

**Stephan Moebius**

**Repressing the Reality of Death and Burial Ritual in Modernity**

Background: For a long period the thesis of repression of death and dying dominated the discourses of social and cultural studies regarding death. Sociological theories of death interpret the ways of symbolizing and communicating death in our organised modern era as a social »repression of death« that is also expressed by placing rites and places of burial at the edge of the city (Nassehi and Weber 1989). In the recent years, however, this thesis of repression was more and more opposed by a growing public interest and an intensified discourse concerning death (Schäfer 2002; Knoblauch and Zingerle 2005). The driving force of these processes developed in books by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Verena Kast, popular guidebooks, in discourses about near-death experiences and new funeral and memorial practices (natural burials, virtual cemetery etc.). In addition, those developments also depict a new institutionalization of dying and new social 'movements' of death (hospice societies, hospices, palliative ward, AIDS-movement, etc.) as well as a reorganization of the previous structures of death that are connected to those novel approaches. Hand in hand with this also goes a rising valorization of the individuality of a dying person. Not least because the demographic developments resulted in an increase of elderly people as well as the rising interest of media and mass culture surrounding the dead body (e.g. TV-series like Six Feet Under or documentaries surrounding undertakers), death and dying are nowadays not only omnipresent in media, dying has also become a much discussed topic in politics, confessions, economy and legislation (Feldmann 2004). Dying today is, as so many other aspects of modern life, not treated as an event that one has to encounter at some point, but has turned into a *project* of some sort, a so called 'resonance-project' that often goes hand in hand with new individualised 'ritual designs' and new practices of aesthetization. Therefore, it is possible to prepare oneself actively and independently for this resonance scenario which is to be kept in mind, to be planned and prepared (Moebius and Weber).

Goal: The dissertation is therefore to deal with the late modern discourses and practices surrounding death and compare those to the ones identifiable in antiquity. The goal is to identify the changes of practices in regard to death and burial rituals, but also the changes of how our minds handle death. How do the rituals relate to the production of resonance? How did the world relations to the ancestors change? In which relation do rituals, aesthetization and death stand to one another?

Methods and disciplinary background: The methods will be methods of qualitative social research, especially discourse analysis, content analysis, interviews and participating observation.

**Collaborations:** A cooperation concerning the Sociology of the Sacred is intended with Christoph Heil, Wolfgang Spickermann, Hartmut Rosa and Jürgen Martschukat. Particular cooperation concerning death/funeral rituals is intended with Irmtraud Fischer and Georgia Petridou.

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## Processes of Sacralisation in Late Modernity

The sociology of processes of sacralisation, established by Émile Durkheim (1981) and his disciples (Mauss 2012), is to be applied and tested regarding (late) modern phenomena in this dissertation.

In this context processes of sacralisation will be seen as the central elements for relations with the world that are experienced as extremely attractive. In the process a present oriented sociology of the sacred will not only focus on the sacralisation of communities, whose counterpart can be seen in the current sacralisation of national and religious fundamentalist groups, but also on the sacralisation of persons. The sacred and processes of sacralisation are not limited to a certain area, but everything can potentially become the object of sacralisation (Joas 2012). Starting from this rather rudimentary outline of a sociology of the sacred, the sacralisation of communities as well as of individuals (hero cults, genius cults or genius-religions – one might want to think about the adoration Stefan George, Wagner or Goethe receive –, the pope, football ‘gods’ or the celebration of the own self in the late capitalist economy of attention) shift into focus. Those sacralisations take place against the backdrop of certain world views and guiding principles that are perceived as attractive and therefore need to be taken into consideration as well. At the same time sacred places, spaces and object also play a significant role.

Goal: The dissertation analyses processes of sacralisation in the modern era and their changes. The focus will be on sacralisations of the person (like heroes, so-called geniuses, religious leaders, homo oeconomicus) and of communities (like nations, fundamentalist communities, aesthetic movements).

Methods and disciplinary background: The methods will be methods of qualitative social research, especially discourse analysis and content analysis of different media (books, texts, films, websites).

**Collaborations:** A cooperation concerning the Sociology of the Sacred is intended with Christoph Heil, Wolfgang Spickermann, Hartmut Rosa and Jürgen Martschukat. Particular cooperation concerning the inscenation of special persons is intended with Jutta Vinzent, as well as Irmtraud Fischer regarding power relations and Laerke Recht and Peter Scherrer on ‘private religion’.

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**Andreas Pettenkofer**

**Resonance through Electronic Media: The Sacralisation of the Body and the #MeToo Movement**

Theories about religion often assume that Sacralisations remain stable only if they are continually reaffirmed through ritual interactions. Durkheim's sociology of rituals (1995 [2012]) – one of the inspirations behind Rosa's concept of resonance – emphasises that this is true even of groups that do not use an explicitly religious language when talking about what is sacred to them; this insight helps to explain the dynamics of social movements (Pettenkofer 2010). Late modern societies, however, depend less on physical co-presence, and more on technologically mediated communication at a distance, than Durkheimian sociology assumes. Does this not mean that ritual-based mechanisms lose their importance, and that stable Sacralisations become increasingly unlikely?

This PhD project focuses on a case that contradicts this expectation. The concept of sexual harassment – the normative background of the #MeToo movement – is a case of a 'modern' Sacralisation. It is not articulated through an explicitly religious language, but it implies a new, much stricter affirmation of the sacredness – the inviolability – of the individual body (Joas 2008), and a new sense of disgust about violations of this norm. For a long time, one could easily doubt whether there was any social reality to this norm. The #MeToo movement made a difference by affirming this norm in a new way.

This may seem surprising: The #MeToo mobilisation mainly happened on Twitter. Communication via electronic media rarely elicits strong emotions (Barth 2016) and thus can damage social movements (Fletcher Fominaya 2016). Even movements that may seem to rely on such media are actually sustained by contexts of intense interaction (Coleman 2010). And Twitter does not even create 'synthetic situations' (Knorr Cetina 2009) that *approximate* physical co-presence. Why was this success nevertheless possible?

This project uses the 'resonance' heuristics to show how the communication structure of Durkheimian rituals can emerge independently of the interaction settings that Neodurkheimians like Collins (2004) see as necessary. The guiding hypotheses are: The 'me too' mode of Twitter messaging decouples this communication structure from local interactions. This happens via continual, even personalised affirmations and through retellings of similar stories that, by communicating indignation about violations of shared values, reaffirm these values. These resonating experiences constitute the attraction of this movement and explain the emergence of a sense of collective agency and a readiness to participate.

In order to retrace the emergence of this resonating space of communication, the project concentrates on a reconstruction of Twitter sequences and other written documents, focusing on the different kinds of interlinkages between stories, and between stories and their comments; on the transformations of specific stories into widely transmitted examples; on the ways in which emotions are communicated (e.g., how does sharing experiences of disgust create positive

resonance?); and on the plausibility-enhancing linkages between tweets and longer accounts of harassments and related experiences.

The goal is to develop an empirically grounded theory that explains how sacralisations can be sustained through electronic media. The case of #MeToo also suggests two directions in which the concept of resonance can be elaborated. (1) It points to an underexplored 'cognitive' element: Sharing versions of the same story enables participants to understand their own experience as *typical*, and their own stories as credible (see Manne 2018 on the dilemma of 'epistemic injustice'). This 'cognitive' change also transforms their experiences as such and is crucial for creating resonance. (2) The #metoo hashtag had been introduced in 2006 by a black activist, but a larger movement only started when the hashtag was taken up by white celebrity actresses; this suggests that structures of intersecting inequalities can shape the opportunities for this kind of 'resonant' process.

**Collaborations:** The project will profit from a dialogue with IGDK participants working on Durkheimian theory (Stephan Moebius), the history of the body (Jürgen Martschukat), feminist theory (Irmtraud Fischer), and – due to the shared problem of how to identify resonance in written documents – with all the participants working on ancient history.

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### **Social Order and the Destruction of Resonance: Towards a Theory of Humiliation**

The concept of resonance (Rosa 2016) articulates a specifically modern ideal – the idea of a society of individuals who feel at home in their world and share a sense of agency that is sustained by the recognition of others as well as by the affordances of material objects that furnish this world. This phenomenology of resonance also has critical purpose: It can help identify constellations where the ideal is not fulfilled. But this critique is mostly tied to the assumption that social processes which frustrate the realisation of this ideal also damage the viability of modern social structures. This PhD project will show how social structures can *stabilise* themselves by continually destroying the possibility of ‘resonating’ experiences. It uses the phenomenology of resonance to identify processes of humiliation that ruin the sense of agency and even the sense of self, and that can be mediated by rituals of non-recognition and by ‘repulsive’ material objects. Such processes make protest unlikely; they constitute one possible path to social stability based on fatalism (Pettenkofer 2017).

In the current literature, practices of humiliation are often seen as premodern remnants without real impact – e.g. Frevert (2020), where this is facilitated by a narrow focus on *intentional* and *highly visible* instances of humiliation – or as a ‘dark side’ of social structures that are primarily sustained by recognition (Schützeichel 2018). To go beyond this, the project starts by reconstructing three bodies of social theory that generalise from different experiences of humiliation: (1) *Theories focusing on experiences of educated middle-class Jews in Europe and North America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*: Starting points are Arendt (e.g. 2007 [1948]) on fear of humiliation as a reason for avoiding politics; Garfinkel (1956) on degradation ceremonies; and Goffman (1963) on humiliations within unspectacular everyday ‘interaction rituals’ that can sustain social constellations where everybody works hard at displaying conformity. (2) *Theories focusing on experiences of Dalits after the legal abolition of untouchability*: The Indian debate shows how, after its traditional religious justification has lost its strength, a ‘caste’-based division of labour is being restabilised through acts of humiliation (e.g. Guru 2009). In this debate, practices of humiliation are explained as reactions to a *modern* coordination problem: How can social structures remain stable without a cultural consensus that legitimates them? This debate emphasises the role of bodily experiences and of material objects; e.g., hierarchy-maintaining humiliations can also be based on recurring situations where agents have to deal with ‘dirty’ objects and acquire their smell (Lee 2017). (3) *Theories focusing on experiences of humiliation resulting from intersecting inequalities in ‘Western’ democracies*: The writings of Bourdieu (e.g., 1984) are full of descriptions of humiliating experiences. He also shows why these situations do not depend on *intentions* of humiliation. However, he cannot fully use the explanatory possibilities offered by these descriptions, because he presupposes that social order is already maintained through internalised norms (‘habitus’). Focusing on the explanatory role of repeated humiliations also makes possible a new reconstruction of Bourdieu’s sociology of inequalities. Here, the project

will also make use of autofictional writings by authors like Annie Ernaux and Édouard Louis who are inspired by Bourdieu's sociology (see contributions in Louis 2013) but pay more attention to *gendered* humiliations. Generally, the planned phenomenology of humiliation experiences should also rely on 'fictional' sources: In literary texts, aspects of everyday life that we usually chose not to pay attention to because focusing on them would make social coordination difficult, are made explicit (Adorno 2019). Based on these reconstructions, the project will develop a typology of humiliation experiences, and a systematic account showing how social entities can be stabilised by mechanisms that, through humiliation, change self–world relations.

