THE ORDER OF RITUALS

THE INTERPRETATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

HANS-GEORG
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HANS-GEORG
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TRANSLATED BY MARA LUCKMANN

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Prologue

How Rituals are Ordered and the Order of Rituals

The “question of the subject” is woven into the network of contemporary social theory’s themes whose concepts and contents shine brightly—system and lifeworld; constructivism and deconstruction; discourse, code, and difference—as central line of inquiry, general theme, and leitmotif at the same time. It is the inquiry into the here and beyond of systems, codes, and discourses; into the names of the “authors”; into the concrete, materially incarnate “place” in which “it” thinks, writes, acts, and “processes”; into the agency that makes and must make a distinction between an “I” and an “other.”

The implicit and explicit ubiquitousness of this question is a reason, in the market of theories and schemes, why the “deconstruction of the subject” finds itself in immediate proximity to a simultaneously asserted, inflationary individualism (individualization of lifestyles, life situations, life stories, etc.). Moreover, as a result of the emphasis on a “de-subjectivization of the theory,” the subject who is supposed to have disappeared is theorized upon more fervently than ever. Finally, the observer of markets can enjoy the perfect presentations in which the theoreticians of subject-free concepts stage themselves as a decorated empty space for their theories: as bodily performatory existence of that which is not supposed to exist.

Turning to the “order of symbols and rituals” in the face of this situation could easily be mistaken for an attempt to enrich the “deconstruction of the subject” by yet another variant or by the analyses of “discourse codifications.” Yet nothing could be further from my intentions in the following chapters. Instead, my aim is, on the one hand, to pursue selected tracks on the paths to the contemporary belief or hope in an autonomous social subject. On the other hand, I shall also search for partial answers to the question of what efforts of order and orientation hold individualistically organized (purportedly atomized) societies together.

In doing so, I shall focus on those symbolic forms of (self-)presentation which at present permit us to bring enough order and clarity into the "new lack of clarity" conjured up by social critics (e.g. Habermas) that we feel quite comfortable in it.

Our society presents itself as unclear and unmanageable to all those who were (or are) still accustomed to seeing social order depicted in classes, strata, "central" groups or institutions, and who measure and classify the social world(s) according to "centers" and "margins." But human societies get caught up time and again in situations in which the traditional grids of order and stratifications lose their value and no longer serve as orientation for the individual. Situations like those can be found in the sixteenth and at the close of the eighteenth centuries in Central Europe, in which old orders give way to new ones, the social balance of power shifts, traditional hierarchies crumble and are replaced or destroyed by others.

Our times are not so very different *structurally* from those predecessors. Thus, in the United States, one has been able to observe for a long time now the development of a social structure pattern that is increasingly gaining importance in Western Europe, too: The social rise and fall of individuals is regulated less and less by stable, "hereditary" membership in classes or groups. The elevators of "vertical mobility" can no longer be rented beforehand and used exclusively by specific social groups. Drop-ins and drop-outs now belong to other and very various groups. They are evaluated more according to their future than according to their provenance. In addition, the "homemade mixture" of Western societies through global migrations receives a further, only temporarily "external" component: Mobility and variety, opposing interests and conflicts, dissimilarity and inequality, mass concentration and isolation, mechanisms of merging and exclusion are characteristic of these societies. The individual has to perform his own self-classification since the existing relations are losing their value. He has to make himself so recognizable by actions and external presentation as a member "of something" and as belonging "to something" that, tendentially, anyone can "classify" him without having ever seen him and without knowing him personally.

The combination of other and self-observation, of social presentation and self-staging, gains importance in these societies: They are, more than others, societies of observation and staging. The repertoires and styles of presentation become insignia of lifestyles. These for their part signal not only consumer habits, but also membership in collective attitudes in terms

of conduct and value systems. Forms of presentation as elements and instruments of orientation put their special mark on the “mixed” societies.

As in historical situations of social re-formation, those guarantors of social orientation now appear in which social order becomes *visible* as a social product that is constantly to be renewed, and as an act of presentation by *each* individual member of society. Thus, frequent council decrees regulating clothing enjoyed their zenith precisely in those times in which the estate system collapsed: The willed (“new”) self-classification replaced the matter-of-course that was traditional and anchored in routines.

Emblems, fashions, styles in staging, and the search for “new” symbols for a while replaced the corporative social order just as they later, time and again, were to replace the orders of classes or strata. The attempt to replace privilege, class, or strata-specific formations of demeanor with the help of ritualized or “ritualizable” rules of conduct stems from the same source, from Castiglione to Knigge and Pappritz, all the way to contemporary “how-to”s for “stylish” conduct.

This gives rise to the suspicion that economically, culturally, and ethnically “mixed” societies not only replace an old order through their return to specific, visible forms of presentation, but that they present themselves and their world views in them: as a public stage of lifestyles, attitudes, and demeanor, interests and worldviews, generally available to all. This stage hardly knows permanently distinguishable—through office or origin—“performers” any more. The stage is at the same time medium, market, and arena: the place in which every social formation, in fact everyone, must appear and present itself, himself, herself—insofar as they wish to hold their own in the face of the competition. Success on stage, however, comes only to those who are able to let their presentation become an element of a collectively recognized and all-embracing order.

My interest, then, is in social order as a permanently to-be-enacted achievement. It is in those admixtures that accompany all social acting. It is in the elementary devices we use when we orient ourselves according to one another and thereby also according to our conjectures about the expectations (and expectations of expectations) others have of us. My focus is on the incessant work on the social form and on the presentation patterns, arrangements, and staging practices to which social forms of expression themselves are indebted.

These forms of presentation have to constantly be converted through acting. They are bound to their realization in the acting, but in turn bind

the action to pre-existing, traditional, and learned patterns. They subject the action to their “self-meaning” (*Eigen-Sinn*). Since the actors are frequently enough not conscious of this “self-meaning,” a foreign will is just as often imposed upon them by the forms of presentation: the “frozen” and set knowledge, and the often barely recognizable intentions of past generations.¹

Our knowledge of the origins, of the accomplishments of order, and of the original meaning of the presentational forms that we return to in acting is not very great. It is not knowledge *about* the acting, but rather knowledge *in* acting: There is no explicit knowledge of the form that relates to the forms of knowledge represented in the acting.

Thus, we tend to separate “form” from “content.” Discussions of the supposedly “empty” rituals or of the “simply dead” ritualized action stems from this tendency. We thereby ignore the fact that, in customs and rituals, we are forming the cult of everyday life. We forget or overlook the fact that the “choice” of a form—along with many other things—lets us make this identification: The form *is* itself “content,” which forms the expressions of action in a specific composition and tunes into the key and harmonies or disharmonies typical for those expressions. Just as one cannot call the *Odyssey* a novella or “Wanderers Nachtlied” a short novel, one can not either exchange at will rituals of greeting and parting, of burial and courtship. Action has its “genres,” the same as literature.

