral research programs must be measured is the numbers of finished theses, it was quite a challenge to write up a report in which it was clear that none of the theses could possibly be finished by the time we submitted the re-application, as this had to be done before three years of funding for the doctoral researchers were even over. That two theses were submitted the day before and on the very day of the visitation by the funding institutions, with another one being submitted only two weeks later, speaks to the incredible team spirit and can-do-mentality that was to be found in the research group.

However, the process of report-writing and preparing for the visitation also had many positive effects to the 'working together' in the graduate school. Since

we had to ask the doctoral researchers to contribute to both report and re-application – and to be willing to be interviewed and present their projects and the IGS during the visitation in a critical, but favorable light, many discussions were instigated about research, the school's topic and processes. At first, the writing of reports meant to accept that any criticism of the research group should be framed in a certain way or only internally. After all, the primary purpose of a re-application is to show that the program works and should continue to be funded. Yes, ways of improvement should be mentioned and yes, doctoral researchers should present themselves as involved and reflective. But especially the coordinating team had to remind all members of this purpose: to take major criticism out of the reports and set it aside for internal discussions. Thus, reports had to be partly re-written to provide more information; and above all, the doctoral researchers had to briefed, even drilled, on what to say and how to say it during the visitation. For that, we carefully selected those doctoral researchers who were to speak for the group, as not all would be taking part.

The re-application process took place in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant that the visitation, too, was relegated to an online format. For the selection, we developed a set of criteria: we wanted equal parts male and female, from Erfurt and Graz, German-speaking and non-German speaking, and an even distribution across nationalities and disciplines. A task that sometimes felt like squaring a circle, but for which the experience with and closeness to the doctoral researchers by the coordinators were an indispensable advantage. To prepare for the online visitation, Graz hired a communication expert who evaluated individual performances, gave tips on how to improve the interaction, and made junior and senior researchers re-do their presentations time and again. For the doctoral researchers, this was a valuable experience and practice for their own funding proposals we hope they will one day submit, all the while being aware that we demanded not little of their time to prepare for something that they, directly, would not profit from, but that would, on their part, be an act of solidarity.

The Covid-19 pandemic also demanded that we re-think much of what we had done before. Primarily, it meant that the close contact in which we had hitherto worked was no longer possible. Especially in Graz, the IGS shares offices on the same floor, with a kitchen that regularly allowed for informal exchange and unintended meetings but was also used for reading groups and co-working on papers. At Erfurt, members of the IGS also shared offices in twos or threes, but these were on different floors to provide contact, beyond the IGS, with other researchers of the same or related disciplines and other research projects. None of this was still possible when the pandemic shut down the universities in Erfurt and Graz. Researchers remained at home, libraries were closed, colloquia were relegated to online video conferences. In this, we had fortunately had some experience, as

contrary to our initial planning, the supervisor and tandem partner did (mostly) not travel to colloquia at the partner university, but rather participated online. Now, it was not a matter of two or three people participating virtually – now it was everyone. However, discussions in an online format were slowed down considerably, and we will never know how much valuable conversations and how much input missed were lost on the way. By our experience, it is often enough the casual input or feedback, the unintended encounter, that furthers projects, and this had to be denied to the doctoral researchers at this stage. Not only that, the pandemic also postponed necessary research to be conducted, predominantly interviews that could not take place at the planned times. That the results of some of the research projects will look very different from what they would have been without the pandemic is certain. It is to be hoped that they will be nonetheless outstanding.

3 An Insider View from Both Sides – Doctoral Researcher and Coordinator

I joined the IGS as a doctoral researcher[1] in 2017. After achieving my doctorate in 2020, I became one of the three coordinators of the project for one year in 2021/22. I am thus in the lucky position to reflect on the project from its beginning from the position of doctoral researcher and coordinator. I entered the project in 2017 coming from a background in classical philology (Latin language and literature studies, which is an independent sub-discipline of classics in the German-speaking world). I embarked on a project on the occasional poems of the early medieval poet Venantius Fortunatus. This project was a shift from my earlier work and required extensive study of a new epoch that covered most of my first year in the doctorate to get an overview over the state of research. With the start of the second year, spent in Erfurt, I began to write commentaries with enclosed interpretations of a number of poems, thus providing the material for my overall work. These commentaries were largely close readings of the up to then scarcely commented poems and followed the traditional methodology of classical philology. In the third year, back in Graz, I began to shape my commentaries into a more unified scientific oeuvre.