**Collaborations:** This project will profit from a dialogue with participants working on social theory (Stephan Moebius, Hartmut Rosa), on the history of the body (Jürgen Martschukat), and – concerning, in particular, the vital distinction between the humbling and the humiliating – with participants from theology (Irmtraud Fischer, Markus Vinzent).

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## Hartmut Rosa

### Rock concerts and football stadiums as 'bowls of hysteria'

In sociological and anthropological studies, the affinity between religious rituals and contemporary practices in rock concerts as well as sports events has frequently been observed (Kähler 2012; Gugutzer and Böttcher 2012; Klein and Meuser 2008; Schultz and Sheffer 2015; Alpert 2015; Koenot 1997; Till 2010; Inglis 2006; Mattig 2010). Thus, it is well known that such rites play a significant role in forging communities (of fans), inciting euphoria and forming identities, with a particular emphasis on adolescence. What has never been properly analyzed so far, however, are the ways and means by and through which particular axes of resonance are created in such repetitive practices. The guiding hypothesis of this project is the idea that such axes of resonance are created and reinforced in all four dimensions: First, we find that certain persons (musicians, players) are bestowed with 'magical' powers and energies such that horizontal relationships of resonance are established. Moreover, resonances among the group of fans and 'devotees' are also created through collective, repetitive rituals such as singing, clapping, dressing in symbolic outfits, the preservation and communication of 'expert knowledge' etc. Second, in all of these cases, certain material objects are sacralised or 'energised', too, for example, drumsticks and guitar plectra, the shirts and shoes of players, or concert posters with signatures etc. Material (or diagonal) resonance, however, can also be observed with respect to 'sacred grounds' (Anfield Road, Wembley Stadium, Castle Donington) and 'holy times' (Saturday afternoon for the Bundesliga, the Wacken-weekend in August etc.). What is rather unclear, though, are the precise ways in which there might be an element of 'vertical resonance' in the sense of some perceived 'transcendent' power. Certainly, with legendary events during important football games (e.g. when Liverpool equalised a 0-3 in a Champions League final) or great rock concerts (e.g. when Pink Floyd briefly re-united after 24 years for the Live Aid Concert), there is a vibrant sense among fans that 'history is written today'. Furthermore, in and during such events, fans feel that they are connected with the history and community of a much wider collectivity which they are a part of. This, then, also connects to the ways in which football games and rock events restore and reinvigorate the sense of 'second order resonance', i.e. of the self being *connected*, physically and symbolically, to earth, life, the others and (one's own) history and/or biography. Thus, an important question to be answered by this project is whether and how the everyday life of participants is affected by these events, and whether and how those axes of resonance are relevant outside the ritualistic practices themselves. But first of all, the precise form of such resonances needs to be explored and researched in this project. How are those axes established, preserved, conceptualised, materialised and embodied? Which are the forms and significances of repetition in the relevant practices? How are power relations constituted, invigorated, modified or subverted through the occurrence of resonance? Methodologically, research will draw on a wide variety of ethnographic and sociological research. Based on the insights and guidelines of



Grounded Theory, a triangulatory mixed-method approach including participant observation, expert and biographical interviews and a thorough analysis of documents will be suggested.

**Collaborations:** Obviously, this project will benefit a lot from the study of material cultures and objects on the one hand and of religious traditions on the other, several experts on which are part of the IGDK (Jörg Rüpke, Wolfgang Spickermann). Thus, there will be tight cooperation with the projects focusing on practices in antiquity, with a particular focus on comparative dimensions, i.e., on similarities as well as dissimilarities with respect to patterns and rituals of resonance. However, there also will be close cooperation with the research projects focusing on contemporary bodily and symbolic practices (Jürgen Martschukat, Stephan Moebius) and, first of all, analyzing ritual practices in music (Verena Weidner).

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### **Roadside Crosses and Lovelocks: On revitalising religious ritual practices in secular contexts**

Whoever walks one of the famous bridges in Paris, Cologne or Amsterdam cannot help but wonder what it is that drives inhabitants of a late modern world to seal and materialise their private bonds with publicly displayed locks at symbolic places (Hammond 2010). Has the lock on the bridge come to replace the wedding ring in church – to the witness not of a God, but of an anonymous public? Similarly, what does it mean that at the sites of crimes or accidents it never takes long before a multitude of candles and flowers (and teddy bears, if children are involved) prop up; a ‘ritual’ that can be observed almost uniformly all across the western world? What do the much less spectacular, but more durable crosses and lights at the roadside commemorating the victims of car accidents signify? Why do even the most secular rites of passage for youngsters at the verge of adulthood or at funerals inevitably contain elements of and references to ‘transcendent’ realities such as ‘life’, ‘the world’, ‘the cosmos’, ‘history’, ‘nature’ etc.? Do they establish (certainly very fuzzy, rarely articulated) vertical axes of resonance (Mahdi, Christopher and Meade 1996)?

The idea of this project is to consider such practices and rituals which appear to establish connections of and for life through particular axes of resonance at particular biographical junctures such as birth, maturation, marriage, death etc. These practices always involve particular places (such as bridges), material objects (such as locks, crosses or teddy bears), times and social bonds, which are by and through these practices made resonant (cf. also Descola 2013; Bender and Taves 2012). Drawing on the comparative structure of the IGDK, there are four research areas to be addressed by this project: 1) What are the social and biographical contexts in which we find such practices – and how do they compare across ages? 2) Which axes of resonance are established by and through which practices and rituals – and how are they interconnected and stabilised? The question of repetition is of particular interest here, since in most cases, there is no repetition of the rituals for the main protagonists, but rather strict repetitive rules for the community. 3) What is the relationship between the cognitive and symbolic content and the material, bodily and sensual elements of the established resonances? What is the role of power-structures here? 4) What notions or images of transcendence (‘Das Umgreifende’, to use Karl Jaspers’ (2001) term) are involved or created by those practices? Is such a sense of transcendence historically contingent or inevitable, even if ‘beneath’ the articulated level? Do those rituals establish a subliminal sense of ‘second order resonance’ for those involved, i.e. a sense of vibrant connection to life, the community, nature etc. as such?

This project, though taking present day practices as its empirical starting point, systematically involves a comparative perspective that seeks to answer its research questions by an explorative reference to corresponding practices in Antiquity. For a successful dissertational project,

obviously, the respective practices both now and then need to be carefully selected and restricted by the candidate and the supervisors involved.

Methodologically, research will draw on a wide variety of ethnographic and sociological research. Based on the insights and guidelines of Grounded Theory, a triangulatory mixed-method approach including participant observation, expert and biographical interviews and a thorough analysis of documents will be suggested.

**Collaborations:** There will be tight cooperation with the projects focusing on practices of dedication and body-related ritual practices in antiquity, with a particular focus on comparative dimensions, i.e., on similarities as well as dissimilarities with respect to patterns and rituals of resonance (Irmtraud Fischer, Georgia Petridou). However, there also will be close cooperation to the research projects focusing on contemporary bodily and symbolic practices (Jürgen Martschukat, Stephan Moebius).

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**Jutta Vinzent**

### **Resonances and Dissonances of Art Forgery**

Art forgery has been practiced for a long time, whether these were Roman sculptors producing copies of Greek sculptures or most recently, Wolfgang Beltracchi, who was sentenced to six years imprisonment for forging hundreds of paintings. On the other hand, artists such as Glenn Brown who 'appropriates' art, being announced Turner Prize nominee in 2000 and having his work bought by the Dalí foundation which looks after the artist whose painting *Autumn Canibalism* he copied. Copying, forging, plagiarising, appropriating? Who defines what forgery is and how does it affect the work's perception? Does it lose its 'aura'? While defining forgery is highly significant in art, as it has economic, legal, moral and aesthetic consequences for the object, the person who forges and the person who 'detects' it, and therefore has been discussed widely in light of examination techniques and processes to unmask forged objects (Scott 2016; Bell 2013), discussions about the role of intention to defraud (Charney 2015), little consideration has been dedicated to the aesthetic perception of forgery (Birkenstock 2014 ) or its creative act (Sim 2013). Taking the latter as a starting point for an assumption that forgery is not necessarily a clearly defined field, this project will explore art forgery in light of resonance, a significant topic, considering that forging means that there must have been some kind of resonance to another object that consists beside the one that is assumed as forged. However, do forged art objects not create dissonances once discovered as forged? And what about the dissonances in the perception of the object? Especially when forging modern art works, does one and the same artwork not receive a mixed perception by which the signature becomes a legal document, while the rest of the object can be 'invented'?

The aim of the project is to explore art forgery in light of the concept of resonance, using a number of case studies. It looks at who defines forgery, on what basis (evidence) and how the perception of the object, once considered as forged, changed. Questions about agency, evidence and perception will play a significant role. It therefore would develop further the resonance-theoretical concept in view of the horizontal and vertical dimensions: How do forged objects resonate? Does forging not mean that the object resonates with another one? What evidence is used to identify the objects as forged and to which extent can evidence be based on resonance? Is the concept of resonance able to establish a different kind of definition for forgery which is not based on authentication but on resonance, emphasising a relational relationship rather than an essentialist understanding of objects? And how does the concept of resonance change if related to relationality? The hypothesis is that forged objects develop a stronger perception aesthetically, that the evidence on which the forging is based raises issues about what evidence is and that institutions play an important role in the definition of forgery and its perception, independent of the historical setting.

The research of this project uses visual and written sources. Methodologically, it is based on visual analysis and materiality, perception theories and agency approaches. It can concentrate on forged art objects, exhibitions that showcased forged art or its collectors.

**Collaborations:** Within the research group, the project will therefore collaborate closely with other projects interested in agency, relationality and network methodologies (Jürgen Martschukat and Jörg Rüpke) and Peter Scherrer's concern with material culture.

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### **Ritual as Resonance. Religious Objects on Display**

Museums exhibit objects used for religious purposes on site and as visual images on their websites, particularly Jewish museums. Such a consideration does not differentiate between religious and secular use of rituals to use such objects as evidence for migration, narrating the life stories of these objects. What these museums and their life stories bring to the fore is that objects change their meanings (and functions) from being used in religious practices, objects of memory and loss and of objects that constitute a history of a group. These museums identify 'ritual' primarily with a religious use of the objects. However, is this not a slippery term, as they are actually not used in such rituals anymore when displayed in museums? Have the objects not become 'ritually' mute? To which extent do exhibits and the museum environment produce unexpected resonances? Not in all cases do the works resonate as the environment suggests, which becomes obvious when a person begins to pray in front of a ritual object exhibited in a museum, because the association with the object seems so strong that the object is enacted as a religious object rather than an exhibit.

This project investigates the curating, display and spectatorship of museum objects formerly used in religious rituals, particularly relevant at a time of globalisation, when art spectatorship has become more religiously diverse and curating is increasingly produced online.

While much literature has been published regarding museum spectatorship, even in view of being considered as a ritual (Duncan 1995), and curating, little has been dedicated to that of religious objects (Sullivan 2015; Li 2020). Taking on Sullivan's concerns for sacred objects of Asian religions displayed in museums, who argues that such objects raise questions about the spectator's identities and who suggests ways to display objects so the religious traditions are understood when displayed (Sullivan 2015), this project takes its starting-point from the spectators and their reactions to the curation of religious objects to identify the environmental reasons and the role of repetition and memory for a particular viewership that does not only 'understand' but resonates with exhibited object.

