Research in Contemporary Religion

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Volume 1

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Religion:
Immediate Experience and the Mediacy of Research

Interdisciplinary Studies, Concepts and Methodology of Empirical Research in Religion
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Introduction

Religious Experience, Empirical Research and the
Quest of Immediacy

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The contributions of this volume give a fresh look at a well known issue: the immediacy of religious experience. They do it by means of theoretical investigation. This approach might be taken as an opposition: on the one side direct experience, on the other side analytic distance. Our introduction tries to open the quest for the relation between experience and analytic investigation, we will draw some lines through the history of arguments, and finally we will give a short overview of the various contributions.

The Issue: Immediacy of Religious Experience and its Critique

Immediacy of religious experience was and somehow still is self-evident. For a long time referring to experience was estimated almost identical with being in touch with the core of religion. To appeal in religious matters to one’s own experience was and is identified as referring to an unquestioned everyday plausibility of one’s own faith. At least throughout the last two centuries this reference time and again has been used as the basis and the final means to preserve the internal certainty of religious belief against questioning from outside and as defense against estrangement of faith by secular reason. It was used as both, as strong protection against external theological authorities and as a means to withdraw from the need to defend faith against reason. The appeal to an immediacy of religious certainty in one’s own experience thus seemed the ultimate stronghold against any modern secular philosophical and psychological critique on religion.

In the history of western religion this appeal to immediacy has not only been vivid as a naïve stance of uneducated religious people. Taking the heart and fire of religion as unmediated contact to the deity is to be found also within prominent theological and philosophical reflection. To elaborate this idea people drew especially on the similarity between religion and
Everyday Culture Research and the Challenges of Immediacy

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology/Volkskunde

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The subject of Cultural Anthropology/Volkskunde is the study of everyday life culture and the daily life performances of historically bound cultural patterns. As religion and everyday life are interwoven multifariously it may be interesting to point out some theoretical and methodological considerations about researching everyday life culture that have proven their usefulness in many studies and that might be fruitfully transferable to empirical research projects about religion.

Even though everyday life is one of the central categories for studies in Cultural Anthropology/Volkskunde, it proves to be rather problematic in some aspects (cf. Lipp: 1993). Despite the difficulty to define it in a precise manner, this category is still estimated exactly for its flexibility as a very important and useful description of what cultural anthropologists are interested in: the complex and multifarious cultural relationships and systems of significance and reference man is living in. As background of the "normal daily life" the everyday life is both important and constitutive for human existence and difficult to study for the researcher.

According to P. Bourdieu and his habitus concept, it is broadly agreed that everyday life in many aspects is driven by durable internalized cultural rules and patterns of behaviour that have to be seen both as group-specific and as historically developed as well (cf. Lipp: 1993, 25). Hence everyday

1 For linguistic support I would like to thank Mr. Dieter Heimerdinger and Mr. Thomas Schneider very much!

2 Up to the 1960s, the discipline had the common denominator "Volkskunde". From 1970 onwards a variety of different names can be found: Volkskunde, Europäische Ethnologie (European Ethnology), Kulturanthropologie (Cultural Anthropology), Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (Empirical Cultural Studies), Populäre Kulturen (Popular Cultures) and others, sometimes even in combination. At Mainz for example, where I am currently situated, the discipline is called "Kulturanthropologie/Volkskunde" at the moment. In spite of various thematic amplifications in the last decades, the thematic and regional priority of the discipline is still far reaching on the German-speaking areas of Europe. Therefore the major part of the publications cited in my contribution is German.
life often is traditionally mediated, experienced, precognitive and built up by routines. This means that it is a form of interaction and world-perception that is mainly dominated by immediate experiences and performative patterns. In these structural aspects it is similar to many forms of religious life. Methodologically, research has to recover these constitutive factors of immediacy, unconsciousness, historicity and performativity. To enable itself for research on everyday life, Cultural Anthropology/Volkskunde was constrained during the last decades to deal with these aspects on a theoretical and a methodological level and to find answers to the question how to transform immediate practice into the mediated forms of research.