So it can easily be misunderstood when the new, wondrously increasing, antiresearch handbooks and recipe collections for “qualitative” methods in the social sciences talk of “pattern analyses” (or suchlike) and invite social scientists—in a misunderstood application of conjectures drawn from speech-act theory and ethnomethodological conversation analysis—to act as taxonomists and archivists of forms and patterns “with whose help,” this is the implication, social order is created. The attentive observer cannot help but notice that the patterns and forms of presentation he or she examines do not lead to a specific order, but that they *are* that specific order.

Realizing a form of presentation means creating an order, concretely and practically. Pattern collections can thus be no more than anthologies of exemplarily documented and reconstructed forms of presentation, to which one can justifiably assign a genre designation.² Consequently, it is useless to compile a guide for rituals and forms of presentation in acting. The way acting is ordered is not a result of laboratory desk work. It is

created and perpetuated in its traditions and variations by those who act, who in turn shape the individual elements of action into ever new mosaics within the framework of familiar genres—or else create new genres.

As unique as the concrete realization of a ritual or form of presentation is on the one hand, as uniform on the other hand seem the sequences of routines, “habits of conduct,” and rituals in the “everyday” of constantly recurring duties and work. In the cycle of routines, time seems to become viscous or even to stand still. The impression arises that nothing “really” happens. But in order to arrive at a partial answer to the question of the nature of social order, precisely what occurs when nothing (seemingly) takes place is also decisive: What is taking place here is the handing-down and settling-in of the forms. Here, the large and small rituals and “patterns” acquire their indestructibility. But here, too, is the source for their “insufficient” explicitness, for the no-longer-articulated, literally “tacit” knowledge: What we do constantly and as a matter of course over and over again requires no further elucidation in everyday action.

In the repetition, clues as to time and “reasons” for the emergence of specific forms are lost. The “everyday actors” would, if asked why they “use” certain routines, forms, and rituals, respond with new, often ad hoc “practical explanations” (Scott/Lyman). But even the most tenacious observers of everyday rituals can discover no more than a few clues and traces, unless they engage in a detailed reconstruction of individual cases. That, however, will offer them insight into the process that lets order and repetition turn into compulsory repetition and compulsory use of a specific order and specific form.

The observers will see how the forms create their own realities, destroy the new as such, or remove it, as something “new,” from perception, and shape it according to “old” patterns. They will recognize the consequences of the “self-meaning” (stubbornness) of rituals and forms, and will discover that they figure as patterns of articulation for a certain view of reality, and *simultaneously* as triggering patterns for a largely pre-determined action sequence, in which that view is manifest as real action. And finally, they will understand that certain continuously handed-down rituals and forms of action can be preserved as specific symbolic forms by a society over a long period of time—in a sense, as action triggers at rest.

Such—for the time being—deactivated ignition devices are on call and at the disposal, in various constellations, of every society and its

members as a kind of repertoire of conduct for the purpose of mastering future events. They [the devices] react to specific social problem-situations "assigned" to them as it were, conditioned by preceding experiences like contact fuses; they dictate to us a specific, preformed way of conduct. Whoever is at home in such symbolic forms (and who isn't, at least partially?!) is ignited in a predetermined, handed-down form by seemingly new but in fact already preinterpreted events. These become stimuli to him, which he responds to in a chain of reactions which in turn are often already determined and acquired by frequent practice in the past, down to the ignition order: they are, in fact, learned.

The Reconstruction of the Social Construction of Order

The reconstruction of the structure and effect of rituals, a small part of the total of symbolic forms in which we bed our social order, is not feasible except by analyzing individual cases: Only thus can structure and effect be "read" from a documented, concrete action sequence, and be presented both as qualities of the acting itself and also as processes of the reconstruction of order and reality. Such a structural-analytical reconstruction and presentation of individual cases attains its sociological explanatory value when it leads to the construction of a historical-genetic "ideal type." One should be able to distinguish this ideal type's model-like and consciously constructed distance from reality from concrete, historical action, thereby seeing it as meaningful and explaining the origins of its course, effects, and consequences.³ This procedure of constructive reconstruction is that used by historical-reconstructive hermeneutics.⁴

Now, a prologue is the wrong place to face the periodically recurring debates on the already achieved or imminent "demise of hermeneutics." Nonetheless, I shall be so bold as to make some brief observations on hermeneutics' use of the concepts of "subject-bound" and "subject-centered" and the misunderstandings that result from these concepts.

Just as every worldview and every "truth," every theory, methodology, and method has its history, so, too, does hermeneutics. It has undergone changes and expansions, and, as a self-reflexive style of cognition, has through criticism contributed substantially to its own transformation. In historical-systematic terms, it is bound to *the principle* of the written word, first to the recording of language (texts), but then—a logical consequence—to *the quality of the being recorded of "data" in gen-*

eral, to the fixedness and, thus, tendentially infinite “recallability” (discursiveness) of documents, now nonlinguistic as well as linguistic ones: human signs, actions, productions, and man-made “objects” of any kind.

In the—primarily but not exclusively Western—history of hermeneutics, the specific type of theological exegesis by many interpreters of the one Holy Scripture left its mark conspicuously on the schools of thought and interpretation. It was the search for the one subject represented in the text and the search for the subject’s will. At the same time, though, philosophy and jurisprudence, two very ancient hermeneutic disciplines, have long tended to deal with quite other than the “one” subject and “meaning.” Through this very other relation to their subjects and objects they placed the plural of the many (possible) truths and probabilities side by side with the singular of the one truth: side by side with the discovery of the “one” meaning, the “one” sense, they placed the development of the *potential* of meaning and sense.

The self-reflection inherent in the hermeneutic style of cognition led (from Spinoza through Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Gadamer, up to the present discussion) to the discovery and problematization of the reader and the interpreter as “co-author of texts.”⁵ By his interpretative action, this implicit co-creator fills the interpreted “text” (in the above, general sense of “document”) with his own meanings and ranges of meaning. Where in our myths and Holy Scriptures the “one” holy subject itself already often used a human voice (via a prophet or even, splitting the authority, of a legislator *and* another voice by his side: Moses and Aaron), thus now, the interpreted (“represented” in the text) subject (or the document as subject) acquires an opposite: the interpreting subject. Both enter—already for Schleiermacher—a relationship of tension to each other that requires constant rebalancing.