This project conceives of the 'ritual' not as an essentialist, fixed notion with which to describe a religious object but rather as an activity that creates a relationship between things and spectator. This relationship, which actor-network theories call associations (e.g. Latour 2005) is always established anew. Unlike associations, which seem very neutral in view of direction and intensity, 'ritualising' is considered as a form of resonance that relies on repetition and memory. Such a consideration does not differentiate between a religious and secular use of 'ritual' as conventional writing has undertaken, but rather allows an explanation of spectatorship that is affected by the object (and therefore is rather described as viewer or even participant). It is therefore suggested to understand ritualising as the practice of establishing ritual meaning between the object that has the potential to resonate and that of the 'actor' that forms and formulates these associations. Therefore, ritualising is an activity that forms a complex net of associations, similar to each other,

which become part of the 'actor's' memory and are enabled by objects that evoke a memory of such an association. It takes further the concepts of resonance and ritual by exploring the latter as a form of resonance marked by repetition and memory and contributes to questions about ritual memory. Exploring this topic on the basis of actor-network theories, it uses an approach to the ritual which is grounded in the understanding of rituals that emphasises its performativity (e.g. Rüpke 2003; Bell 1997) and of performativity that conceives of identity formation through repetition (Butler 1990). It is distinguished from both, actor-network theories and performativity theories, in suggesting to disregard the connotations of the theatrical (such as in 'actor' and 'performance') and to speak of the 'self' that enacts and simply of 'activity.'

The sources for this project consist of on-site and online museum displays of religious objects in form of installation photographs. Furthermore, interviews with curatorial staff and spectators and spectator observation as well as associated archival material on objects in museums will be consulted. Therefore, methods involve observation and interview techniques as well as curating and provenance research. If possible, a project could be convened with a local museum (e.g. the Anger Museum, Erfurt) to test out various displays of religious objects. This set of material will not only allow us to understand better the proposed concept of ritualising and the impact of repetition and memory, but also how spectatorship is influenced by its environment, namely, how to describe, exhibit, and display objects.

**Collaborations:** This project would benefit from working together with colleagues from Religious Studies (Jörg Rüpke) and those interested in sacralisation (Stephan Moebius), material culture (Peter Scherrer) and spectatorship (Hartmut Rosa).

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**Verena Weidner**

**Connection through technology? Digital Musicianship between resonance and alienation**

While resonance theory assumes almost ideal conditions for resonant self–world relations in music making or listening to music in general (Rosa 2016; id. 2018), the opposite is assumed to be the case when dealing with digital music technologies. Making music with apps on smartphones is considered as lacking sensuality and unavailability due to the reduced operating possibilities and technical controllability (Rosa 2016, 497). This coincides with music educators' criticism of the algorithmisation of thought and action through computer technologies, the standardisation of musical material, the capitalisation and commercialisation of music through digital media, and the escape into a desensualised, disembodied and lonely synthetic world of the screen (see e.g. Knolle 1995; Thwaites 2014). In contrast to this, there are often almost euphoric assessments in which the diagnosed simplicity and low threshold of newer digital technologies is read as an indication of a democratisation of music and music education, which, precisely the other way round, offers those who have so far been excluded the possibility of their own musical experiences (e.g. Möllenkamp 2017; Väkevä 2013).

Beside these generalised ascriptions, a glance into the musical practices in question reveals a more differentiated picture. It then becomes clear, for example, that cheaper availability and technical simplification have led to changes in the previously clear division of roles between composer, producer and distributor (Slater 2016), as well as to shifts in the competencies required for making music with digital technologies (Leong 2017), and changes in the relationship of body and sound (Harenberg and Weissberg 2010). A systematic investigation of these interrelations against the background of resonance theory is still to be done.

The dissertation project will be based on the aesthetical practice using *Ableton Link*, which takes place, for example in so-called link-jamsessions (in pubs, cultural centers etc.), but also online, in facebook groups, on Twitter and in forums. This specific postdigital practice is of particular interest in so far as the *Ableton Link* protocol, which has been fed into music and VJ apps and software since 2015, has led to paradigmatic changes in digital music making (Weidner et al. 2019). *Link*, comparable to the older MIDI protocol, synchronises soft- and hardware via a common WiFi network. Therefore *Link* (again) enables a joint synchronous interaction 'in time' which has been taken for granted in (electro)acoustic music making but had only been possible in digital music with a huge amount of cables and a wide range of technological infrastructures in the past. In addition to digital instruments, (electro)acoustic instruments also participate in link-jam sessions, which leads to a postdigital coexistence, or blurring/hybridisation of digital and non-digital practices.

With regard to resonant and/or mute self–world relations, the focus will be on the culturally formed resonance sphere as well as the individually created resonance axes around *Ableton Link*. According to the questions of the second phase of the IGDK, **aspects of repetition and the associated ritualisation**, the **power relationships** that constitute themselves in it, as well as

**the effects of material aspects on resonance** relationships will be taken into account. How do performative ritualisations begin? Which power relations are constituted there (e.g. between conductor and player or organiser of the session and visitors or in terms of gender)? How do conventional practices become rules with functional, symbolical and practical meaning? What is the corporeality of that roles? And how does the materiality e.g. of a screen in a Facebook group etc. relate to resonance relationships?

Methodologically, the project is located in (cyber-)ethnography. Secondary evaluations of (interview/video) data collected in the research projekt MuBiTec-LINKED are possible, which are to be complemented by additional data. Conceptually, it is expected that the resonance theory will be supplemented by selected theory elements from science and technology studies (see showcase 'Tango in the technosphere').

**Collaborations:** There are links to projects that address aspects of the body (Georgia Petridou) and gender (Irmtraud Fischer), as well as to those that address (ancient) spaces, communities, rules/social order, (ancient) ritual forms; materialities/objects (Hartmut Rosa), aesthetic experience in religious practices (Stephan Moebius).

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### **Tango in the Technosphere. How does the digital transformation affect the self–world relations in a dance community?**

Tango argentino is a discursively highly charged social dance that is (often clichédly) associated with eroticism or passion and in which issues such as 'connection' or 'fusion' take on a central, sometimes even religious significance (Dreher and Figueroa-Dreher 2009, Kimmel and Preuschl 2013). There has been a variety of research that concentrates on Tango as a cultural discourse-practice formation with e.g. specific body images, gender constructions, ritualisations and ways of intersubjective communication (e.g. Davis 2015; Diaz-Bone 2009).

However, Tango has hardly been considered yet as a phenomenon of late modernity, i.e. as a phenomenon that takes place not only 'onground'/offline, but also online. The boundaries are sometimes blurred: while at first it was still possible to distinguish quite clearly between online *information* and offline *interaction* (Buntenbach 2014), from the 2010s on, practices such as uploading tutorials or show dances to YouTube or setting up car- or overnight communities in local Facebook groups ensure that the Internet becomes the digital infrastructure for an increasingly large proportion of community activities. With the Corona Pandemic and its crisis-like effects on the tango community in 2020 at the latest, this development will receive a new impetus: The consequences are fundraising campaigns and the formation of politically and economically oriented interest groups, but also countless tango lessons in webinar format up to virtual (living room) milongas, where the tango fans meet on Zoom instead of in pubs.

Within the heuristic framework of the IGDK, the effects of digital transformation on tango as a resonance sphere including the individually formed resonance axes will be investigated. Of interest is **(1) the materiality of Tango argentino after 2020**: How are dancers, musicians and teachers connected by skin, sound waves and/or technologies? How do e.g. shoes, screens, dance floors, songs, illustrated books or videos enable or prevent resonant aesthetic experiences? **(2) Tango as a form of Community of Practice (CoP)** will be explored: How do glocal tango communities emerge, exist, and change through traveling vs. surfing the internet? Where do participants meet? What are their practices, and what are the boundaries of the communities? And what role do onground/offline contacts play in the interplay or in the temporal before or after of online contacts? Further **(3) second order resonances** should be considered: Where are which songs or orchestras played, which professional dancers are invited, and how are global repertoires constituted based on earlier resonant experiences? What role do interviews on blogs with local tango celebrities play? How are resonant self–world relations and decisive points of transformation and/or aesthetic experience thematised there and how does this affect the readers? And finally, **(4) aspects of power** are of interest: What (shifting) power relations become visible in tango as online/onground phenomenon? Which forms of subjectivation (e.g. with regard to the affordances/constraints of a technology or with regard to gender, age or race) are recognisable and how do they affect the everyday life of the community participants?

The PhD researcher will start with local tango communities (e.g. Erfurt and Graz) and follow them into their online-offline-contexts. Methodologically the research will use a wide range of qualitative methods, following multi-sited (cyber-)ethnography and grounded theory. This includes data from interviews and participatory observation as well as online data from blogs or social media platforms. Conceptually, it is expected that the resonance theory will be supplemented by selected theory elements from science and technology studies (e.g. Klingan and Rosol 2019; Latour 2005).

**Collaborations** are in line with projects that deal with (also ancient) ritual forms, including the rules and social orders that appear in them (Jörg Rüpke); with research into materiality (Laerke Recht, Hartmut Rosa, Peter Scherrer), gender (Irmtraud Fischer), body (Georgia Petridou), (performing) art reception (Jutta Vinzent), community practices (rock concerts/sport events: Hartmut Rosa), and aesthetic experience in religious practices (Ursula Gärtner).

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**Franz Winter**

**Somatic dimensions in the ritual practice of the new religious movement *Terra Sagrada*.  
An analysis with reference to Rosa's theory of 'resonance'.**

The study of so-called new religious movements has been a major aspect of the history of religious studies in the second half of the 20th century. This was closely related to the fact that since the 1960s and 1970s a major debate emerged particularly in the Euro-American horizon in regard to the growing presence and importance of a couple of newer religious movements. Most, but not all of them had their origin outside the Euro-American horizon and in Asia with countries such as India, Japan, or Korea as an important source. With their often new and sometimes seemingly strange behaviour (when looked upon by mainstream society) they soon were regarded as deviant and highly problematic developments that should be criticised from various angles. Initially this debate was dominated by (mainly Christian) theologians who were searching for explanations for this new phenomenon, mostly with a rather critical bias towards these new religions that were commonly referred to as 'cults'. Most of these scholars were following common patterns of exclusion and problematisation of smaller and marginal religious communities and began to develop a certain frame of interpretation of these newer movements that became dominant and was eagerly accepted by mainstream society and the media (Ashcraft 2018: 73–102). This approach once was labelled 'cult essentialism' which is an adequate description of this phenomenon (Hall et al. 2000). Early studies by scholars of religious studies tended to work on a counter-narrative to this paradigm and sometimes took an apologetic standpoint (Ashcraft 2018: 149–152). Both approaches make up part of general developments in the respective society that changed after the 'cult'-debate that had its heydays in the 1990s. In the following decade a more neutral approach became relevant, a way that might be defined as neither condemning nor defending new religious movements in general.

The formation period of a religious movement is always characterised by major attempts to define its positions in a mode of delimitating and outlining clear boundaries (Riesebrodt 2007, 46–54). In doing so new movements try to form a coherent community that has clear markers of identification to the inside and delimitations in regard to mainstream society outside.