This article will point out three principal theoretical aspects of everyday life culture and present some methodical requirements that derive as consequences from these general considerations. The first part of the text deals with the concept of everyday life culture in general. The second part discusses the relationship of discourse and practice in daily performed culture, whereas the third part will focus on cultural rules and their range limits on collective and individual levels. Concluding my contribution I will add some ideas about the problems of scientific (re)presentation of research results. Though with different settings of priorities, every aspect treats the general problem of the necessity to handle the immediacy of life “in the field” within the structures and rules of mediated research-designs.

1. Concomitance of the Non-Coeval: About the Historicity of the Presence

Let us first take a look at the concept of every day life culture regarding the relevance and function of historical references within the current cultural process. One of the most influential and considerable debates that has occupied the discipline Volkskunde for more than thirty years since the early sixties is the so called Folklorismusdebatte (Moser: 1962; 1964; Bausinger: 1966; Köstlin: 1970; 1982; Bodemann: 1983; Bausinger: 1984; Welz: 1996). The debate, set off by H. Moser in 1962, started out from the observation that in many cultural contexts, e.g. traditional costume processions, carnival, usages or traditional handicraft-presentations, certain cultural elements were performed and presented as “old” but under the conditions of very modern and actual circumstances, like tourism or mass media reception. Moser stated that the “old”, even if practiced as in times of old (which was often not the case), was basically presented as “ancient” for a certain audience with ostentation and, thus, after functional and even phenomenological shifts has been totally re-contextualized. Moser called this “folk culture at second hand” (“Volkskultur aus zweiter Hand”, cf. Moser: 1962, 180). The problem in question was how to treat these different modes of “being old” from the perspective of culture analytical studies. In the beginning, the debate focused on efforts to identify cultural elements as “true” or “false”, as “original” or “reproduced”. But very soon it became clear that this academic quest of authenticity within popular culture would not be a fruitful way to understand how cultures work. On the contrary, the debate gradually showed that even if authenticity in popular culture remains an important keyword (Bendix: 1997) the dichotomy of authentic vs. bogus culture as heuristic presumption for cultural studies is misleading. And what is more, it ignores one basic insight:

Even though it cannot be denied that there has been a remarkable increase of these phenomena during the last 200 years, processes of modification, citation, transformation and adaption are not specifically modern or even post-modern effects. They are basic principles of cultural activities in general, the concomitance of the non-coeval (Gleichzeitig des Un- gleichzeitigen) is a characteristic feature, even a constitutive factor (cf. Köstlin: 1973). Therefore, the judgement of cultural elements whether they are “true” or “false” no longer seemed to make sense. In the course of the debate the focus changed, and gradually the concentration shifted to the question how and why these strange arrangements and mixtures of “old”, “new”, “original”, “reinvented” and “actual” were culturally built. It became increasingly clear that it is an inevitable part of the conditio humana to deal with various elements of a historically stratified culture at one time. This understanding of the different functional forms and performative levels of this current treatment of “the past” was strongly stimulated by British historian E. Hobsbawm’s formula of “The Invention of Tradition” that pointed out clearly, how cultures use the past to stabilize their present situation and to form regional, social, ethnic etc. identities (cf. Hobsbawm/Ranger: 1983).

In the end it has been realized that there is no possibility to qualify or evaluate the various modes and forms of using the past culturally. It turned out to be of higher relevance to analyze and understand their function in every single case and to accept that handling of the past always remains a part of the cultural process, also including elements of former scientific studies that “suddenly” appear in popular culture (cf. Welz: 1996, 58–60). These mechanisms, desired or not, are part of the reflexive modern culture, and therefore have to be subjects of research interest as well. It can be seen as a significant characteristic of modernity, to legitimate current phenomena with historical narratives of reference (cf. Köstlin: 1995, 259, 263).
K. Köstlin, who is a German “Volkskundler” who has been working in this area for many years, gives an example for the procedure, how currently relevant concepts of identity are drawn from the past. In 1989, the German region Baden-Wuerttemberg, especially the Protestant parts of it, celebrated the 250th birthday of the famous pietistic pastor Philipp Matthäus Hahn. With remarkable effort five exhibitions about Hahn were worked out. But the most remarkable thing was that these exhibitions did not so much center on Philipp Matthäus Hahn as a pastor, but on the personal character of Hahn and on his non-pastoral activities as a tinkerer (“Tüfler”) and a constructor of clockworks. He was celebrated as “father of high-tech” and thus a reasonable quasi obligatory connection has been constructed between the historical person of Hahn and the current Baden-Wuerttemberg known for its well-developed high-tech and car industry (DaimlerChrysler, Porsche etc.). This is only one example, how history can be used selectively to create or at least to support such strong cultural formations as “tradition” or “identity”.