With this redoubling of the subjects the dissolution of the (also theological!) subject centrism becomes *structurally* possible, and with it the dissolution of the axiom of the “one meaning” (text truth, meaning, sense, etc.). The potential of interpreters, of their stories, and of their histories systematically and historically “opens” the interpretatee’s potential meaning. In the course of all this, both on the side of the interpreter and that of the specific document, the transformation is made from absolute to historical semantics. The potential of context and reference grows to unmanageable proportions on both sides: The decomposition of (the interpreting and interpreted) subject and the “one” meaning had com-

menced—long before “decomposition” and “deconstruction” as drop-dead-arguments celebrated their boom.

As a logical consequence, the search for the “one” meaning lost some of its significance. At the same time, the insight into our imprisonment (“interwovenness”) in sense and meaning increased: the insight into the fact that we are always interpreting, have to interpret, move in an always preinterpreted world and in seemingly hardly controllable surpluses of meaning.

This insight complemented and changed the formulation of the question in hermeneutics. Whereas earlier, it was exclusively the “what” of understanding, it now became, more and more, the “how”: understanding itself as well as devices, “rules,” “patterns,” implicit premisses, socially conveyed ways of appropriating, “training,” and handing down interpretation and understanding. Without knowledge of structure and method of understanding, this much was evident, founded statements about the “adequateness” of interpretations were and are hardly to be made any more: One comes close to understanding a concretely understood thing (an interpretation or explication) only if one can reconstruct, while understanding, how an “understood thing” is constructed in—and through—interpreting and understanding, and at what concrete, historical places subjects let their interpretations and constructions coagulate into texts as they write and interpret.

So here they are again, the subjects that were deemed lost. They step forward from the theater of the world and the scenery of signs, rows of citations, and figures of meaning, at two structurally significant places: (1) as historical-concrete actors (producers of documents) at a concrete historical place; and (2) as historical-concrete interpreters with specific historical ranges of interpretation. Moreover, both producers of documents and interpreters (the producers of documents of the second degree) *embody* the concrete, living authority of experience and decision which decides on adequateness, rightness, and plausibility of the product in question (i.e. the document or interpretation).

This decision is made in the course of the subject’s “inner conversation” of the subject with himself, in the comparison of “interior” images. In this respect, both the producing and the interpreting subject remain the undeceivable authority of experience, perception, and decision. However, none of this internal communication as inner-subject-experience can be disposed of—except the choice, visible in the document, of a

specific action and its product. The cycle of interpreting and understanding starts all over again.

Sociological Novellas

The lover of sociological “macro-theories,” especially system theories, takes pleasure in the arithmetics of the world. If, in addition, he succeeds in translating the arithmetics of the world into a world of arithmetics, then his fondest desires are fulfilled. Whatever comes up against him is sucked in by the gears of theory, fed into the machinery of concepts, translated and processed serially until it rolls off the production line conspicuously marked with the linguistic and quality stamp of its producer: the new serial number for a prefabricated encyclopedia. As sociologist, the macro-theoretician now is rid of all problems, he merely continues himself to be one for his colleagues: predominantly for those colleagues whose aim it is to describe and comprehend concrete social phenomena as such and to explain these phenomena causally both in their specificity and in their societal “generalizability.”

Material sociology as a science of reality has a far harder time than system theories: It must first get to know the phenomenon thoroughly before speaking about it. Its questions and answers are “open” insofar as they have to adapt to the peculiar traits of the phenomenon. And finally, the formation of such a sociological theory is perpetuated by analyzing individual cases. Where it loses its grounding in empiricism and can neither be verified nor falsified by the latter, such theory formation loses its claim of being sociology. Consequently, the case study is the King’s highway of theory-guided and theory-perpetuating sociology.

The object of the case study can be anything that hits the eye of the observer, that seems to contradict former theoretical insights—or simply anything that arouses curiosity. The “case” is delineated by the explicitly to-be-stated interest of the observer and the subsequent theoretical definition of what is to be the “case” and its demarcations, wherein lie the hopes for insights resulting from the case analysis that can then be generalized.

The case study does not, unfortunately, share the language of that literary genre, the novella, but it does share its proximity to the individual, delineable and yet exemplary phenomenon. However, in the case study the interest—or at least my sociological interest—is not in what Goethe called “an unheard-of event that has taken place.”⁶ Instead, my

interest is in the reasons for the exigency of every single detail in order to construct meaning in an action. The unheard of is the detail and its specific location, the individual element which in *its* specific location contributes to the meaning (a potential of meaning) of the whole in its enactment, and which later makes this potential of meaning accessible to interpreters.

It is the unique form (*Gestalt*) and position of each individual element of the social order that engenders the case analyst's fascination with detail, his or her love for the seemingly secondary, his or her attention to the network of motives and symbols. They all are the expression of a certain enchantment on the part of the interpreter by the interplay of coincidence and logical consistency, wherein forms of acting *and* interpreting are created out of the sequence and combination of individual elements. It is true that this magic loses some of its sheen when the interpretation decodes how a general phenomenon is articulated and presented in the specific, the concrete historical phenomenon. Nonetheless, the fascination with the singular is not lost: It is the concrete location where society lives and is kept alive.

Before Boccaccio lets his heroes begin narrating their "novellas," he recounts, in the form of a frame story, where his narrators are and why they are narrating: They have retreated to a castle on their flight from the plague. So great "was the virulence of the plague in communicating itself from one person to another, that not only did it affect human beings, but, what is more strange, it very often proceeded in an extraordinary way. If an article belonging to one sick of the plague or one who had died of it was touched by an animal outside of the human species, the creature was not only infected, but in a very short time it died of the disease."⁷ In short, everything in the outside world is contaminated. The narrators, though, are, or at least deem themselves, safe.

The sociological "novella writer" as case analyst requires his or her own field. He may love castles, but he doesn't live in one. Unlike some of his colleagues who push nothing but theories, he does not fear "his" field in the "outside world" like the plague. He doesn't necessarily love it, either, although he is not dealing with victims of the plague, but rather, to a large extent with "his own kind." If at all, the contagiousness is mutual. To create and maintain a certain distance is important for both sides, for those who observe and explain something, and for the others who want to remain anonymous as they act. The observer is not primarily

responsible for what he doesn't see and thus doesn't make accessible, in terms of possibilities, to himself and others. This distance has nothing to do with flight, just as little as with submerging oneself "in the field" without re-emerging.