It is exactly this point where the theoretical framework of Rosa's theory comes in as it seems very useful in regard to the analysis of the self-definitions, the identity building, and the emergence of new patterns of the worldview emerging in these kinds of new movements. It focusses on the issue of identity and somatic dimensions of self-awareness etc. This makes it—*inter alia*—ideal for an analysis of the ritual aspects of these movements from a comparative perspective. However, when introducing Rosa's theoretical frame another important aspect comes to the fore, i.e. defines the 'good' resonance Rosa proposes and what to do with definitions of resonance within movements that clearly show a closed and delimitating attitude towards mainstream

society? Should we define that as 'repulsive' (to use Rosa's terminology) and not as resonant (within this particular sphere)?

The project will deal with a new religious movement that is rather young: The movement Terra Sagrada is a European off-spring of Afro-American traditions such as Candomblé and Umbanda and has a rather limited and small membership (that is rather accessible and open to research, though). Its core teachings center on practices that lead to the incorporation of ghosts that is also the essence of its main ritual of initiation. In regard to the situation in German speaking countries there is a PhD thesis that was finished recently and that can help as a basis for further endeavours (Tranh-Huu 2020). This thesis focusses on the various motivations of members on the basis of a religio-psychological frame and takes the importance of rituals into account, that are essential for the movement. This material is an ideal starting point for a research project that combines these results with the above-mentioned theoretical frame of Rosa. One example would be the highly important 'somatic' dimension of the ritual and its performance as becomes clear with the presentation.

Results of this research project might enhance aspects of the portrayal of contemporary developments in European society when it comes to the importance of religion. This kind of micro-study gives insight into one particular societal layer that is often rather superficially referred to as 'holistic milieu' without going deeper when it comes to the individual motivations and the prospective benefits of becoming a member. With the additional help of Rosa's theory we might understand the mechanisms easier.

**Collaborations** are envisaged with researchers in the social sciences on processes of sacralisation (Moebius), resonance theory (Hartmut Rosa) and practices of exclusion (Andreas Pettenkofer, Jürgen Martschukat) as well as scholars on antiquity on religious communities (Jörg Rüpke, Georgia Petridou) and its opposite, the 'privatisation of religion' (Peter Scherrer).

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**‘Sacred texts’ as resources of world-orientation and self-optimisation. A case study in the modern reception of the Indian Upanishads.**

Although the category of ‘sacred texts’ is not in the centre of the religious studies any more as the overall focus on the study of textual sources is nowadays interpreted as too narrow and thereby provoking misconceptions in regard to crucial aspects of religions (Rüpke 2007: 45–52), there is still a rather intense interest in major collections of ‘sacred books’ of religious traditions, be it the well-known triad of the so-called ‘Abrahamic’ religions (Tora, Bible, and Quran), be it Buddhist Sutras, the Daoist Yijing, or important sources of Indian religious history. Most of these texts, though, are not only seen relevant as sources of information on the various religious traditions, their teachings, moral concepts, or rituals, but they are often perceived as objects of reverence and orientation even beyond their mere importance within the religions they belong to. They are interpreted as the source for a kind of transreligiously and transculturally relevant wisdom that might even inspire people without an explicit religious affiliation and particularly those in search of inspiration for their own world-orientation or individual development. We might even speak of a particular ‘spiritual’ approach towards the religious heritage in the form of major books and other textual sources. A major part of this approach is naturally closely linked to the history of perception of non-European religious and cultural traditions in Western/European/Christian scholarship whose important traits can be traced back to patterns that were shaped in the 19th century. And it makes up part of a specific milieu in contemporary society that is often referred to as ‘holistic’ or ‘spiritual’.

The PhD-project is focused on one particular case of this category of ‘sacred texts’, the so-called Upanishads that originally belong to Indian religious history. Initially the Upanishads make up part of the so-called ‘Veda’ whose four parts are the foundational texts of Indian religious history to date. Therein the Upanishads became perceived as the *vedānta*, i.e. the ‘end of the Veda’, both indicating their place in the collection of texts but also their relevance in regard to their content. In the course of the further development the Upanishads became separated of the Veda and were perceived as a different strand of texts. However, this process took a long time and is closely related to the further history of India and the reception of its religious and cultural heritage in the following centuries—from India as the homeland of the texts to their reception in the Muslim Mughal context and culminating in the eventual arrival of the Upanishads in Europe in the 19th century (Winter 2018). The lengthy process led to the current perception of ‘the Upanishads’ as a more or less coherent, unified, and even codified religious textual corpus.

As already indicated this special approach to the Upanishads as a source for the development of the individual makes up part of a specific milieu in contemporary society that might be referred to as ‘spiritual consumers’ or ‘holistic milieu’. Historically important traits of this segment are shaped by patterns that were developed within a religious tradition commonly referred to as ‘esotericism’. It is a vital part of modern religious, viz. ‘spiritual’ culture and should not be underevaluated. As



the history of this particular strand is closely linked to the reception of non-European and particularly South Asian and (later) East Asian religions, it is naturally inclined towards material that is connected to Asia.

The PhD-project combines a study of the reception history of the Upanishads in comparison to a sociological-empirical research on a yoga group. Its aim is to isolate the most important characteristics of this specific handling of the Upanishads within contemporary 'spiritual approaches' and to place them into its reception history. The empirical part is methodologically based on a discursive analysis of relevant books viz. textual material of the 'spiritual' viz. 'esoteric' market as well as on a qualitative oriented research within members of a so-called 'yoga' group (one the PI has access to in Vienna, or any other comparable group), where members are not only practicing yoga as a variant of sports but as part of their 'spiritual' orientation. In addition to the Yoga Sūtras the Upanishads are used in special reading lessons as part of a seemingly ritualistic setting in the weekly or more extended week-end meetings.

The twofold approach is not meant to add to an 'actual understanding' of the Upanishadic treatises, but to better understand the way the Upanishads are taken as a resource for world-orientation and individual development. The theoretical frame of the Resonance theory might help to systematise the various aspects as it provides an all-encompassing understanding of individual approaches and perceptions that are relevant for the situation today, i.e. a suitable description of major traits of contemporary society 'in the West'. Consequently, it might serve as a guide and the basis for the study of this particular trait of modern 'spiritual' culture.

**Collaborations** are hoped for with other researchers on sacred texts (Irmtraud Fischer, Ursula Gärtner, Georgia Petridou) as well as, again, processes of sacralisation (Stephan Moebius).

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## Classical and Biblical Studies

**Imtraud Fischer**

### **The impact of power-relations on resonance: Does it matter whose texts became part of the canon?**

Biblical texts are canonical text. This means that the inventory is fixed, stable, not to change any more, not even to the smallest character, the jota. As such texts are continuously important for the respective religious communities, they immediately provoke explications, which try to update the sense: the commentaries. In contrast to the stable text, commentaries need to be fluid (Kilcher and Weissberg 2019). To help make canonical texts resonant for the community, they do not need mere repetition, but appropriation (de Certeau 1988). This means that the postulated collective resonance of biblical texts is being guaranteed only by adaption to different contexts, cultures and times. Literal exegesis as done by fundamentalists is therefore a less than adequate attempt to secure the resonance of biblical texts.

Nonetheless, especially texts dealing with gender issues as well as with women in other positions as mothers and caretakers are till today often not actualised, but repeated word by word (Fischer 2020). Old Testament anthropology therefore still has to deal with the contextualisation of biblical prohibitions like Leviticus 18.22 that a man should not lay down with a man as he lies with a woman, although it is clear that homosexuality as we recognise it today was an absent conception in biblical times. The same is true for restricted biblical female gender roles which may not be valid in today's Western European gender democracies.

To beware biblical texts from growing mute, theology has to inquire about power relations represented in the texts, but also concerning the production and tradition of texts. The Hebrew Bible as a collection of world-making narratives (Goodman 1978; Nünning et al. 2010) gives an insight into the patriarchal society of Ancient Israel and into the processes of identity formation within the people of Israel's God. In connection with my international research project 'The Bible and Women' ([www.bibleandwomen.org](http://www.bibleandwomen.org)) this project should develop the concept of resonance (Rosa 2016) by analysing the connection of resonance and the asymmetric relations of gender in biblical texts and specific traditions of interpretation. The relationship between antiquity and modern European culture will become especially clear in this context, since the Hebrew Bible still influences the resonance spaces of the receiving religions (Jewism, Christianity, Islam) when it comes to gender relations. This project should bridge the gap between the biblical text and its reception history till today and should analyse the reproduction of gender stereotypes through mere repetition without appropriation.

**Collaborations:** With Moebius concerning sacralisation, with Pettenkofer concerning gender bias and strategies of marginalisation and humiliation, in the argument of 'failed-reception' with Gärtner. The project of Spickermann on worshipping women in ritual and cult analyses also the

question of little evidence of a phenomenon, historically of much more importance. A stroke of luck is the participation of Jutta Vinzent, as far as reception of biblical subjects in art historically was of very high impact throughout centuries.

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### **The impact of repetition on cultural memory in Ancient Israel**

Worship is never a case of a single act. To worship deities needs continuous exercise as well as well-rehearsed rituals for getting and staying in contact with the godly sphere (Klingbeil 2010). In terms of resonance, the vertical axe has to be cultivated by rites and periodical practices.

In biblical religion, for this reason we have on the one hand cultic practices in context with offerings and sacrifices at holy places, after the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BC at the only holy place, Jerusalem. On the other hand, we find the practices of the daily ritual of prayer, the weekly ritual of the 7<sup>th</sup> day, of Shabbat, and the annual recurrence of the great feasts and pilgrimage events. Although of different origins, some of agricultural, some of historical events, the great biblical feasts were underwritten with theological narratives. The tradition of reading certain biblical books, the so-called Megilot, at special feasts is of course a later development, but has its beginning already in biblical times. E.g. the book of Ester offers not only the legend of a feast, but orders also to celebrate it. Repetitive rites in special intervals of time, at special places, most probably with a special diet, specific participation also for children (e.g. the famous question of the youngest at Pesach or the custom of carnival costumes at Purim) provoke strong resonance – for religious traditions at best: lifelong resonance (Fischer 2019). Especially in Deuteronomy and deuteronomistic literature the impact of learning is to be highlighted (Finsterbusch 2005).

As religious experience is not at all restricted to repetitive practice but may be even stronger by unique events in real life (e.g. vocations), it is interesting to consider what role repetition plays (Gertenbach – Laux 2019), particularly repetition of rites and practices (like sacrifice and prayer) for resonant relationships. In which aspect do they maintain resonant self–world relations? Which impact do they have on social cohesion? Do they also have resonant effects on the importance of historical events, ancestors, or famous figures of the past (Sax 2018)? What role does the space play in which rites are performed? Under which conditions would it be possible to change them (e.g. the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem)? What factors extend resonant spaces or eschatologically important religious figures in time and space (e.g. the heavenly Jerusalem or the messianic son of David)?

This project should bring light in the relationship of repetitive practice (Klingbeil 2007) and resonance as it is reflected in Old Testament texts and handed down to us as cultural memory (Assmann 1992; Fischer 2014) of the ancient people of Israel.