Without deepening this cultural pattern here, there remains the basic conceptional understanding that in questions of popular culture the presence is never separable from the past. This does not only mean that the current situation is a result of historical developments – this is trivial and no one would doubt it. It rather means that the past in many ways is actually a part of the presence: the past is still present. Man is unable to live without explicit or implicit reference to the past, which can be the personal, national, collective or individual past. Several studies showed clearly, how historical modes of nature-perception still determine for example actual patterns to perceive the Alps or the German forest (Tschofen: 1999; Lehmann: 1999). I can even go one more step ahead: The handling of the past is not only useful to stabilize certain types of identity-architecture, the reference to the past in some cases even seems to be a value for itself. In many fields of popular culture one can see how groups constitute their group-identity by declaring themselves as part of a wider context, therefore by being part of something. This context can be a regional, an ideological, a social, ethnic or a temporal one. Many cultural associations for example argue with their own tradition in which they stand as a basic element of their identity concept and from there they get relevant impulses concerning their self-image. The cultural pattern of “standing in a tradition” or “being part of something” is an essential one in many fields of popular culture and also in the field of religion. In this perspective it becomes quite clear that many cultural processes are only understandable if their historical development is considered as well, even the actual culture is related to the past in a complex way. Tradition is not only relevant on a collective, which means, group-, nation-, or culture-wide level, but also on an individual one. Via biographical narratives and personal memories the past inevitably extends into the presence.

These mechanisms are also relevant in specifically religious contexts on various levels: the tradition of faith and dogmas as mediated by church, the forms and the customs of religious life within family contexts, personal experiences and histories referring to religiousness and finally also the social, institutional and ritual characteristics of religiousness in single local congregations – in every case the handling and construction of “history” and “tradition” is of prominent interest. Are there as well procedures of inventing traditions that should be noticed? It is of high relevance to understand how and wherefore the reference to the past is used.

The main methodical consequence from these considerations is that for research projects concerning the current situation, designs that combine a present-empirical with historical perspectives have to be found. The historical elements are so important and functionally relevant that it is inevitable to identify them and understand their formation and former meaning to understand – maybe in contrast – their actual meaning and relevance. But unlike some culture-historical studies, this is not aiming at judgement, whether history is used in a “correct” or “incorrect” manner, such a way of questioning would miss the chance to understand how and with which shifting implications history is culturally treated. However this treatment of history may be described, focusing on explicit citations of the “historical” in various identity-building discourses or looking at implicit effects and continuities for historically established modes of perception or acting patterns one central finding will be received: culture is not necessarily bound to epochs, but in contrast there will always be found a complex interwoven system of elements that refer to different temporal or functional origins, but are parts of the same presence. Present culture in this way disrupts the idea of a clear chronological order, but presents a form of time spanning immediacy.

While this first aspect of the concomitance of the non-coeval has touched a general conceptional problem of how cultures work, the next two aspects concern problems of methodological access to cultural reality, but self-evident also starting from principal theoretical reflections.

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5 A good example for this biographically driven presence of the past can be found in a study about inherited things by Langein (2002b).
2. Discourse-Practice-Theatricality: About the Limited Significance of Texts and the Force of Practice

After the linguistic turn in humanities and the boom of the Foucault-inspired discourse-analysis in the last decades the culture-as-text-metaphor made a glorious career (cf. Bachmann-Medick: 2004). The writing culture debate, mainly inspired by C. Geertz and his semiotic conception of culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz: 1973, 89) helped to come to the realization that in fact culture in many ways is language mediated and textually configured (especially in the modern north-western hemisphere), so that the analyses of texts can actually lead me to central cultural mechanisms.