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1 It is interesting that the two concepts *doctoral researcher* and *doctoral student* coexist in our use of language. When we discussed the structural differences between Graz and Erfurt, we came to the conclusion that the Austrian university system treats doctoral students more as students with relatively strict curricula and ECTS requirements while the German university system seems to treat them rather as researchers with agendas of their own that do not fit into the requirements of ready-made curricula. See below for a further discussion of the two places.

This process required that I engage with the theoretical frameworks on offer in the graduate school. The ones I found to be most applicable to my material were the concept of resonance by Hartmut Rosa, the core concept of the collective research effort of the graduate school, and the concept of strong and weak evaluations by Charles Taylor, a related but independent concept. With the help of these concepts, I managed to gain a new perspective for my material, showing the occasional poems of Venantius Fortunatus as texts that convey a complicated religious message efficiently.

There were times during the journey of my doctorate when I would feel more or less excited by the interdisciplinary setting I was thrown in. The interdisciplinarity in the project shows mainly in the colloquia and conferences when presentations from the different disciplines are presented to a mixed audience. During these presentations, I would often ask myself whether my time was spent wisely listening politely to archaeological or sociological papers. The experience of these meetings changed over time, though. While I got to know my colleagues' projects better, the presentations also started to make more sense to me. Like a beginning student of an undergraduate degree, I started to know and partly understand the most prominent concepts of the other disciplines better the more often they appeared in presentations. This slow, gradual learning process over the course of three years had its share in my ability to engage fruitfully with sociological theory in my third year when needed. I would later say that new bookshelves "I would have been scared of as a graduate student" opened up to me over the course of the interdisciplinary doctorate.

Other things were always nice: the comradery, the shared offices and lunches. Philosophy, sociology, and religious studies did not enter my academic life in the shape of concepts but in the shape of colleagues. It was this human element that over the course of the three years helped to bridge moments of frustration and misunderstanding. When I developed my wider, socio-religious take on Venantius Fortunatus' poems, it was the constant discussions in the office and over lunch with colleagues who were writing dissertations in philosophy and religious studies, that advanced my thoughts most, gave assurance at insecure moments and, not least, eased the loneliness of the scholarly process.

An important part of this social aspect of interdisciplinarity in the IGS is the year abroad at the partner university. This year abroad combines the social specifics of being in another place for a foreseeable, limited time period with the stronger involvement into the scholarly activities at the "other" institution. In my, the classicist's, interdisciplinary doctorate, the stay at the Max Weber Center in Erfurt, a place with little scholarly activity in Latin philology but a strong focus on sociological and religious studies research, held an important place in enabling me to come to terms with the interdisciplinarity of my own project. In Erfurt, I both

had the time and freedom to really focus on my own research with less distraction from the more vibrant, but also more demanding "classics social life" in Graz. At the same time, I could take deep draughts from the fountains of sociology and religious studies, but always with the freedoms of an interested observer rather than somebody fully involved in this sphere.

The interdisciplinarity one can observe in my story that is reflected in my work has various aspects and only one of them is truly scientific. There were the **different academic traditions** that I came from before the doctorate and looked into during the doctorate that led to limitations and frustrations in the beginning, but to greater ease when they had been acquired by practice and thus overcome. The processes within which this interdisciplinary work took place involved **different groups of people.** While I, one could say, came from a certain peer group of classicists and literary scholars, I had to move in and out of my old and new peer groups during the doctorate. A major factor for the success of interdisciplinary work in the IGS in my case was the formation of "a new peer group" of interdisciplinary doctoral students in Erfurt and Graz, whose members were individually different in regard to their academic origins but equal in their station of "young scholars struggling with interdisciplinarity/other disciplines". Into this equation came the peculiarities of **place.** All activities in the IGS naturally center on either Graz or Erfurt and the two institutions combined in one project have rules of their own that make each of them an academic organism one has to learn to be comfortable with. These peculiarities, together with the geographical distance turn "Graz years" and "Erfurt years" into a unit of structure in the individual process of the doctoral students. This was reflected also in the stages of my (interdisciplinary) work over the course of the doctorate.

A related factor that goes hand in hand with the dynamics of group and place is the factor of **language** in the IGS. While the disciplinary peer groups in which the IGS in Graz and partly in Erfurt participates are usually German-speaking, the IGS, by its international orientation, has to be English-speaking most of the time. The practice of international academic English in the IGS makes it an organism with tangible borders to the outside world(s). This fact strengthens the integration into the IGS of many of its members with repercussions on the research and social life of the international interdisciplinary group.

