

English Summaries

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Individualisierung von Religion? Pilgern zwischen religiöser Subjektivität und Autonomieverlust **Individualization of Religion? Pilgrimage between Religious Subjectivity and Loss of Autonomy**

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The assumption of an individualization of religion is discussed by using the example of pilgrimage. After a brief overview of the state of research (1.) the qualitative-empirical study of religious experiences of pilgrims will be presented (2.). It differentiates between two types of religious experience, a symbiotic one and a dialogical one. These insights into the consummation of religious experience are discussed with reference to the theoretical concepts of subjectivity, sociality and autonomy which are relevant to individualization.

Our considerations are based on a theoretical understanding of religion (Wilhelm Gröb) as interpretation of subjective experience (3.). For pilgrims, religion is indeed mainly experience made by oneself, thus subjectivized. The individual is the point of reference of the interpretation („for me“) as well as source of legitimation („selbst erlaufen“). Matthias Jung’s tripartite concept of experience, which combines “experience and symbolic form by articulation” („Erleben und symbolische Form durch Artikulation zusammenschließt“) is a key to understanding. The subjectivization of religion apparent in pilgrimage is described by Hubert Knoblauch as individuation – understood as orientation along one’s own experience – which does not imply individualization in the sense of lacking social embeddedness.

The sociality of pilgrimage (4.) is examined with respect to synchronic and diachronic communication about pilgrimage, which leads to the adoption of behavioral and interpretive patterns. This, in turn, makes religion visible as a communicative and thus social fact. Conventionality and subjectivization of religion do not exclude each other. The sociological concepts of privatization (Thomas Luckmann) and decisional nature (Peter L. Berger) of religion should be modified for pilgrimage. Privatization is confirmed insofar as the subjective relevance is decisive. It is not confirmed in the sense that religion, as a result, disappears from public communication.

While pilgrimage is mainly a collective endeavor, it can only partially be spoken of an equalizing *communitas* in the sense of Victor Turner’s ritual theory.

The social participation in principle remains reversible and a matter of choice, and results in the fact that the collective is only used strategically for one's own experience without one being committed to it (Hubert Knoblauch). Collective endeavor does not occur as an equalizing involvement in a community but as its strategic utilization for one's own experiences.

The aspect of autonomy is discussed with respect to the individualization of religion (5.). One can detect a symbiotic mode of experience in which pilgrims, instead of being intentionally acting subjects, take on a receptive position and let themselves be determined by events and things. Under the impression of an immediate givenness, which does not understand experience as the result of subjective interpretation, certainty arises through self-evident immediacy. The latter is irrevocably dependent on the individual but also uplifts it. Subjectivity does not necessarily lead to an awareness of autonomy. Autonomy is maintained in view of normative social standards but, at the same time, revoked in one's surrender to and unfolding in things and impressions.

The final chapter (6.) concludes that the question regarding individualization of religion for pilgrimage needs to be answered in a differentiated way: religion occurs within the individual subject that behaves pragmatically with respect to social embeddedness. At the same time, that individual seeks a certainty and de-individualizing involvement in seemingly pre-social things such as nature and the own body. Religion is individualized in pilgrimage insofar it is based on one's own construction of meaning. With regard to sociality, one can only speak of partial individualization: Pilgrims depend on social communication and practices but they also place emphasis on the individual freedom of choice, albeit without using it.

The Medium is the Messenger?

Eine kommunikations- und medientheoretische Untersuchung divinatorischer Praktiken: Das Giftorakel der Zande (*benge*) und die arabisch-islamische Geomantie (*'ilm ar-raml*)

The Medium is the Messenger? A Communication and Media Theoretical Study of Divinatory Practices: The Poison Oracle of the Azande (*benge*) and the Arab-Islamic Geomancy (*'ilm ar-raml*)

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The article presents a communication and media theoretical analysis of divinatory practices, whereby it focuses on the Poison Oracle of Central African Azande (*benge*) and Arab-Islamic geomancy (*'ilm ar-raml*): The Azande pose important

individual as well as collective questions to a chicken that is poisoned by *benge* in a ritualized context. By this method, the Azande believe to have contact with another world imperceptible through ordinary media and senses. From that extraordinary realm, they receive the answers to their questions. These principles coincide with Arab-Islamic divination, except that *‘ilm ar-raml* is a divinatory practice by mechanical and mathematical calculation.

The analysis has three goals: to gain a holistic view of a well-known phenomenon via a new theoretical framework, to test the following theses concerning media of religious communication and to contribute to about media, materiality and performance within religious studies. Especially in the findings of the divination studies-field, David Morgan sees therein fruitful stimuli for the field of religious studies in general.

This endeavour intends to test three theses, which came to the author by investigating rituals and divinatory practices from different sociocultural contexts: 1) Media of divination differ remarkably from media of everyday communication. 2) These particular media establish and secure communication between different domains of reality (according to *The Structures of the Life-World* [Schütz/Luckmann]). Hence, they embody a fundamental betwixt-and-between. 3) From an insider perspective these particular media are conceived and apprehended as vivid communication partners – even though they are inanimate paraphernalia from an outsider perspective.

As groundwork to make these theses plausible, we have to face communication and media as well as the characteristics of religious communication in section 1: Everyday communication is understood as a synthesis of “information, utterance and understanding” (Luhmann), which takes place predominantly in four media types: perception, understanding and distribution as well as so-called symbolic generalised media. As instruments, these media serve to construct the domain of everyday life and ordinary reality. However, extraordinary realities (as there are e.g. science, art, religion [Berger/Luckmann]) are constructed differently. These kinds of communication differ by means and modes and take place within different contexts – especially religious communication (Knoblauch). Thereby, religious communication in general shows remarkable characteristics: preliminaries, prescription, liminality, intermediation and multimodality (Roth).