It is undisputable that the analysis of texts as cultural manifestations and therefore as sources is essential for cultural studies. Especially in historical research texts and papers are mostly the only available sources and the analysis with discourse-analytical and content-analytical methods can bring out valuable and stimulating results, especially about the corresponding effective cultural rules and norms and about their historical development. But there often remains a certain insecurity how close these forms of source-interpretation can actually lead the researcher to the level of practiced everyday life in these times. However, these mainly text-based studies are without practicable alternatives. Looking at the present cultural situation, also here lots of texts, pictures and other media-products that are easily available: the internet for example generates a huge quantity of actual primary sources that seem worthy and significant for up-to-date cultural analyses (cf. Hengartner: 2001). Obviously the mass media influences on daily life contexts have become much more influential and dominant as some decades before. But as the culture-as-text-paradigm has always been a model for interpretation and has of course always implied the possibility of an empirical approach to culture by generating data, the facile availability of textual material, combined with one as a silver bullet promoted culture-as-text metaphor in some areas slightly seems to have led to the misinterpretation of “culture as text” as a “text-as-culture” concept. Several reasons may be therefore responsible. First of all a pragmatic one: texts are often the most easily available types of sources, and a mainly language-based concept of culture eases to justify text-based studies. Secondly, this concept of culture for many mainly text-orientated disciplines as for example the various literary studies opened the possibility to define themselves easily as cultural studies with a general claim of competence.

But apart from this more or less political aspect, there is one simple obvious principal objection against such an exclusively text-based approach to everyday life culture: everyday life is lived and not written. The practice of the daily cultural performance generates a gap between the culturally constitutive texts and the “real life”. This gap has methodologically been mentioned, if the researcher wants to make sure not turning himself into a bookman or geek. For ethnographical studies it is absolutely not sufficient to concentrate on written, printed or published material, even if the mass and the availability may be seductive, because paper doesn’t blush. Everyday life is realized by acting bodily, not only by coding/decoding the world and other semiotic operations. Mainly powered by the ethnological experience, also in the German Volkskunde the importance of the acting-related dimension of culture has been realized. In the tradition of van Gennep’s rites de passage or Turner’s liminality-concept it has clearly been seen that relevant aspects of everyday life are realized by collective actions and ritual proceedings: not only the religious rituals, but also events of sociability, group-constitution within youth-culture, family-life and working-life as well can be analyzed under the paradigm of rituality as well. But also in other disciplines there seemed to grow a certain discomfort about the exclusivity with which a semiotic concept of culture under the text-paradigm was handled.

The continued speech of various “turns” that reportedly happened and happen in humanities is a lively expression of the consciousness that the text-model alone for itself can not be sufficient to describe cultural activities completely. After the linguistic turn also the interpretive, performative, reflexive, literary, postcolonial, translational, spatial, theatrical and the iconic turn have been diagnosed (cf. Bachmann-Medick: 2006).

Among the various models, one in the last years has been the subject of a very lively and fruitful interdisciplinary discussion: the model of theatricality (cf. Fischer-Lichte: 1995a; 1995b; 2004). In a DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) priority program the concept of theatricality has been developed and discussed as a cultural model in humanities, not only in theatre studies but also in everyday culture research (cf. Heimerdinger: 2005). Even if it is impossible to report here the whole discussion in its various disciplinary specifications it is worth to have a look on the central ideas and terms of the concept and to see what is the heuristic profit available from using this model. The central idea is to take the theatrical situation that someone impersonates a role and presents this role in front of an audience as a metaphor for culture in general.6 Starting from this idea and understanding theatricality not only in a narrow theatre-specific, but in a wider cultural sense, the theatrical situation can be split up into four aspects.

6 One of the still most common definitions of theatre is from E. Bentley: “The theatrical situation, reduced to a minimum, is that A impersonates B while C looks on” (Bentley: 1966, 150).
as analytical categories, that accentuate different aspects of the cultural process—needless to say that they are dialectically related to each other and only theoretically separable.

The first of these aspects is the activity of staging that takes place behind the curtain. This aspect corresponds with the job of the director and also somehow of the author: someone has to plan the whole thing, to choose the right words, costumes, requisites and tools for expression and has to calculate the impressions and the effects of the play to the audience. The aspect of staging refers to the semiotic aspect of culture that implicates the generation of meaning and that is analyzable by studying texts and other intellectual or cognitively accessible material. To research the aspect of staging, all varieties of discourse analysis are suitable methods. Dealing with the dimension of staging in the cultural analyses, means to de- and re-construct the semiotic architecture of cultural phenomena, to exemplify the intertextuality of various cultural elements and to interpret culture within the paradigm of an intentional communication process (cf. Fischer-Lichte: 2004, 14).