For this kind of observer, sickness or health, pathology or normality—this is where the range of images borrowed from Boccaccio ends—are neither measurements of degree for the conduct of others nor categories of a social theory. He likes to be spared these classifications just as do his compatriots. His focus is on the comprehending reconstruction of what he finds as a given, on explaining the causes of what he observes, and on developing the realm of possibilities before the background of historically grown "facticity."

As an hermeneutic analyst, he hands over the deduction of and responsibility for that which could and should be—not exclusively but primarily—to himself, but also to his readers.

Notes

1. The connection frequently made between such presentation patterns and "everyday rituals" to customs, conventions, behavioral norms, and traditions is anything but coincidental. The concrete origins of these patterns of conduct can no longer be clearly determined, however. The reasons for their creation are lost in the dark and/or are no longer accessible to the actor's consciousness. See also Benedict, Ruth (1955), *Urformen der Kultur*, Hamburg.
2. Concerning the concept of "communicative genres" see Luckmann, Thomas (1989), *Kultur und Kommunikation*, in *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, Verhandlungen des 24. Deutschen Soziologentages, des II. Österreichischen Soziologentages und des 8. Kongresses der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Zürich 1989, ed. by M. Haller, H.-J. Hoffmann-Nowotny, and W. Zapf: 33–45.
3. See Weber, Max [(5) 1972], *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen: 1–11.
4. In this context, see Soeffner, Hans-Georg (1989), *Auslegung des Alltags—Der Alltag der Auslegung*, Frankfurt.
5. See Iser, Wolfgang (1972), *Der implizite Leser, Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett*, Munich.
6. Goethe to Eckermann, 25. 1. 1827.
7. Boccaccio, Giovanni [(1492) 1930, 1955], *The Decameron*, transl. by Frances Winwar, New York.

Martin Luther before The Diet of Worms

1

Luther—From the Collectivity of Faith to a Lutheran-Protestant Type of Individuality

*"Why don't you come by sometime and tell me
your story?"*

—Citizen Kane

There is a long history, at least in Central Europe, to the present fact that practically everyone can tell their story, practically everyone offers, at all times and places and with great virtuosity, self-thematization, either openly declared or else dressed up as "relationship problems"; that practically every kind of social action, from defense pleas via political legitimations to explanations of "private" decisions, is not only autobiographically tinged, but also deemed explicable by autobiography itself. It is the history of a form of knowledge and representation which was and is clearly marked by the interpretation of reality, world and self in the modern world and the present—it is the history of the social type of presentation of "accentuated subjectivity."

Some of the conditions for successful, collectively accepted self-thematization are: (1) knowing the techniques of self-observation; (2) the collectively known and societally trained "guidelines" [including "guidelines for suffering," which supply points of orientation for self-perception (see Hahn, 1982: 407ff.; Hahn, 1984: 229ff.)]; (3) the *structural* isolation of a "self" that is perceiving itself (Hildebrandt, 1985) and securing the significance of self-perception; (4) historically embedding *and* preparing the "newly" developing forms of representation and knowledge through existing, institutionally secured and collectively recognized forms of presentation; and (5) social structural and economic changes that present or represent¹ themselves through the "new" form of

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knowledge in everyday consciousness, and are legitimized “ideologically” by them (see Luckmann, 1980).

Such conditions are neither created by one individual, nor do they emerge “suddenly,” unexpectedly, or—as some seem to find desirable—at a precise historical moment in time. Rather, they tend to be the result of a long development, heralded by “traces” and “isolated tendencies” long before they become collectively accepted. And they point the subsequent interpreter to earlier social structures that only later take on a recognizable form. These structures are but rarely visible to the consciousness of those who live within their confines. And frequently, the quality of these structures and, even more, the ensuing social consequences and effects, are actually in opposition to the intentions and interests of those who, in fact and objectively, helped create those structures. In the following I shall attempt to show this, taking Luther as an example.

Some of these “great individuals,” whose stories to this day illustrate and constitute the everyday, living consciousness of “history,” neither invent new structures nor effect the implementation of the current ones, let alone new ones through their implicit, at times also explicit use of the new structures for political, scientific, or artistic action. Others—among them Martin Luther—are able to find a collective language for already existing social phenomena, which have not and could not formerly be articulated. They supply the intentions, actions, and plans with a representative means of expression, with their own linguistic system of symbols. They combine the collectively existing repertoire of symbols, having listened to the way ordinary people speak, *through* and *into* a great defining text, beside which all other texts, everything else, including one’s own life, become no more than background text.

Therefore, apart from their historical meaning, the central significance of the “great articulators” lies in the way they prepare, in an exemplary fashion, the “data” that the later interpreter requires in order to understand fragments and excerpts of the historical developments by analyzing the historical preconditions that brought them about. The following discussion will be about the path that Luther paved structurally, even if not intentionally, and which he in part took himself, from the collectivity of faith and life style to isolation in faith and lifestyle, from collective curriculum vitae to (auto)biography, from observation of the other to observation of the self, from the individual in the world to the world within the individual.

The Old in the New and the New in the Old— Luther and His Name²

Originally, Luther's family was called "Luder" (Loewenich, 1983: 36). He entered the University of Erfurt under the name "Martinus Ludher Mansfeldt." In 1517, he changed his name from *Luder* to Luther, and included his parents in this undertaking. All this is common knowledge. What has been a matter of argument, however, are the reasons he might have had for changing his name. There are two interpretations that refer to language use and polemics in connection with Luther's name during the Reformation. His opponents, as opponents playing by the rules of proper opposition were compelled to, brought the name "Luder" in connection to *lotter* ("sloven"), *Luderleben* ("debauched life"), and *Lockerspeise*, or *Aas* ("carrion"), and the odors associated with the latter. In other words, they quoted linguistic usage that was possible at the time and that one finds intact to this day in words like *Luder* ("scoundrel") and *Lude* ("pimp"). The other camp of interpreters, philologically educated as it was, knew the rules of sound change and semantic change, and defended an opposite position. According to their theory, *Luder* is connected to the word *lauter*, or "honest."

What we can deduce from these opposing interpretations is the irritating fact that, as so often, quasi-scientific—in this case, philological—arguments are wielded in a rhetorical tournament jostling for the correct worldview. Contradicting the above, it has recently been proven with great philological accuracy (Moeller and Stackmann, 1981) that the change from *Luder* to "Luther" referred neither to *lotter* ("sloven") nor to *lauter* ("honest"), but rather, that the change came about because at the time he changed his name, Luther was signing letters he wrote to his friends (e.g. Spalatin, Melanchton, and Lang), with the name *Eleutherius* (i.e., "the liberated one", "the one who feels free"). This "derivation" from the Greek is symptomatic of that mixture of allusion and interpretation, using etymologies, which was commonly used in the Humanistic Circle (*Humanistischer Kreis*). Luther applied the same stylistic devices weighed down with self-interpretation.