**Collaborations:** As the projects of Ursula Gärtner and Markus Vinzent are both dealing with the issue of the role of resonance in the process of the reception of texts, cooperation is self-evident, concerning the impact of repetition obviously also with Hartmut Rosa. As eating and drinking as well as praying are fundamental actions of feasts, a very good connection would be possible with Christoph Heil's projects, concerning ritual pilgrimage and processional performance, also connections with Georgia Petridou are possible. Complementary to Laerke Recht's project on the

archaeology of private religion, which focuses on remains and uses textual evidence for support, in this project archaeological remains like the famous figurines in private houses in post-exilic Jerusalem will support the literary evidence. With the city-wall project of Jörg Rüpke there are connections especially concerning texts of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where the city wall and the gates play a special role in the desire to the only place of presence of JHWH as well as in the metaphorical language concerning the city.

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**Ursula Gärtner**

**Templum de marmore ponam – Poetic Sacred Places in Imperial Epic as Manifestation of Mute and Resonant Self—World Relations**

The significance of the interface between narrative and ritual has been recognised for some time (e.g. Barchiesi, Rüpke & Stephens 2004; Nünning & Rupp 2013; Rüpke & Degelmann 2015). But the specific role of ancient fictional poetry, in particular epic poetry and ancient fables, still offers a broad field for further research (e.g. Beard 2004; Grethlein 2007; Nasse 2012; Agoustakis 2013). It seems especially fruitful to combine traditional literary-narratological approaches with the approach of the IGDK that is the investigation of resonant self–world relations. We will not only gain information about rituals or socio-religious practices themselves and reflections on them, e.g. how characters locate themselves through horizontal, vertical, diagonal and introspective dimensions in the world and how the author lets the recipient perceive and evaluate this. We will also learn to understand how ritual and narrative influence each other, how ritual practices are restaged, how author and recipient develop resonant relation and how poetological statements (Robert 2015) can thus be read in a new light.

The focus of the project will be on a specific narrative element, the *ekphrasis*. Ancient *ekphrasis* was and is a well-tilled field of research (e.g. Webb 2009; Squire 2009; Koopmann 2018; Harrison 2020). Nevertheless, the conceptual context provided by the IGDK, and especially the *new four foci* of the second phase, will offer a fresh perspective. In all genres of ancient epic poetry sacred places are described, where a person (usually a character of the plot) perceives and locates himself in relation to the world, mute or resonant. The question will not be how and what kind of sacred places are described and what role the descriptions play within the text. It will also be examined how the description itself restages the on-site-visit for the reader, viz. how the experience can be *repeated*, and how the reader can experience axes of self–world relations as resonant or if he can merely observe them from the outside, mute to himself. The effect of these poetic passages may create *second-order resonance*. As described places are often places where power is negotiated, the interaction of *power, agency and resonance* becomes relevant. And the description of place, though fictitious, puts materiality to the fore.

These places often serve as poetological images for the poem or for poetry itself, hence the approach of the IGDK offers the innovative possibility to discuss metapoetic questions. In the context of the resonance theoretical heuristic, a new impulse will be gained by including modern sociological theories on emotion. The new methodology of this project will not only have a most welcome impulse on narratological research, it will also enrich the questions provided by resonance theory. The project itself will be specified based on the existing knowledge and interests of the PhD student, e.g. one period, one author, one kind of sacred place or a comparative study on exemplary descriptions from various texts. Possible texts are from the Roman (early) Imperial period and (pagan and Christian) Late Antiquity.

In *Aen.* 8,347ff. we are presented, e.g., with virtual temples while wandering through a not-yet existing Rome with Euander and Aeneas; although the temples are not there (yet) the characters feel the numinous atmosphere of the place and the recipient feels the diachronic relevance. Other texts describe existing monuments, for example Paulus Silentiarius and Venantius Fortunatus. These examples are particularly interesting as they offer the possibility to compare pagan and Christian authors as well as Greek literature from the east and Latin literature from the west. The PhD candidate could analyse what happens on the different axes and levels of self–world relations when a recipient reads *ekphraseis* of sacred places in epic and when the epic – through the narrative – becomes a sacred place itself, wherein the reader finds himself wandering around in admiration.

**Collaborations:** Possible collaborations include Irmtraud Fischer, Jürgen Martschukat and Franz Winter on textual practices, Jörg Rüpke on community-making, Jutta Vinzent and Verena Weidner on aestheticism.

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### ***Sonuere tactae*. Ancient Fable Collections as Resonant Narratives**

The advantage to investigate the interaction of narrative and ritual with a combination of traditional literary-narratological approaches with heuristic usage of the concept of resonance has been outlined in the first paragraph of the showcase above. It might be surprising to examine ancient fables in the context of socio-religious practices. But the topics the IGDK focussed on in the second phase can be examined in this genre very clearly. It must be said first that on the one hand against common opinion not only animals act in ancient fables, but also men and gods and that we find depictions of ritual practices, and that on the other hand socio-religious actions are visualised in animal fables and are interpreted or judged in the pro- or epimythia.

In the Latin fable collections of Phaedrus and Avian or in the Greek collection of ‘Aesop’ or Babrius one can examine resonant relationships in different ways: How and what religious/ritual practices are described or restaged? Can we find contemporary influences? Are there any traces of social contextualisations? How do the characters use these religious/ritual practices to experience resonant self–world relations? How is all this reflected on – by the characters themselves, the intra- and extradiegetic narrators or the author and in the pro- or epimythia? How is the recipient invited to reflect on it or to relive resonant experiences, viz. how do fables make ‘offers of resonance’? How is this used on the levels of production and reception to locate the implied author and recipient?

The four topics ‘repetition’, ‘second-order resonance’, ‘power, agency and resonance’ and ‘materiality’ can be treated in a twofold strategy. First, one can examine if and how these aspects are treated in the texts themselves. Second (and more interesting) one can show that fables are a genre where all of these topics are important or even constituting. Fables are means of argumentation relying on visualisation and figuralisation. They belong in a didactic context and are (allegedly) supposed to be *repeated*, i.e. retold. Often, we find in fables themselves settings where fables are told to recipients experiencing existential situations of self–world relations. The *re-telling*, transmission and modification of those fables becomes part of the collective memory. Thus, fables can be – perhaps more than other genres as they are meant to be adaptable – a field of *second order resonance* by making ‘offers of resonance’. As one of the main topics in fables is power, the negotiation of *power, agency and resonance* is more or less intrinsic, and the questions can be how fables themselves are instrumentalised to serve these negotiations. Finally, materiality plays an important role in the world of fables; on the other hand, every text and book as material becomes essential in the diagonal dimension and at the same time opens up certain spaces of resonance for cultural communities.

In the end one could ask how (implied) statements about resonance become statements about poetology. In Phaedrus (app. 14) an ass finds a lyre but complains that he is no artist and so the discovery is lost to the world – no resonance in whatever dimension. The playing of music has lost its role in social (and maybe also religious) practice. But at least he tried the chords with his

hoof and they did resonate just like a poem of a poet (who disguises himself as a poet as bad as an unmusical ass) can make an offer of resonance: *sonuere tactae*.

The PhD student could e.g. examine these questions in one of the fables collections or follow one of these topics through the various collections. Scholarship has long neglected ancient fables (for an introduction cf. Holzberg 2012; for Phaedrus cf. Gärtner 2015; Gärtner 2015 [2017]; for Babrios cf. Holzberg 2019), and all of these questions have not yet been exhaustively researched (for some aspects cf. Morgan 2013 and 2015).

**Collaborations:** The project will profit from conceptions of sacred places as dealt with by Wolfgang Spickermann or Peter Scherrer. Ekphrastic techniques can be discussed with Georgia Petridou, whereas the concepts of aesthetic experience will need the expertise of Stephan Moebius and Hartmut Rosa. Analyses of metaphoric language and multi-sensoric religious experience in a comparative approach can also profit from Franz Winter and Verena Weidner.

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## Christoph Heil

### The Resonance of Eating and Drinking in Early Christianity and its Ancient Contexts

‘In Gottesdiensten und religiösen Riten, etwa im Abendmahl oder beim Segen, verbinden sich mit der ‘Erfahrung‘ vertikaler Tiefenresonanz sowohl *horizontale* Resonanzachsen zwischen den Gläubigen, die sich etwa im christlichen Kulturkreis in der „Kommunion“ als Gemeinde konstituieren, als auch *diagonale* Resonanzbeziehungen’ (Rosa 2016, 443). Building on this sociological insight, the possible dissertation project will treat the questions: What are the elements of early Christian meals which provided the potential of resonance? What made the early Christian groups with their understanding of purity and dietary laws attractive in ancient urban contexts?

For instance, in contrast to other associations, it was possible for Christ-believers to attend ritual meals in other cities without being newly initiated into the local cult association. Baptism was obviously considered by early Christians as a one-time and universal initiation into the church, which was seen as a local and a universal entity. This view was probably established in the church of Antioch and further substantiated by its most prominent member, the Apostle Paul, in his theology of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the letters of Paul (especially Galatians 2:11-21 in connection with Galatians 2:1-10; First Corinthians 8:11–11:1; Romans 14:1–15:13) will provide the central basis for the dissertation, although the apostle’s contexts and dispositions (Jewish and Graeco-Roman meals, Jesus traditions [Mark 2:15-17; 7:1-23; Q 7:33-35; 11:39b, 41]) have to be investigated also. In addition, it should be asked which resonance axes constructed by Paul and his communities using ritual meals received active reception in later generations (1st and 2nd c. AD) and which not – and why.

While the religio-historical contexts of eating and drinking in Paul’s communities has been intensively investigated (see for instance Eschner 2019; Heil 1994; Al-Suadi, Smit 2019), it remains a worthwhile project to do research on its social meanings. For instance, newer approaches using network theories seem to open up new understandings (see for instance Kloppenborg 2019).

**Collaborations:** Jürgen Martschukats’s interest in the body and food is helpful for a potential doctoral researcher. Irmtraud Fischer’s expertise in Jewish (textual) traditions as well as Wolfgang Spickermann’s and Peter Scherrer interests in cult organization(s) will be as useful as Jörg Rüpke’s focus on urbanity.

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### **The Resonance of Praying in Early Christianity and its Ancient Contexts**

Basically, religion is a form of communication (Rüpke 2016, 20 and *passim*) between human(s) and the divine, but of course also a horizontal communication by which humans affirm their own self–world relations. Prayer is one of the most important rituals of religious communication, and in its felicitous performance it is a typical moment of ‘Verflüssigung der Selbst-Welt-Beziehung’ (Rosa 2016, 441). The proposed dissertation topic asks how prayer in the early Jesus tradition (Synoptic Gospels and Sayings Gospel Q) and in the letters of the apostle Paul function as ritualised, social communication. In Q, for instance, we find the Lord’s Prayer (Q 11:2b-4) which is followed by a short commentary which emphasises the certainty that the fatherly God will answer petitions made to him (Q 11:9-13). In the context of the commandment to love one’s enemies, in Q 6:28 Jesus commands his hearers to pray for their persecutors.

The investigation of the Jesus tradition can build upon a network of scholars – mainly, but not exclusively connected to the International Q Project – who convened in Graz 2017 for an international conference on ‘Prayer in the Sayings Gospel Q’ (Smith and Heil 2019). Comparisons with ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman literary texts as well as documentary papyri conveyed a strong connection of prayers from the early Jesus tradition to the daily world of villagers and their concerns. This study of the historical, social and rhetorical meaning of prayer texts from Q should be expanded to other New Testament prayers texts in order to evaluate their potential for resonance with ancient and contemporary persons.