But as shown above, culture consists not only of thoughts, texts and meaning—there are also real human beings who have to live their lives and thus to embody the system of cultural meaning. Therefore the second aspect of theatricality is corporeality. As a play is not realizable in an empty space, but is always and necessarily bound to specific actors with their specific personal and physical characteristics (there is not an abstract “Hamlet” on the stage but always a certain individual Hamlet, played by a certain person) also culture is body-bound. Human life is only thinkable in connection with human bodies and—in a wider sense—with the material world. Treating this physical dimension of culture, one has to distinguish two forms. Rather close to the metaphor of “theatre”, there is the procedure of embodiment, which means, as described above, that a person impersonates a certain concept as, for example, the culturally configured role of a doctor or a pastor. Within this process a person brings an abstract conception of a certain role to a concrete reality, using his distinctive and individual body and “lending” his physical conditions to form this single concrete exemplar, for example, of a doctor. While in this case the body acts as a vehicle to concrete a certain concept, the other form of culturally relevant corporeality can be found in the fact that the body itself becomes an essential part of cultural ideas and becomes therefore not only a “container” but part of the “content”. In some cases culture becomes a corporeal reality and is not separable from this any more. Scharfe cites a saying from Ludwig Wittgenstein: “To kneel down doesn’t assist praying, but man kneels down anyhow.” In this context Scharfe speaks of the culture as a second nature of

the acting bodies and all the effects of the presence of a however conditioned audience.

It is clear that culture is not theatre, but it can fruitfully be described as theatrical. The model of theatricality can neither explain culture nor give answers to the questions of interpretation, nor describe it completely. But keeping the four aspects in mind can be helpful to keep present that culture is a complex system that acts on different levels, and that these levels are interwoven and are interdependently connected. The model of theatricality, taken as heuristic tool, can lead the researcher through the complex cultural reality and can be a strong reminder for complex, multi-sided research designs. And moreover “theatricality” as a model demands acknowledging the inseparability of certain cultural aspects from others. This makes clear that the production of meaning is unthinkable without the handling of bodies and vice versa. In this way “theatricality” refers to a deeply inherent structure of immediacy within the system of culture. “Culture” means the whole correlation of the various dimensions. It is also clear that doing research projects is often, maybe even always, dominated by procedures of (analytical) separation, isolation or distinction. This is necessary to identify certain factors, to measure them precisely and to describe and appreciate them separately. The academic approach to reality very often is not a holistic but an analytic one. This fact itself does not have to be criticised, but it has to be distinctive that the imagination of “reality” that comes out of this approach has necessarily to be fragmentary. The model of theatricality can be a helpful warning, that is absolutely not sufficient to analyze the various dimensions of culture separately but that is important to correlate them again after the analytical work. In this perspective theatricality can help to research the immediacy of everyday life.

It becomes clear that putting all this together culture, as a system of meaning and the aspects of practice, can only be studied in a well-balanced methodological combination. The discourse-analytical grasp by the analysis of texts, documents and monuments, and the empirical grasp in the full breadth and creativity of qualitative and quantitative methods have to be brought, tightly combined, to a close application. From the perspective of cultural anthropology especially the qualitative hermeneutic methods and therein particularly the method of participant observation (cf. Jorgensen: 1989) promise to generate further leading results if the researcher dares to walk the talk and to practice the research process as a highly involving and personally touching activity. Rolf Lindner states about the essence of field research that it has to become a total experience including the ideal of the researcher’s “total immersion” into the context of his subject (cf. Lindner: 2003, 186). The immediacy of the performed culture has methodologically to be answered by a reflected immediacy of the researcher’s access to the field. The model of theatricality can therefore be helpful, and looking at religious life under this theatrical perspective, already at the first glance, a lot of accordances or contact points can be identified: Obviously the factor of role play is an important element within the religious practice thinking of what is happening during the religious service. The system of presentation, incorporation and watching itself is frequently changing. There are elements of sensual experiences (singing), performative acts (the Lord’s Supper) and other theatrically understandable ones which are tightly (with each other) interwoven forms that could be analyzed productively.