Luther used the signature *Eleutherius* only between 1517 and 1519. There is a definite chronological correspondence between his use of the Greek epithet and the changing of his German name. The Greek epithet appears shortly before his *Theses*, that is, before their publication. In

1519, it disappears abruptly. Moeller and Stackmann put forth the theory that the connection between the name change and the epithet *Eleutherius* expresses latently in 1517 what later becomes manifest in the idea: Luther's new conviction that he had become free from other human beings through his servitude to God. Luther's new self-concept—"freedom through servitude"—was first symbolized in the Greek epithet and finally confirmed in the symbolic/pragmatic name change. Luther's writings develop and explicate theoretically in retrospective what had already been accomplished symbolically in the act of representing a conviction.

If one interprets this biographical detail in the life of the translator, theologian, and truth seeker more exactly, then one sees a characteristic image become manifest in the symbolic act of Luther's name change. That is, the new name "Luther"—retaining the "old," the family, and religious tradition except for the one letter, which he replaces by two others—symbolically joins the past with the new conviction expressed in an "old" language. The name thus is more reformed in the symbolic new formation than it is actually newly formulated.

The contradictory unity of "liberty and servitude," symbolically implied in the name change, refers, through Luther's seemingly magic use of linguistic symbolism, to an encompassing symbolic pattern of world and self-interpretation, to the allusion or re-evaluation of his own life as well as of the world via symbolic acts. At the same time, the symbolic act or symbolic context lends all the individual elements and individual experiences a consistent, uniform meaning. This becomes visible in the issue of mind-body or soul-flesh. Flesh, or body—material housing of the soul and/or mind in our culture usually suffers a bad reputation—gains its meaning and worth, if any, through its visible or suspected symbolic connection to its tenants, who are considered superior to the lodging (i.e., through the soul and the mind, which in their turn represent a superior or *the* Supreme Being of whom they partake). If soul and mind are free, then so is the whole person. In short: Along with his name change, Luther has not only pulled a new spiritual cloak around his old Adam; the old Adam becomes a whole new person. The symbolic conversion becomes a real one.

Christian tradition knows many precursors to this conversion figure. Luther chose one of the most prominent, albeit not as *exemplum vitae*, but rather as a form of existence. He chose that inquisitive rager Saul, on whom suddenly, on his way to Damascus (Acts 9) "a light shone from

heaven," who heard a voice saying "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"³, who was the only one among his companions to understand the voice, who became blind and finally regained his sight from out of the blindness—who turned from a Saul into a Paul.

Almost 1500 years later, this story can be told in a different way. It is given a different context and a different milieu, but remains perfectly recognizable. Saul's journey to Damascus becomes Luther's return from Gotha to Erfurt. The fledgling law student—Luther's father wants his son to make his career in this field—has bought the necessary books in Gotha. On his return, he experiences a "frightening apparition from heaven."⁴ He secretly sells all his law books, gives a goodbye dinner for his friends in Erfurt, and goes "immediately to the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt that same night. For that was what He had ordered, and became a monk." In the Erfurt monastery of the Augustinian hermits, he first is named Augustinus⁵ after the saint of his order, another conversion story. But already shortly thereafter, he is called "Martinus" again. And then the revived Acts of the Apostles and Luther's own self-interpretation permanently gain the upper hand. Professor Nathin, one of Luther's theological superiors, recommends him to the nuns in the convent of Mühlhausen as a "second Paul," who "was miraculously converted, just like the apostle" (Friedenthal, 1983: 59ff.).

Saul/Paul is more than a mythical pendant to Martin Luther. Paul became not only an "identification figure" for him, but also the crown witness of the "Holy Scripture"—a crown witness, however, who never saw Jesus, but only knows Him from the acolytes' stories and sermons. A crown witness, in other words, who possesses authority not through his presence or participation in the event, but rather through his convincing *interpretation* of what he has heard. And, conversely, the reported stories attain their meaning and authorization not through the eyewitness, but rather, through the *interpreter*. Consequently, in Luther's prologue to his Romans theology, he says, "This Epistle is the true central piece of the New Testament and the truest Gospel" (Luther, 1983b). Accordingly, it is here, in Romans 3:28, that we find the focal point for the development of Luther's theology: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." This "alone"—*sola fide*—Luther adds to the "old" faith, the "old" text, the same as he added the "th" to his name. Here, too, he is following the example of his model, who signalled his conversion by changing one letter of his name,

albeit the first one. He changes the old interpretatively—only seemingly in a minimal way—by centering it in *one* specific meaning.

But stories and myths would not exist, or continue to exist, if they weren't capable of rejuvenation while maintaining their structure. They connect predecessor and successor, make visible the repetition and, at the same time, vary the material, actualize it, revitalize it.⁶ Thus, the "second Paul" from Erfurt has Saul/Paul as his model. The Saul from the New Testament for his part refers to a Saul from the Old Testament who also tenaciously pursues a just man. The Saul from the New Testament and his successor were able to convert "to redemption"; the Old Testament Saul, on the other hand, unwillingly performed a negative conversion "away from redemption," an act from which he never recovered, all his efforts notwithstanding. Saul/Paul are here—prior to the works of Jesus, "David's son"—still split into two actors: Saul and David.

The former becomes disobedient to his God. God loses "interest" in him (I Samuel 15). The other, David, is selected in order to replace the former. Saul tries to appease his Lord through visible deeds and sacrifices. His attempts are to no avail. David, the newly elect, has no works to show (yet), but still is preferred, "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). The *leitmotif* of Lutheran theology is sounded here in no uncertain terms. Not the works, but faith alone; not that which is visible from the outside, but the "interior" that is invisible to others, the heart decides on the path toward attaining "justice before God." Already here, Lutherism and Calvinism become recognizable in their structural opposition.

But in Luther's real existence, too, this interesting—not only for sociologists—approximation of life to theology and vice versa take place. The Old Testament Saul is not only "rejected" by his God, he is also punished with the "distressing spirit" (I Samuel 16:16) or, in modern parlance, with melancholy and despair. When that "distressing spirit" comes over him, the only thing that can help him is harp music. David is a virtuoso on the harp and thus Saul's therapist: "And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him" (I Samuel 16:23).