In section 2, I give examples of media of divination and suggest a typological distinction (natural, corporal and mechanical), that explains the choice of the case studies: *benge* for corporal and *‘ilm ar-raml* for mechanical media of divination – natural media of divination (e.g. omen) work with natural signs that are interpreted as symbols and function without extraordinary media. This passage closes with a detailed description of the case studies, followed in section 3 – based on cross-cultural comparison – by an analysis of the communicational structures of

divinations; serving the first goal. By means of interrelating cosmology, ritualisation and communicators (client, specialist, extramundane source) the divinatory complex shows certain characteristics and unveils that divination is religious communication par excellence: Even though media are considered as active and vivid communicators as theses three signifies, this passage is lacking “medium”, trying to prevent suggestive influence. The following chapter 4 is concerned exclusively with this topic, bringing this to light by itself.

In section 5 the descriptive, analytic and argumentative work of the previous sections result in a plausibility check of the theses in the form of a semiotic and media theoretical interpretation. From this perspective and within this theoretical framework, it turns out: The medium is the messenger – at least for the field of divination. In a performative context – directed by religious specialists – the setting, framing and paraphernalia create the liminal scenery that function to unify different realms of reality by symbolic identification through the agency of extraordinary media.

„Atmosphäre“: Zum Potenzial eines Konzepts für die Religionswissenschaft – Ein Forschungsüberblick

“Atmosphere”: On the Potential of a Concept for the Study of Religions A Literature Review

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This literature review summarizes the current state of research regarding the concept of atmosphere in various humanities. The intention is to discuss the potential value of this concept for the study of religions and to make a few suggestions as to how it might be developed further in the study of religions. To do so, the article covers a variety of approaches to the concept of atmosphere, ranging from philosophy and phenomenology to art history, architecture, urban design, sociology, human geography and theology. My main focus is on what the study of religions can learn from neighbouring disciplines with regard to theoretical and methodological approaches to atmospheres. I am currently working on these issues in a post-doc-project with the (working) title “Atmospheres.Matter: Catholic Youth Initiatives in Germany – Transformations through Atmosphere?”¹

¹ I thank Volkhard Krech and my colleagues at the Center for Religious Studies (CERES) at Ruhr-University Bochum for many valuable discussions about this project.

The discussion of different academic approaches to atmospheres is guided by three questions: (a) How is the concept of atmosphere defined? (b) What is the methodical approach to the study of atmospheres? (c) How is the relation of religion and atmosphere addressed in these studies?

The finding of this literature review is that most authors assume a mutual relationship of atmosphere and religion. However, and quite surprisingly, the study of religions has so far rarely discussed this concept as an analytic term. This is probably due to two reasons: (a) Atmosphere, in everyday language, is vague, subjective and fleeting, which is the opposite of analytical precision. (b) Atmospheres are often associated with ‘esoteric’ thinking. Here, however, I do not talk about the alleged inherent spiritual qualities of space (the ‘genius loci’). Instead, I seek to develop an empirically grounded and analytically precise concept of atmosphere.

There are five general positions in literature concerning the concept of atmosphere:

- (1) Atmospheres are phenomena with a distinct and spatial sphere of existence. They affect artefacts and architecture but they are not reducible to individual feelings or qualities of physical space (e.g. Schmitz 1998, 22f.; Kazig 2007, 179f.).
- (2) Atmospheres are the subjective and affective experience of individuals in natural and built environments. They are emotional dispositions which are projected onto space (e.g. Binswanger 1933, 629; Griffero 2014, 4f.). This position is rather scarce since most authors accept that atmospheres are not independent of built or natural spaces.
- (3) Atmospheres are the pre-objective and pre-reflective unity of body and space. Their ontological status is before and beyond any subject/object-dichotomy. Atmospheres operate in the immediate communication of body and environment (e.g. Hauskeller 1995, 163; Griffero 2014, 29).
- (4) Atmospheres emerge from things and space. They have their source in spatial arrangements, e.g. when authors talk of “aura” (Benjamin 2013a, 215) or the ecstasies of things (Böhme 2007, 297f.).
- (5) Atmospheres are ‘in between’ humans and physical space. They are not the object but the medium of perception. They are the common reality of perceiving subject and perceived object (e.g. Hauskeller 1995, 195f.; Böhme 2007, 298).

These approaches agree that atmospheres have an undeniable impact on communication and social action. As such, they may become the object of scholarly research. The methodical ways in which this happens differ: Most common are phenomenological approaches which seek to access the ‘real’ grounds of experience (Schmitz 1998, 7–12). The phenomenological approach in general has been

contested in the study of religions and is usually discharged for methodological and epistemological reasons (e.g. Gladigow 1988). There are also psychological studies which prefer empirical, i.e. qualitative and quantitative methods. These are used to measure how people experience and talk about atmospheres (e.g. Schönhammer 2013, 293f.). Still, they do not make the social-material arrangement itself the object of research. In social studies, some authors suggest the analysis of pictures (Hasse 2012a, 37) or protocols of close participant observation (Rauh 2012b, 227). However, there is a methodological research gap when it comes to the question of how to ‘let space talk’.

Eventually, most studies on atmospheres in some way refer to the ‘special atmosphere’ of ‘sacred space’. In philosophical and phenomenological studies, this is usually based on the idea of the “numinous” (Otto [1917] 1991). The ‘sacred’ is then understood to manifest in special atmospheres (e.g. Tellenbach 1968, 74; Schmitz 1989, 20). From the perspective of a post-phenomenological study of religions, these approaches would have to be rejected. For my current project it is important that space is not in and by itself ‘religious’. But it offers the possibility of religious communication through its materially coded semantics.