The project will bring in evidence from early Christian prayer into a ‘lived religion approach’ to ancient prayer (see Patzelt 2018a; Patzelt 2018b). Without mentioning the ‘lived religion approach’, Kloppenborg and Bazzana argue in the above-mentioned volume ‘Prayer in the Sayings Gospel Q’ that the prayers in Q require individually embodied competence for performing them. Like Patzelt they propose that the individual competence of performing prayer in Q results from rhetoric skills which must be analysed in context. Kloppenborg and Bazzana suggest finding this context in the documentary papyri from Egypt (Bazzana 2019; Kloppenborg 2019).

The same questions can be asked regarding prayers in Paul’s letters. Compared to the Jesus tradition, his prayer language is more intensively coloured by the prayer language of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint, but also Paul conveys elements of ‘lived religion’ enhanced by individual rhetorical competence.

It seems worthwhile to investigate the prayers in the Jesus tradition and in the Pauline letters from this point of view in order to describe the active resonance they created in the history of their reception.

**Collaborations:** Ursula Gärtner’s expertise in how texts are performed and perceived offers points of reference for this project as well as religious studies resp. history represented by Franz

Winter and Jörg Rüpke and Georgia Petridou on aspects of lived ancient religion, Irmtraud Fischer on power relations.

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## Georgia Petridou

### The 'lived body' in pain: Narrating gout-induced pain in the Second Sophistic

The body, and the individual's embodied successful or unsuccessful resonance relationships with the world (also known as muted resonance or alienation, Rosa 2019, 9 and 16), have been of cardinal importance in Hartmut Rosa's Resonance theory. Indeed, the entire chapter 3 of Rosa 2019 has been devoted to the exploration of bodily resonances. The 'lived body' is a concept I have borrowed from Meredith McGuire (1990), a sociologist of religion, who uses this term to express the idea of the material body as both the vehicle for perceiving and interpreting social reality and also the only means of anchoring human experience in reality. This project employs recent research in history of religion (Petridou 2017) and socio-anthropology (Throop 2010, 2015; Rosa 2019) and treats the surge of interest in the body and its care in the Second Sophistic not as a new development but as a testament to the diachronic resonance of old, trusted and time-resistant religious ideas of the body as whole when healthy, fragmented when ill, and safe at moments of crisis only when being in the vicinity of the gods (Petridou 2017).

Gout-induced pain – a lingering and extremely painful, but rarely lethal, disease – has provided ample opportunity for disparagement and ridicule in the Graeco-Roman world. The main reason for this is that gout was an illness traditionally associated with a rich diet and sedentary lifestyle. Gout was therefore dubbed the 'patrician malady' (Porter and Rousseau 1998). But how did it really feel to suffer from acute and chronic gout-induced pain that often leads to debilitating disability? This project aims to answer this question by targeting narrative strategies (dramatisation, comical subversion, etc.) that relate the individual experience of pain in the ancient world, while laying extra emphasis on gout-induced pain in the 1st and 2nd c. AD (Petridou 2018, 2020). To that end, the student undertaking this project would be encouraged to survey one or more pieces of key literary (e.g. Pliny's *Letters*, the letters of Marcus Aurelius and Fronto; Lucian's *Philopseudes* and *Podagra*, etc.) and epigraphic evidence (e.g. inscriptions from healing sanctuaries) from this period (Renberg 2017). The main aim is to showcase the high impact that gout-related pain has on the 'lived bodies' of sufferers. Excellent comparative material for the synchronic conceptual framing of gout as an illness and gout-induced pain can be provided by contemporary and earlier medical treatises and philosophical works (e.g. Aretaeus' *On the Causes and the Signs of Acute Diseases*; Galen's *Commentary to the Hippocratic Aphorisms* and *On Simple Drugs*; Celsus' *De Medicina*; Seneca's *Letters*, etc.).

Alternatively, the student may like to explore magico-religious practises used to alleviate gout-induced pain, such as Greek protective incantations (*epoidai*) inscribed in amulets or on personal objects such as rings. In these incantations, podagra ('gout') is usually personified and ordered to flee (Collins 2008; Dasen 2019; Faraone 2018). All in all, this project employs the basic framework of bodily resonances to argue that gout-induced pain, whether theatrically re-enacted, comically



subverted, stoically tolerated, or exorcised by extreme medical and magico-religious measures, seemed to have impacted heavily on the lives of the individuals affected by it.

**Collaborations:** The IGDK presents itself as the ideal hub for research activity of this sort, since the student will benefit from collaborations with other PhD projects centred on conceptions of health and bodily identity, like the one led by Jürgen Martschukat, as well as projects on sanctuaries and initiation rituals in the 2nd c. AD like the one headed by Wolfgang Spickermann.

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### **Resonance, Politics, and Processions: Processional Performance and Democratic Crisis in Ancient Athens**

In the second phase of our project, extra emphasis is given on second-order resonance, characterised by references to personal or cultural memory of resonant experiences. Hence, the proposed project's close engagement with the crisis the early Athenian democracy faced in the Archaic Classical and Hellenistic periods. As Rosa (2019) rightly notes, the current crisis in modern Western type democracies is to an extent responsible for the alienation the individual experiences in the world.

The student undertaking this project will be strongly encouraged to consider the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Athens as periods of intense renegotiation of power (*kratos* in Greek). A plethora of evidence (literary, epigraphic, and material) attests to this period as a prime example of socio-political unrest with socio-religious agents and practises constantly been called upon to provide momentary relief or permanent resolution (Cartledge 2018; Jameson 2014; Lawton 1996 and 2017). In particular, this project targets the intersections of ancient epiphanic festivals and processions (Petridou 2015), the steadfast expectations of the divine taking an interest in human affairs, as well as the resonant political relationships established via civic processions and rituals, and aims at re-examining and redefining the relational dynamics between ritual, resonance, and symbolic action. Processional performance, thus, becomes the main prism through which processions can be construed as tools for construction of new or appropriation of old ritual schemata, and effective mechanisms of creation of synchronic resonant relationships or societal alienation.

The student engaging with the project may like to compare earlier applications of modern sociological theory (e.g. Cultural Pragmatics theory as postulated by Alexander 2004 and Alexander, Giesen and Mast 2006) on ancient history of politics and societal organisation with Rosa's Resonance theory (2019). Alternatively, the student may like to focus on one of more periods of critical importance for the Athenian political history and investigate how resonant relationships in the vertical axis (e.g. political leaders claiming to enjoy an intimate relationship with divine) affect and impact on the formation of intersubjective resonant relations (i.e. relations of the Athenian citizens with their political leaders and each other). The student could focus, for instance, on the epiphanic procession that led the exiled Athenian *tyrannos* Peisistratus back to Athens in the 550s BC (Hdt. 1.60.2-5), re-evaluate recent socio-anthropological perspectives and reading of the procession (Connor 1987), and look afresh at the symbolic polyvalence of the epiphanic procession that led the exiled tyrant back to Athens and the Athenian political scene. If seen within the methodological and analytical framework of Rosa's resonance, for instance, the Phye procession could cease being an elaborate masquerade and become a powerful tool of meaningful negotiation of power between the people (*demos*) and their leaders; a meaningful expression of mutual consent enacted as a civic ritual.

Other alternative thematic stands include examining and deciphering the ritual grammar of other epiphanic processions that increased the agency of the individual political actors and ensured privileged relationship with the divine, thus legitimising their course of political action (Blok 2000). One such example could be the festive procession that led Thrasyboulus and the exiled democrats back to Athens in 403 BC (Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.39 and Lys. 13.80-81 with Kavoulaki 1999).

**Collaborations:** The IGDK presents itself as the ideal hub for research activity of this sort, since the student undertaking this project will benefit from collaborations with several specialists of ancient history of religions both at Erfurt and Graz, such as Kai Brodersen, Christoph Heil, Jörg Rüpke, Wolfgang Spickerman, and Markus Vinzent.

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## Laerke Recht

### The archaeology of private religion in ancient Mesopotamia

Much is known about public religion in ancient Mesopotamia. Large impressive temples placed on platforms and towering ziggurats shaped the skyline even from afar, clearly marking public sacred space. Along with extensive administrative archives recording many details of temple administration and ritual calendars, these are some of the hallmarks of Mesopotamian culture. Festivals, patron deities and the main elements of the pantheon are thus well-documented, and much has been written about them by modern scholars. Private religion has received much less attention, not least because it did not require detailed record-keeping, and has therefore left a much smaller textual legacy. Traditionally, the archaeology of households and other private areas have not been the focus of excavations, although this has changed increasingly over the last few decades.

This project will examine private religion through a systematic spatial and contextual analysis of the archaeology of private sacred spaces that have been excavated to date. Such spaces consist of shrines and sanctuaries located among or closely associated with domestic areas or 'neighbourhoods', as well as religious installations within households (for example altars and offering tables, foundation deposits and tombs below houses). These provide evidence for regular interaction with the divine sphere, supernatural elements, and ancestors.

Sites from both southern and northern Mesopotamia will be investigated, including Ur, Mari, Ebla, Tell Asmar and Abu Salabikh, among others. Beside the architectural evidence, the material culture associated with the performance of ritual in such spaces will be analysed, in particular votive figurines and remains of offerings. While the focus will be on the archaeological and material culture remains, textual evidence will be used in an integrated fashion to support and deepen the study where relevant.

The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of ritual action and performance and the possible resulting experiences of resonance. Moving beyond a Cartesian mind-body dichotomy, the theoretical framework will see ritual action as embodied action. The in-depth analysis of the private religious spaces will seek to reveal the archaeological and material expression of such action and its impact on the everyday lives of private citizens.

The physical remains constitute meaningful means of engagement, and here the concept of materiality is particularly useful, seeing a dynamic relationship involving objects, humans and deities. Corresponding experiences of resonance will work primarily on Rosa's *existential* level of resonance, with the *material* level playing a crucial part as well. This approach allows for an interpretation of embodied experiences in the past through material culture; it also re-directs attention from the minority elite to the broader population and their engagement with and experiences of religion on a daily basis.

**Collaborations:** with Peter Scherrer on material culture, with Christoph Heil and Irmtraud Fischer on private religious practices, with Jörg Rüpke on lived religion, with Stephan Moebius on the sociology of religion.

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### **The cult of cattle in Bronze Age Cyprus: Base Ring 'bull' rhyta in context**

Cattle featured dominantly in cult and ritual practices in prehistory and early historical periods across Europe and western Asia. Already these early practices hint at a more complex relation between humans and bovines that is far beyond the procurement of calories; one that involved experiences of resonance at least on the human side. This is expressed both in the faunal record and in iconography, where especially the characteristic and easily recognisable horns become a potent symbol. Cattle resonated with humans in a particular way and became an integral part of a more sedentary lifestyle.

On the island of Cyprus, cattle were briefly but unsuccessfully introduced in the earlier phases of the Neolithic at a select few sites, but soon disappear from the faunal record. They do not arrive again until the beginning of the Bronze Age, at which point they also occur in the representational record as animal figurines. In the Late Bronze Age, there was a great expansion in both type and quantity of animal iconography in the eastern Mediterranean in general, and in Cyprus in particular, with new media being added to or adapted in Cypriot traditions.