For Luther, who suffered bouts of deep depression all his life, it was music more than anything that helped soothe sadness and despair—to be

exact, helped against "Satan, the spirit of melancholy." When he was suffering from those attacks, friends would bring him his lute. And Luther—reportedly a master of this difficult instrument—would begin to play. Luther himself expressed his understanding of music by quoting the old patterns, as "prologue to all good breviaries" (1538).⁷

His state improves. The evil spirit leaves him.⁸ David-Martinus-Paul II (let us remain in the terminology of myth and legend) hold their own against Saul I-Saul II and their evil spirit, a spirit that can completely besiege a human being, overpower him, and drive him to suicide.⁹

What is divided up between two people in the Old Testament, between the one rejected and the one elected (Cain/Abel, Saul/David), between two antipodal *Doppelgänger*, in the New Testament is transferred, especially through Paul's writings, onto the individual. The double structure becomes the characteristic of the individual, his essential and by the same token antipodal possibilities. *The conversion is the visible realization of this double structure within one person, made manifest through action.* Conversion is a specific form of presentation and self-interpretation, which we have inherited from our Judeo-Christian tradition and which seems to persist, albeit with new contents.

Luther's way of dealing with his own name and the concomitant acceptance and "lived appreciation" of examples passed down through a "holy text," no matter how marginal they may have appeared initially, connote a thoroughly symbolic self-perception that marked Luther's perception of his life. They connote the contradictory unity of "being free in respect to others and in respect to the world" on the one hand, and "servitude to God" on the other. In this context, "servitude to God" conceals the fact that Luther, when he uses the term "freedom" in general, goes much further: It is his conviction that humans without God are fundamentally unfree. God alone is free and in possession of a free will, the only subject entitled to freedom in general and, thus, also freedom concerning His will. "Human will" on the other hand, according to Luther, "is set down in the middle. Like a beast of burden, if God sits on it, then his will and direction are as God's, like in the Psalm, 'I have become a beast of burden and I am always with You.' If Satan sits on it, then his will and direction are as Satan's. And it is not in the realm of his free choice to run to one of the two riders nor to seek out one or the other; for the riders themselves fight in order to keep him or claim him."¹⁰

Upon closer inspection, this much-quoted simile of the human will as beast of burden—one should, in general, quote less ritualistically and interpret more carefully instead—makes Luther's specific treatment of tradition, its reception and reformation clear. What I first noticed while examining the Psalm Luther quotes (Ps. 73:22–24) was that Luther, the Bible translator, can hardly have taken from this Psalm the image of the beast of burden as a beast to be ridden, or at any rate not from *his* translation of the Psalm. "I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You. You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Luther's interpretation of the (unfree) will—which, if one takes the image of the beast seriously, is not a rationally founded will, but much more impulse and affect—is covered by this part of the text: without God who takes him by the hand and guides him with his counsel, man is a fool or a beast (i.e., not master of his own decisions).

But where does the image of the mount come from and that of the two riders fighting for it? Literary criticism gives us some information on the subject (Adam, 1962): The man who has now become a "reformer" and bible translator, the former member of the order of the Augustinian hermits, combines the text of the Psalm with an image from the pseudo-Augustinian Hypomnesticon.¹¹

This combination seems to suggest a comparison of Augustine's and Luther's manner of argumentation and their central themes. In the course of such a comparison, we discover a narrowing and centering of themes that is specific to Luther. Augustine's thought processes are schooled according to Plato and his image of mankind, which sees an originally free will (i.e., in Adam), blessed with rational thought, as the core of man's personality. This is according to Augustine's "De libero arbitrio," from the year 395. Luther takes up this topic antithetically, but "cleansed" of all classical philosophical tradition and blind faith in rational thought, oriented instead toward a Judeo-Christian image of mankind.

At the same time, and this is decisive, the world becomes narrower with Luther. Augustine's *civitates*, the divine or satanic commonalities, filled with human beings, are reduced to the individual. No longer is the *civitas* the battlefield upon which the armies of God and Satan meet. Accordingly, the war with "Satan" is no longer to be waged by the polis or community. This war "rages" within the individual. The war for the human being takes place *within* the human being. And at the same time

he is (usually the sole) witness of this merciless event. Two subjects, God and Satan, fight for a third, who is denied the free will and status of subject. Where, then, does this third subject stand? What is his status? How is he determined? Luther's answer: the subject exists and acts "*ex alterius arbitrio*," or is, in "modern" terms, determined by exterior forces. Incidentally, *alterius* could also be, grammatically speaking, of neutral gender, a determining "id" such as later times invented. External determination on the one hand, strict individualization of the battle on the other, now characterize the image of mankind.

This has many consequences, and one of my theses derives from this Lutheran linking of individualization of the battlefield on the one hand with the doctrine of irrational will, or instinct and affect, on the other. The thesis is that Luther's and Freud's Christian-Judaic and Judeo-Christian positions, metaphors, and concepts of reality are in many ways closely related to each other. But more importantly, Freud has Luther to thank not only for the preparation of certain views of the world, mankind, and reality as well as vital preliminary work on the construction of a certain kind of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis also has Luther to thank for its own effect on "modern" individuals, as well as on German Protestantism and its concept of pastoral care and care for the human being, which of late includes assorted methods of psychotherapy.

Luther spent his formative years in a monastery. At the age of twenty-one, he entered the "Black Monastery" in Erfurt, and he lived in the Wittenberger monastery to the end of his days. He began his monastic life as an Augustinian hermit—and died, husband and father, still in a monastery. He was and remained during all this time a scholar and interpreter of texts. His worldview was shaped not by his journey to Rome, not by his appearance at the Parliament (*Reichstag*) of Worms, nor his "excursion" to the Wartburg. His segment of the world is the study room, a cell. His world originates from the text, and he in turn influences the world through texts.

Once again, he illustrates the "metaphor" in his lifestyle, the metaphor he lives and represents. It is the double structure, consisting of retrospection to the "old," the "original" given, and variation of the "old" through interpretation; of conversion in life and in text interpretation, of collectively existing tradition and individualization of experience: of acceptance and simultaneous destruction of tradition, which he robs of its collective, "external" security by making it prove itself

on an “inner” battlefield—in individual experience and in the isolation of the individual.