One year after my graduation from the IGS, I returned as a replacement for the coordinator on the Graz side for one year, to enable her to accept a research fellowship abroad. In this one year as coordinator, I came to meet the interdisciplinarity in the project not so much from a scientific, but from an organizational point of view. Interdisciplinarity has to be organized and it even has to be fought for in the context of the disciplinary university. As I myself had only come to appreciate interdisciplinary input late in my project, so would the doctoral research-

ers whom to guide was now my task. So, the interdisciplinary activities that were compulsory for the doctoral researchers (colloquia, a research seminar, a reading group) were regularly received with little enthusiasm and it would take additional footwork on the side of the coordinators to find compromises that would be acceptable for all – and additional pressure at times to make sure that the few interdisciplinary activities would actually take place.

This additional complication is mirrored by the university institutions. While organization within one faculty involves one set of staff, one set of implicit institutional customs and one institutional calendar, organization within three faculties at the same time means three times the amount of basic institutional networking and constantly being on the look-out for incompatibilities. The coordinator has to spend a lot of time to know and accommodate the army of necessary partners in cooperation. This was one element where the extent and amount of communication was not clear to me as a doctoral researcher, being screened from it by the daily work of the coordinators in charge and the focus on one's own discipline and department (which usually comes with the connection to the supervisors that seek to integrate their doctoral researcher not only in the interdisciplinary project, but also in the disciplinary community). This network is usually only the necessary network within one university, while we, as an international project, had to harmonize the schedules of two universities. In this situation, communication has to be acknowledged as a major factor in the work plan of every day, shifting the focus from content to form. Apart from that, it has to be shared with the interdisciplinary community in a bottom-up approach. Every one of our doctoral researchers had to become an expert for their institutional pocket at the university, so that they could figure as disciplinary ambassadors in the day-to-day work of the project. They have thus, I believe, and when I am looking at my own experiences, attained institutional competencies beyond those of an average Ph.D. student and contributed their share in making our project possible within the institutional boundaries of the disciplinary university.

The coordinator stands between the Ph.D. researchers and the principal investigators, an experience that was initially strange, but which I grew into, already knowing most, if not all, of the persons involved in the project. The position is, thus, in some respect comparable to that of a drill sergeant in the officer-soldier hierarchical system of many armies – only that academia tends to conceal the obvious hierarchies behind some layers of humanist civility. Sitting at both tables, the coordinator has a view on the interdisciplinary activities between the doctoral researchers and between the principal investigators. My position as a former doctoral researcher in the same research project allowed for a better understanding of where the – then younger – doctoral researcher came from when they spoke up, while it also provided me with the shortcut to already know all of the faculty

members from long experience when needing to mediate between the different groups within the project, both in practical and in (inter-)disciplinary terms. While the doctoral researchers usually engage at some point of their projects extensively with the interdisciplinary offers of the IGS – as they are required to do so – the principal investigators, who are by the nature of their position involved in many research activities beyond the IGS, do so more rarely in their own research in the formal structures that were set up for the research project and in which the doctoral researchers extensively participate. From a coordinator's point of view, interdisciplinary research seems to travel upstream in our IGS, coming from the group of doctoral researchers being constantly pulled back into the respective disciplines. It is, thus, a bottom-up approach in the truest sense, and seems to be especially well-placed in a graduate school.

4 Instead of an End

An interdisciplinary international graduate school has by its nature a very complex structure and is intentionally meant to be demanding for all participants and involved administrations and individuals – the coordinating team included. There is no blueprint for how to deal with complicated constellations, (inter-)personal problems, or group-wide tensions, but of course there are communicational instruments of which everybody from the doctoral researcher to the PI, from the coordinator to the university administration are aware. However, the investment, the repetitive, intense discussions about best practices and overall gains for individuals or the group are outweighed by the high integration and excellent training of young researchers, their high level of reflection on multiple disciplines, high-quality Ph.D. theses, and eye-opening moments and research developments for the entire group.

In this process, the position of the coordinating team as "in-between" requires mostly communicational abilities and at the same time a high degree of retro- and perspective reflection. They are facilitators and catalysts enabling processes, at the same time present, involved, and on the spot. In this position and with these obligations – from organizing to proposal writing to advising young researchers – they need a high competence of finding the balance between engaging with and distancing themselves from the group and its members. The result of this challenge justifies all efforts.

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