During Late Cypriot I-III A (c. 1700-1200 BC), a very specific type of animal-shaped vessel was produced, typically referred to as a 'Base Ring bull rhyton'. The type and ware developed from previous ceramic production traditions, and on the surface appears to become quite standardised. The hollow bovine shape typically has two openings, suitable for pouring or libation purposes. 'Bull' is a misnomer in that male genitals are only rendered on some examples. While the majority of the 'Base Ring bull rhyta' do not have a known provenance, most of the ones with a good context come from tombs or mortuary-related structures, testifying to their value in funerary rituals. About 200 'Base Ring bull rhyta' are known, but have not yet been collected and studied consistently as a complete corpus. This project will do just this, systematically collecting all accessible examples through museum research. Detailed archaeological description and visualisation will form the basis for the project's research questions: Why were cattle in particular meaningful and suitable for ritual? How were the rhyta used and what do they reveal about relations between objects, animals, humans and the supernatural?

In a material culture without a textual record, a great variety of tomb types, and a lack of standardised and easily identifiable religious structures, much is still to be learned about ritual practices and the role of animals in Bronze Age Cyprus. This project will therefore be a valuable contribution to this topic. The rhyta are particularly suitable for this kind of study not only because they form a consistent and neatly delimited assemblage, but also because they work on several ontological levels. It is clear from the contexts and design that bovine-shaped rhyta were the source of experiences of resonance and were assigned some level of agency. They were symbolically meaningful and potentially transformative agents.

The encounter between rhyton and human involves the malleability of clay and daily experience of cattle, and the performative aspect includes the manipulation of liquids, and display and

visibility in the ritual action. In the latter, the vessel may act both as a transformer and as a mediator. This hybridity will be a recurrent theme. The resonance conjured in these encounters may work at all the three levels identified by Rosa: *social* (here understood as meaningful relations with animals), *material* in relation to a certain type of object; and *existential* in its cultic aspect. The project is expected to further develop the levels of resonance in the light of human-nonhuman animal interactions.

**Collaborations:** with Jörg Rüpke on rituals, with Stephan Moebius on sacralisation and burial, and Jutta Vinzent on resonance and materiality.

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## Jörg Rüpke

### Is the city wall the end of the world? Rituals thematising, neglecting or appropriating a physical boundary

**Problems and research questions:** Massive and extended walls were the defining element of many urban settlements, that is, rendered larger, a 'city'. This holds true for the urban networks of the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean world, but likewise for many, but not all urban cultures from Bronze Age China through the Indus civilisation (e.g. Harappa) to Mesopotamia and the Western most provinces of the Roman Empire. Typically, such walls were the largest investment in terms of material and labour of these cities and seen as the most powerful visual dimension of the respective urban society. At the same time, the ritual thematisation seems to be very uneven; religious practices frequently stress the permeability or even appropriated the materiality of the wall for illegitimate ritual usage. Against this background a doctoral project might ask: How was the physical and often legal boundary of urban society inculcated in religious and non-religious ritual practices – and which was the relationship of the two? How did religious rituals translate the physical barrier into transcendent or social self–world relations, including relations of gender and power? Who were the agents of such practices?

Two **hypotheses** inform this research: a) City-wall related religious rituals were a field of contestation between singularising and pluralising agents. b) The materiality of the wall is ritually related to the monumentality of religious architecture within and beyond the city.

How could the topic be **approached**? The topic needs the integration of archaeological data, including graffiti and individual modifications in the form of burials, shrines or paintings attached to walls or gates, with literary and iconographical representations of city-walls. The focus needs to be on the reconstruction of ritual practices and, as far as possible through the tools of lived-religion methodology, experiences of such practices by different agents.

In the analysis of such archaeological and literary evidence the performance and habitualisation of mute or resonant relationships needs to be seen through ways of dealing with the materiality, the orientation of the space used, and the imagery and metaphorical use of wall images. Particular attention is to be paid to spatial metaphors of high and low, inside and outside, beyond and behind, as well as metaphors of movement of through, underneath or over the wall.

**Collaborations:** - diachronic and conceptual comparison: Stephan Moebius (habitualisation)

- archaeology: Peter Scherrer (construction and modification)

- metaphorical language: Ursula Gärtner (Latin literature), Markus Vinzent (Patristic literature)

- materiality: Irmtraud Fischer (Biblical texts), Georgia Petridou (Greek literature)

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## **Is there somebody else out there? Polemics and counter-polemics on ancient astral religion**

**Problems and research questions:** Manifold Roman ritual practices were addressing or using the sun or moon, stars or other celestial or meteorological phenomena in the sky for a variety of religious purposes: astrology or other forms of divination, from lightning for instance, or simple prayer. The 'sky' in all its agency, its movements, meteorological activities supplied in many cultures a privileged and easily ritualised axis for a vertical resonance, in particular for large-scale political rituals. However, before the advanced imperial period, astral cults were not accorded any relevance for Roman religion, above all in scholarship that treated all these phenomena separately. Against this background a doctoral project might ask: Which role did ritual practices concerning the sky play in establishing vertical, transcendent and encompassing, relationship with a horizon beyond the actual social and spatial boundaries? Who were the agents of such rituals, patrons and further participants, and which type of power relations were involved? Which materialities were employed in such rituals addressed to unreachable addressees?

Two **hypotheses** inform this research: a) On an intellectual level, criticism (and defence) of astrology and *katasterismos* forms part of discourses and practices constituting not only the resonant or mute character of relationships with the cosmos, but also relationships of power. And b) on a larger social scale the cosmic dimension of self—world-relations is appropriated and articulated in ritual practices and objects such as representations (paintings, lamps, jewellery worn on the body, horoscopes written on tables or papyrus) involved in the entertaining of such relationships. In both cases issues of gender find an expression in such practices and conceptualisations.

How could the topic be **approached**, given the high technicality of many of the relevant texts? I suggest analysing protreptic, apologetic or polemical passages of or against astrological texts, but also references on relationships of self and cosmos and narratives about *katasterismoï*. That is to say, it is necessary to combine the focus on literary texts with epigraphic and archaeological evidence, cutting across the usual thematic boundaries of 'astrology and divination', 'religion', 'emperor/ruler cult', 'sun worship' or 'calendar'.

In reading this literary and non-literary evidence the theory of mute/resonant relationships can be used to interpret and compare conceptualisations of interaction, loss of human volition and the critique of such postulation of interaction and attribution of agency to both humans and cosmos. The concepts of (precarious) knowledge and primitive intellectuals can be used to socially locate the status of such discourses which were rarely official and established.

### **Collaborations:**

- comparison: Hartmut Rosa (axes of resonance)
- narratives: Christoph Heil (conversion narratives)

- *ekphraseis*: Ursula Gärtner (Latin literature)

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**Peter Scherrer**

**Privatisation of salvation: Religious communities as axes of resonance in the Roman Imperial period**

Beginning in the late 1st and more broadly from the 2nd century AD onwards, it is possible to trace an increasing presence of small sanctuaries on private ground or even as part of upper class dwellings, appearing often more or less simultaneously in different city districts of urban spaces in the Imperium Romanum. Most of these emerging complexes consisted of a temple or a treasure house with a cultic image and dedicated votive offerings, an assembly or dining room and a courtyard closed off from the outside world. In many cases, those sanctuaries are not only attached to private homes, but participate in their infrastructure like heatings, gardens or kitchens. They house various cults, frequently ones of the so-called Oriental (e.g. Dolichenus), or Egyptian (e.g. Isis and Sarapis) religions of salvation, or Mithras. But also Silvanus and the *Viae*, Mercurius or other 'Roman' gods and goddesses are venerated. It might be possible that the so-called house churches or oratoria of early Christianity benefitted from or were generated by the contemporary pagan structures serving as meeting points within the various town's districts. In any case it becomes obvious that the cult practises and rituals performed in these complexes contrast strongly with what was seen as the official cult of Rome and lokal *civitates* (polis-religion). They stand witness for a systematic privatisation of faith, cult and ritual in the high and late Imperial Era. A comprehensive study of the phenomenon of the different cults and religious groups has not yet been undertaken. Existing approaches always focussed on one specific cult while general sociological phenomena were not part of the considerations. But it seems that privacy and local connections in a city's quarter (*vicus*) became more and more important instead of the citizen's official duties in the service of the Emperor, as the early *Augustales* had been. In times where the emperors changed quickly and their reputation often suffered, from the late 2nd c. AD onwards, the process might have accelerated even more. In many provincial towns founded by the emperors from Hadrian or the Severan dynasty onwards nearly no official, large-size temple building and sacred courtyard can be found. The official cult seems to have been reduced to some locality in the *forum*, but no *area sacra* of comparable size is installed (e.g. Carnuntum) anymore. If supposed *Capitolia* or Imperial temples were built at all, then they emerged quite often on the outer limits of the town and probably their erection was due to an Emperor's visit or other accidental occasions. Thus, not only religious behaviour changed, but the social and political role of Roman citizens on the whole, esp. after the *constitutio Antoniniana*.

A specific explanation of this model of cultic grouping, architecturally as well as sociologically, might be the Roman habit of *pater familias* on the one hand, and of the patron–client system on the other. The traditional liability in sacred affairs and the overall responsibility for his *familia* (in the ancient denotation) and clients made the *pater familias* an ideal *pater* of a privately organised *collegium cultorum* of whatever god or goddess. Thus he not only provided for an adequate

locality, but also for the furnishing of the meetings with the ritual instrumentation, the preparation of meals, and many other necessary processes and instruments. Thus, naturally, the owner of a dwelling housing accommodation for ritual meetings of relatively limited groups of normally less than hundred participants must be identified as *sacerdos* of such groups, who not accidentally is often called *pater* (e.g. in Mithraism).

The success of religions and cultic groups, who promised afterlife and salvation, was very much embedded in the change of society in different ways. So a dissertation project dealing with the distribution of this specific cultic and religious architecture, the form and functions of these sacred places, the upgrading of corporate cultic meals and furnishment for rituals are subjects of fruitful discussions between sociology, religious history and religious studies, Classical Philology, that may allocate relevant texts, and archaeology/architectural history, to see if these texts match or contribute to our understanding of the sacred rooms. Thus, it could be detected how these groups prepared their rituals in the hope for resonant experiences.

Not to overburden the dissertation, a case study with focus on Mithraism, whose liturgy is relatively well known in comparison to most 'oriental cults', might be enough for the main body of the work, in a concluding chapter an analytic comparison to other cults with similar architecture might widen the spectrum.

**Collaborations:** with Wolfgang Spickermann and Franz Winter on cultic groups, with Jörg Rüpke on rituals, with Laerke Recht on sacred topography.

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### **Living in paradises – late antique imagery as reflections of life and afterlife**

In many categories of ancient literature, by far more in Greek than in Latin, the desire for an afterlife in the Elysium is a frequent theme. Beginning with orphic and other mysterious or religious texts (including various inscriptions like the Derveni Papyrus), which occur from the early archaic to late antique times, but also in philosophy from Parmenides to the Neoplatonism, in Homer (esp. Ulysses and Achilles at the gates to the underworld) as well as in tragedy, poetry, and rhetoric scripts, the sources tell of a desperate need for hope related to the afterlife.