From “Collective” Curriculum Vitae to (Auto)Biography

Although we cannot compete with “those two men” (Socrates and Plato) and their “perfect humanity,” we can still attempt to emulate, “as much as we are able, their exemplary actions and follow their tracks” (Plutarch, 1947: 51). With this brief characterization of his paedagogical goals, Plutarch formulated a fundamental conviction of ancient Greece and a premiss for its image of mankind. It is that human life gains the quality of “complete humanity” through participating in rational thought and through insight into the “essence of the spirit” or of the “ideas.” The focus is not on individuality or on the story of the individual’s development, but rather on the forming of complete humanity, of the general, the universal—of reason and mind—which define the essence of the human being. Accordingly, life is subordinate to “the point of view of *paideia*, of upbringing in the sense of education...to the thought of self-improvement as borne by Eros” (Bultmann, 1956: 110). Upbringing in the sense of “education” is, however, “a term alien to the biblical world” (Bultmann, 1956: 110). In place of the development of man to a “harmonious,” “well-ordered,” and “balanced” life, biblical man encounters God and His interference in human life as the center both of the image of mankind and of life orientation. The categories that the biblical-Christian lifestyle applies are “being called,” “being selected,” “being rejected.” The encounter with God that makes recognizable which of these directions one’s life is to take occurs within the “concrete, historical events”—the place where “God is encountered as the demanding, judging, or pardoning One” (Bultmann, 1956, 110). As ancient Greece oriented itself—*structurally*—according to ideal curricula vitae, thus in Christianity, the historically very gradually developing autobiography emerges—also *structurally*—“as a description of the individual life, guided by God” (Bultmann, 1956, 110). Upbringing as—and toward—education, toward perfection, the ancient Greek ideal, in the eyes of Christendom quickly assumed the aftertaste of “superbia,” or arrogance; that means it is seen not only as dispensable, but basically even as dangerous.

Bultmann’s historical-structural comparison of the image of man from Greek antiquity and that of “biblical man” enables us to differentiate

between, on the one hand, the orientation of life according to ideal biographies and, on the other, the orientation according to individualized autobiographies, tendencies that come together in Christendom, in Christian churches, as well as in Christian lifestyle “types.” The historical shift from one to the other can thus be observed with greater precision. What becomes evident is that the medieval church, with its living admonition to the faithful to take the saints as role models for their lives according to the traditional hagiography, reverts to the patterns of upbringing and education from ancient pedagogy not in terms of content,¹² but very much in terms of structure. How did this come about?

Human life is rendered nearly intolerable by the idea of a transparent, arbitrarily interfering God standing directly opposite man who is at God’s mercy without defense in the “concrete historical encounter,” and further rendered intolerable by the immense threat emanating from this image. Structurally contained in this concept is the invitation to flee from the situation. This is historically realized both in the protective, ritual ordering of one’s day and one’s life in orthodox Judaism, and in the exemplary middlemen who insert themselves between the directly interfering God and the individual who is so threatened by Him—visibly successful *receivers* of mercy whom, because of their success, the Church makes into *mediators* of mercy.

Luther grew up in this situation of the wish fulfilled—in a ritual distance to God created by the Church and secured by exemplary mediators. Outside of his parents’ house, in which father and mother tried to adhere to the then highly common and to them valid Christian concept of child rearing by staging a kind of competition in beating their children,¹³ Luther encountered religion “as a whole” for the first time when he entered Latin School at the age of five: not as a religion of revelation, but rather, as a system of convictions and rules of conduct. These were literally beaten into Luther and his co-students, as was common practice at the time (see Paulsen, 1919: 3ff.), the Saints’ Calendar in hand. Latin and religious instruction thus merged into one impressive and easy-to-memorize didactic unity.

The Saints’ Calendar’s succession of days and years repeats the timeless saints’ names and their exemplary lives—the finite chronology of the Calendar suspended in the repetition of the “eternally valid.” At the same time, parents tend to bind their children, their children’s names, and orientation in life—via the “name-day”—to an ever-valid model of

action and type of curriculum vitae.¹⁴ The individual's life moves to a specific position within a given context of order.

This already barely surmountable grid of rules and regulations on how to lead one's life is further reinforced by a ritually secured system of holy actions, in other words, by the sacraments. Much has been written and said about the "effect," "function," "symbolic form," and symbolic contents of the sacraments. What has scarcely been touched upon is the *organizing and forming of the individual Christian life into stations*, which the sacraments attempt to do. If the reader will bear with me in considering the number seven of the sacraments, which was only established in the twelfth century,¹⁵ and from a different point of view, then it will become apparent how that number, among other things, also serves to firmly structure the individual's life into stations.

Birth, the end of childhood, marriage, and death are not only depicted in the sacraments of passage, that is, christening, confirmation, marriage,¹⁶ and extreme unction, but also sanctified as eternal stations in life which link all generations. But more: they link the generations among each other into families and communities of manageable size. Parents and godparents accompany the growing-up and the first phases of the child's life with his christening and confirmation—symbolically reminding the adults of their own childhood. In a symbolic preparation of their own end, the parents and godparents experience, together with the following generation, the "extreme unction," the final passage of the older generation. All generations stand within a life cycle that faces both forward and backward—a cycle they share that is rendered orderly and eternal by the sacraments.

It is the, shall we say, *confirmative sacraments* of Eucharist and penitence that guarantee the believer continual reminders of this life cycle. They bring order to the weeks and years—recalling the larger continuity—and connect everyday life with the order of the life cycle. This leaves little or no room for individual autobiography. Life-cycle and everyday conduct are subject to the same system of rules and regulations—from the "weighty" stations in the life cycle all the way to the ramifications of everyday actions.

The institutional guarantor of the lasting realization and repetition of this symbolic pattern of order, the religious specialist, expert, and administrator of rituals (see Douglas, 1974) himself is visibly included in this order through the participation in a sacrament: he secures this order and is in turn secured by it in the sacrament of "ordo"—ordination—in a

sacrament of guarantee, which sanctifies the institution itself. The institutional repetition of the rite in Christian mythology thus turns into—as in other myths, too—the faith in the magical character of repetition: the repetition of myth becomes the myth of repetition (see Lévi-Strauss, 1967). Already in his time as Augustinian hermit, Luther destroys—initially for himself alone—these ritual networks of rules and regulations and thereby too, the protective distance which the network lays between the faithful and the immediacy of the “sanctified.” Luther aims his entire attention at “the God revealed in the Word,” at the “holy text” itself, not at the tradition of exegesis by the church fathers, a tradition which, in his view, comes between the faithful and the “bright, naked truth,” the immediacy of God. As one of the learned padres and future docents of theology, he receives a complete Bible edition bound in red leather (see Friedenthal 1983: 65): the prescribed Latin translation by Hieronymus. He thereby enjoys a privilege not accorded the lesser brothers. They never behold the Holy Scripture; they are merely read aloud select passages. Luther so visibly concentrates on reading the Bible that, according to reports, his teacher Usingen sees fit to warn him: “Eh, Brother Martin, what is the Bible? One should read the old teachers, they distilled the juice of truth from the Bible, the Bible causes all turmoil” (quoted according to Friedenthal, 1983: 67).

Luther was convinced of the opposite: tradition is little or nothing, the immediacy of the “manifest word” or the immediacy of God Himself is everything. As he, at first only for himself in his perusal of the Bible, later for others in his translation of the Bible, pushes aside tradition’s distancing element and establishes “genuine” access to the “only true word,” to the immediacy of “God’s given word,” he also destroys, by reducing the sacraments to baptism and Eucharist, the cycle of ritually ordered and sanctified stations of life. The attention of the faithful is focused on faith, penitence, and mercy, on the individual’s immediacy to God. *The cyclically and ritually ordered time is dissolved, by concentrating on the immediate encounter with God, into a chain of moments of decision and testing, while the cyclical succession of generations is dissolved into one person’s individualization before God. The smallest unit of society—the individual—becomes, tendentially, the sole and thus the highest authority by way of the postulate of immediacy.*

With Luther, Protestantism turns back to what Bultmann later termed “biblical man,” to that human being who encounters his God as a “de-

manding, judging and merciful" God in a "concrete historical context," who sees himself rather than the world as the stage for his trials, who can reach the point of considering his surroundings and the external world as secondary, seen in the light of his immediacy to God. Luther's man, radically oriented toward the individual's immediacy to God, as well as Bultmann's biblical man belong "to the world" as though they did not belong to it. They belong to "those who have wives [should be] as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away"(I Corinthians 7: 30ff.).¹⁷ Luther's performance at the Diet at Worms was thus exemplary for the realization of this image of man. This performance is not the symbol of a new collective and merely "reformed" practicing of religion. Rather, it is an exquisite demonstration of how *individualization* is the central quality of this religious type who firmly places *himself*, his own conscience, against the collective authorities. "Thus I cannot and will not retract anything, because it is neither salutary nor safe to do anything against *one's conscience* (emphasis added). So help me God." (Quoted according to Friedenthal, 1983: 338; Loewenich, 1983: 185.) In these final words from his defense speech (on the second day of his questioning), what resounds is not only the individualization of the human being who answers to God alone through his conscience, but by their structure they also articulate, in referring to the conscience, that historically much later construct for legitimation and judgment, the "ego," which has its secure place in the store of knowledge of modern "Western" cultures as a rarely questioned explicatory pattern. Here, the individual becomes immediate to himself or rather to that part of himself which represents, as a "result of socialization," "society," and not "God." In concrete terms, though, the individual refers reflectively to his "ego," not society, that alliance of his fellow human beings. He remains within himself in "communication" with his "ego" and, if he does justice to his "higher," or "upper" self, then he is at peace with himself. Regardless of the external dangers, he can shout out, like Luther at the conclusion of the Parliament, "I have come through, I have come through." (Quoted according to Friedenthal, 1983: 338; see Loewenich, 1983: 185.)

What also belongs to the structural effects of this turning (back) from participation in the general (including the social) and toward individual-

ization, and to the consequences of the escape and departure from the cyclically ordered time of exemplary stations and stories into historical chains of moments and events, is the development of autobiography as a description of the individual encounter, the development of the history of the individual with God: the recounted recapitulation of a life guided by God.¹⁸

But whoever wants to describe needs to know what is important to himself and to others. He requires points of orientation for the observation and recollection of events. He cannot do without criteria that enable him to differentiate between what is "relevant" and what is "irrelevant." In short, he who has a story to tell not only must have the "contents" of the story, but must also have knowledge of the structure and form of presentation for the story that is to be told. Accordingly, a specific pattern of observation and a specific system of relevance belong to the structure of an autobiography; and the autobiographer must be practiced in them, must have had "training" in them.

From Other-Observation to Self-Observation

In Luther's day, the monasteries in Germany and elsewhere were not, generally speaking, all that they should have been. It was with good cause that those who lived under the rules of the order—the "regulated ones"—did not enjoy the best of reputations, according to contemporary documents (see Bohler, 1921; Lohse, 1962). The European medieval literature, especially that of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, treats the whole arsenal of the degenerate "saints" in farces and novellas, with a combination of pleasure, sarcasm, derision, and also bitterness. This arsenal includes both the lecherous and drunken/gluttonous monk and the corrupt, intriguing, financially insatiable and dissolute prelate, the amorous nun and the depraved abbess. In Luther's day, those who entered a monastery out of religious conviction had to take their cues from a radical monastic minority that still took its faith and the rules of the order seriously.

As mentioned above, Luther chooses the order of the Augustinian hermits in Erfurt.¹⁹ The "Black Monastery," which he enters, belonged to the congregation of the Augustinian-Observants,²⁰ an unusually strict minority even within the order of the Augustinians. There he learns the rules and inner guidelines of a collective other-observation and self-ob-

servation according to the so-called chapter on offenses (*Schuldkapitel*), which is held every Friday. The prior speaks the opening formula "Let us deal with sin!," the question "What do you say?," and the communal answer is "Our sin!" Thus, the account listing the offenses is revealed to the collective revisor once a week, but in addition, the behavior prerequisite for this kind of bookkeeping is practiced—the regulated self- and other-observation.

Individually, the brothers rise and confess those offenses concerning the breaking of rules and regulations of the order (see Balthasar, 1961: 135 ff.). The confession of all other sins was the object of the confessional. As a consequence, it is not only the "practice in societalness" (see Friedenthal, 1983: 56) that is decisive in the regular practice of the "offence chapter," but also the concomitant training in observation according to a given guideline—precursor of and pattern for certain techniques in empirical social research. The "offence chapter" was based on the obligation and training of each brother to observe the other, to control and to publicize his shortcomings, albeit anonymously. The name of the accused was not named; the person in question was expected to admit to his offenses himself.

The observation of another person, and the description of his offenses in such a way that that other would recognize himself, demands of the observer, to an extreme, the combination of "external" observation and internalized "appropriation of the perspective" of the observed person. Thus, the monastic society becomes a self-observation society, the contemplative or "active" shared life is interrupted by observation. A community of action or meditation becomes an association of observed observers. The focus is no longer on the acting person, but rather, on observing the action; no longer on the success of action, but rather, on its failure. If one reads the rules of the orders and considers them in connection with a strict observance of the "divine" commandments, then one knows that by those standards, not a day, barely an hour passes in human life without offenses being committed. Under this aspect and through the trained observation that uses it as its measure, life becomes an endless chain of trespasses. And the chain becomes heavier with each passing day. All else loses its meaning, all else recedes into the background.

Luther places his life under this new sign and, as a consequence, has much to report and to confess to. He loses his measure of proportion. Details and small matters take on disproportionate importance. Staupitz

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