On the other hand, archaeology has brought to light a vast number of private houses and also public buildings in sacred precincts, prytaneia and other banquet halls (to mention only the most important types), which contain groups of rooms with programmatic furnishings in mosaics, wall paintings, and sculptural adornments hinting at Dionysic or similar conceptions of an (after)life in paradise. Especially in the luxurious households of the senatorial order in late antique countryside (*villae urbanae*), like the Villa Casale near Piazza Armerina in Sicily, but also already in dwellings of the municipal aristocracy (like the 'Terrace House II' in Ephesos) in the 2nd and 3rd century AD we may trace the urgent will to form one's environment with depictions of myths appropriate for consolation.

There is abundant research literature about that phenomenon, even if – due to fragmentary preservation or excavation – archaeological cases where we can follow the contents of the whole program are rare. But it would bring a completely new note to the discussion if the concept of resonance could be related to these houses. To ask what in detail had been the ideas behind the stony legacy, to reconstruct the direction ways in which the patron and his family or guests were going, what was the role of architecture (including gardens, porticoes etc.) and its adornments, what was the core of actions in daily life or festivals. Was there a wish for resonant experiences and how could one manage to get a chance for repeating those moments? Certainly, they read or declaimed the texts, stored in the private library, performed theater-plays, executed processions, and most of all, had symposia, during which all the declamations and performances took place. But how could the architectural framework help in these efforts, to have more than a good time, but to catch a glimpse of salvation as hope for what would happen after death?

The dissertation project is designed to reconstruct this role of architecture (gates, courtyards, gardens, peristyles, corridors, assembly and banquet halls and small niches, dark rooms without windows and so on), in asking what function at what stage of a ritualised meeting, religious ceremony and/or banquet it might fulfill. The solution lies in retracing the way of guests and processions through the house, the single stations and the final place(s) where the expected divine appearance (*epiphania*) or other experiences might happen. The endowment of rooms, depicting gods and goddesses, the myths of heroes and half-gods who overcame death, returned from Hades or, at best, became Olympic gods like Hercules and Dionysos, must have had a certain arrangement from a starting point escalating emotions and expectations till the grand final



in a 'sacred' place. These places might, most likely, have been niches and rooms with glass-mosaics showing Dionysos and Ariadne in Paradise or similar sceneries.

**Collaborations:** The dissertation must be supervised by both a philologist and an archaeologist but will much profit from religious studies including theology, philosophy and sociology as well. So, the whole group of PIs can and shall be involved in aiding the young scholar and discussing methodology as well as preliminary results.

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## **Wolfgang Spickermann**

### **Local tradition and re-formation of (sacred) space: border sanctuaries as centres of resonance**

This project deals with 'Border sanctuaries' as markers of a new territorial order as well as of a traditional 'religious landscape' throughout Antiquity. Situated at the very periphery of different communities, these cult areas were used as local centers by the rural society for cultural, economic, and sometimes even legal purposes, but most of all for common cult and public events often with theater performances and probably sports competitions. The formation of a (new) sacral landscape delimited by sanctuaries on the borders of city territories, provinces, civitates etc. forms a basis for studies on **horizontal (communities)** and **diagonal (landscape, architecture, borders)** axes of resonance. An example for such sacred spaces is the Martberg sanctuary on the border between the new Roman Civitas Treverorum and the new province of Germania Superior.

#### **Core hypotheses:**

1) Public cults played a significant role in rural areas and might be important in establishing horizontal and vertical relationships. 2) 'Border sanctuaries' for public cults and related events could also mark and demonstrate a new territorial order aside from previous religious and political relations. 3) Especially in the Gallic and German Provinces of the Roman Empire these 'Border sanctuaries', normally in the form of monumental temples and other large buildings like theatres, had a special function for the Romanisation of traditional tribal communities. 4) Especially the recurring festivals were often connected with rituals that on the one hand served to strengthen the corporate identity of the rural communities and on the other hand to establish a connection to the empire and its rulers.

#### **Sources and methods:**

Methodologically, research will analyse the construction and decoration of sanctuaries and their environment marking a sacral or political boundary, as well as the religious practices that took place there, from the point of view of resonant self–world relations. Are there, in addition, detectable differences between the religious practices of men and women belonging to different groups of worshippers in border sanctuaries? The major aim of the dissertation – or, ideally, regionally differentiated dissertations – is to analyze the construction and decoration of sanctuaries marking a sacral or political boundary, as well as the religious practices that took place there, and for which we have archaeological or epigraphic evidence, from the point of view of resonant self–world relations.

**Collaborations:** With regard to the role played by art and sports events and the element of leaving everyday acting space and connected rituals, this line of analysis profits enormously, on the one hand, from the studies of the community building function of those events and the analysis

of sports and society by Jürgen Martschukat who would be my co-advisor, the 'bowls of hysteria' project (Hartmut Rosa), and on the other from the 'privatisation of salvation' project put forward by Peter Scherrer. Regarding the religio-historical analysis of healing and body cults, the project offers ample opportunities to interconnect with the project proposed by Georgia Petridou.

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### **Worshipping Women in the Roman Empire: Ritual and cult**

This project relates to one of my most enduring research interests, which I have been pursuing since working on my dissertation 'Mulieres ex voto' in 1994. In the context of gender research, the fundamental question is whether the religious practices of women differs from that of men. This determines a large part of the research literature on gender and religion that has been published until now. In this context, it is of great importance whether there were specific women's cults, such as the Bona Dea cult, which is still found outside Rome, for example, in Glanum, Arles and Aquileia for purely female communities. In Lyon, Lectoure and Alzey, women in the local Magna Mater communities have apparently introduced their own new rituals. A stone relief from Bonn shows a circle of worshipping women in front of the statues of the three matrons. What specific priestly offices did women hold in contrast to men, and above all: what rituals were associated with them? In classical Athens, where the sources are relatively good, the exhibition 'Worshipping women: ritual and reality in classical Athens' (December 10, 2008 - May 9, 2009) dealt with female piety and the rituals associated with it. The Magna Mater cult in Gaul was still called a 'school of feminism' in the last century. A systematic investigation of significant examples from parts of the Roman Empire can, for example, focus on whether and how women developed their own piety and whether certain religions and associated rituals had more resonance for women.

#### **Core hypotheses:**

1) Women are clearly in the minority in epigraphic material containing information on religious practices, accounting for about 10% of all consecrations. Nevertheless, votive inscriptions by women or mention of female cult officials in inscriptions contain important information about female piety and can be evaluated in comparison with votive inscriptions by men and couples. 2) Women were able to establish their own cult communities with their own cult functionaries, which can rarely be located archaeologically (e.g. Glanum). 3) Women could develop their own rituals in religious communities (Lyon, Lectoure, Alzey).

#### **Sources and methods:**

Methodologically, research will analyse mainly votive and donor inscriptions and archaeological images of women to get information about their religious practices and the places where they took place, from the point of view of resonant self–world relations. Are there, in addition, detectable differences between the religious practices of men and women belonging to different groups of worshippers in a sanctuary? The major aim of the dissertation – or, ideally, regionally and chronologically differentiated dissertations – is to analyze the votives and religious practices of women, for which we have archaeological or epigraphic evidence.

**Collaborations:** Cooperation is planned with Jörg Rüpke and Georgia Petridou for religion-historical aspects (Roman Imperial Religion, cultural history of the 2nd century AD) as well as

with Irmtraud Fischer with regard to gender research. There are overlaps with the interests of Jürgen Martschukat and Andreas Petternkofer in power relations and minorities.

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## Markus Vinzent

### Turning the driving agencies in a world of pandemics

Taking the frame of two pandemics of late antiquity (a. the so-called Antonine Plague, a type of smallpocks outbreak which probably killed a quarter of the population of the Roman Empire during the later 2nd century AD, and b. the so-called Plague of Cyprian, probably a disease similar to Ebola in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), has left us with a number of witnesses (historical descriptions, letters, sermons and inscriptions) which show how agencies rapidly changed and developed in a challenging socio-religious environment which impacted ritual practices, political and religious authorities, undermining the trusts in the so-called gods, creating new social relations with infected people, and working out hands-on new social and religious coordinated temporal units and spaces (Scherrer 2015), counteracting politically driven and practiced social distancing with religiously motivated care for the dying and the dead. Different self–world relations transformed self-locations in a world where political and social relative peace of over 200 years was suddenly disrupted on a then global scale. In both cases one can test how ritually supported horizontal, hierarchical and vertical axes have been shattered and new forms of ritual practices in differently layouted frames emerged. Moreover, reports from hundreds of years after these events show the deep memorisation of new settings that these pandemics created, and how entrenched they became in rethinking the past.

While over the past years, these pandemics have been researched from the perspectives of network theories, economics and politics, there is little research done in the area of early Christian, or religious historical and ritual studies.

**Collaborations:** Given that Vinzent is supervising four candidates from the first cohort with different co-supervisors, spanning antiquity to the contemporary times (Renzi, Heil, Fischer) shows already both that the subject area is in demand by students and that the kind of research is interdisciplinary and intratime related, exactly what the Graduate School aims at. Methodologically, the studies combine textual research, reception history, sociological and empirical case study work, again a mix that could hardly be done outside the type of scholarly environment that is provided by the Graduate School. Contentwise, the frameworks of resonance and ritual are great stimuli for approaching evidence and reflexion in novel ways.

In Erfurt, Vinzent cooperates with Georgia Petridou and Jürgen Martschukat on body and health practices. In Graz on the creation of temporal religious units with Peter Scherrer, on social practices surrounding death with Stephan Moebius.

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### **Dramatising, radicalising, individualising. Purpose and relation of non-historicising and historicising early Christian narratives**

Contemporary and antique narratives (both of non-historicising as well as historicising nature) share the attempt at reaching out to readers by drawing on dramatised, radicalised and individualised information. What does not cry out, does not overpaint in stark contrasts, does not focus on memorable events, does not recount wonders and surprises is rarely noted, copied, preserved, perhaps not even produced. Similarly, the meta-narratives of historical studies of these dramatised materials – both in antiquity as well as in contemporary settings – turn towards such material, often highlighting particularly the most dramatised parts of such narratives and evidences, consciously or unconsciously multiplying the inherent dramatised tendencies of the material at hand. Unsurprisingly, such pointed and sharpened world-views embed themselves in rituals, make up calendars and organise life's structures. Feasts are highlights of highlights, moment's of great experiences of the past (Exodus in Israel, the birth and resurrection of Christ in Christianity, 'Īd al-Adhā in Islam), the past is turned into moments of highlights. The question, of course, arises, about the nature of world relations that are implied in such constructions and reconstructions of pasts and futures. Which axes of world relations are muted, which are made to speak? In which ways does resonance as a metareflexion itself play towards an enforcing of a dramatised world, where what is mute is further muted and what resonates, rebounds and be moved to the fore? How does a perspective of resonance lend itself towards a criticism of headline truths, or conversely contributes to it?

Material to look at are classic or contemporary historiographical works of early Christianity and historiographies of the first millennium (Eusebius, Orosius, Gregory of Tours).

#### **Collaborations:**

In Erfurt, Vinzent shares interests with Jörg **Rüpke** and his concepts of religion and the ritual, with Hartmut Rosa and his concept of resonance applied to spectatorship and with Jürgen Martschukat who incorporates actor-network theories in his research.

In Graz, Vinzent would like to continue to cooperate with Stephan Moebius' expertise in sacralisation, Franz Winter's interest in religious texts and their reception and Peter Scherrer's concern with material culture.

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