The next aspect is directly connected with the previous argument and continues the discourse of the gap between texts and practice on another level. There is a second gap: the gap between general, culturally established rules and individual requirements or individual implementation of these rules which are often connected with specific transformations. This can be studied at one simple example: “Christmas” is, among other aspects, correctly describable as a strong, tradition-mediated and culturally deeply anchored collective pattern of which exists a collective, broadly conform conception. With its specification as a family celebration with an accent on making presents to children, Christmas, under cultural aspects, is clearly connectable with the traditions and particularities of the 19th century bourgeoisie culture. The dominant values here are family-life, harmony and sociability (cf. Weber-Kellermann: 1974, 223–243). But taking a closer empirically based look not only at the collective Christmas concept, but on real Christmas celebrations, a broad variety of different forms, customs, procedures and even meanings that are connected with this event can easily be observed. Families will surely be found who celebrate Christmas in the above mentioned manner. But there will also be some more empirically observable Christmas versions. In many contexts Christmas is celebrated under specific conditions with specific priorities, customs and rules typical of specific groups. In extreme examples even such Christmas versions can be found where the general concept is turned upside down and in the center of the event there is no harmony and sociability but loneliness and desperation (cf. Langbein: 2002a).

8 For role playing as cultural activity E. Goffmans (1959) classical study is still inspirational: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.
If I want to study culture, I have to focus general rules and concepts but I also have to look at the variety of practical forms and especially to register the difference between both. There is a gap between the collective pattern of culture – and culture as well as religion is at first necessarily a collective phenomenon – and the individual, situational and empirically observable forms of culture. This principal open gaping of well-imagined and realized everyday life is an observation that thwarts every form of methodical restraint. Theoretically, it is based on what U. Eco calls the “contradictory format of the Global Semantic Space” (Eco: 1976, 316). The contradiction and ambiguousness of the world are fundamental facts of its constitution. The task is to accept initially this poly-valence of culture as a matter of principal and then to integrate it systematically into research designs. This means to understand the diverging, even paradoxical forms of cultural practice not as matters of cultural inaccuteness which have to be accepted with a shrug, but to esteem them as characteristics of human culture, whereupon research has to ask specifically. Ambiguous and ambivalence have to be basic elements of the heuristic approach. A mode of interpretation that accepts ambiguity and equivocality as normal is needed – giving up the illusion that culture or human behaviour could be described “exactly” or free from contradictions. In contrast: the semantic iridescence and the functional plurality are significant for human beings in general.

This demands methodical creativity from the researcher. First of all, it requires the openness or even the expectation to find this phenomenon of cultural iridescence and secondly the intention to elaborate this concept of culture in the research studies explicitly. Such a culture-relativistic approach requires a strictly reflexive attitude on the part of the researcher, who has to be able both to look at familiar phenomena out of a certain and necessary distance as well as to reckon with unexpected impressions. Otherwise it will be impossible for the researcher to study a cultural system of which he himself is a part of.

Within the discipline Volkskunde there is a broad and strong tradition of studies about popular religiousness (“Volksfrömmigkeit”; cf. Daxelmüller: 2001). For years there has been a debate how this research should be accentuated. One position emphasizes that it should and could be given more much more attention to the individual dimension of religious life than in the past – using for example autobiographical material (cf. Daxelmüller: 2001, 508; Mohrmann: 1997) –, the other position argues that Volkskunde should concentrate on the perspective of religion as a cultural, which in this case especially means a collective, phenomenon, and that therefore subjective religiousness is not an issue, Volkskunde could competently deal with (cf. Scharfe: 1997; 2004). Not having the intention to continue this debate, it seems to me to be obvious that an empirical approach to religion would have to consider the individual dimension of cultural acquisition necessarily. The dichotomies of power and resistance, authority and autonomy can be brought to insight as relevant dimensions of human life only in a dialectic perspective considering both religion as a collective system of rules, norms, customs, meanings, rituals etc. as well as the modes of personal acquisition of this system.

4. Conclusion and the Problem of Representation

Putting the three outlined aspects together it can be said that the cultural anthropological experience first of all teaches one insight: everyday culture is a complex matter that has to be studied within several heuristic dichotomies: past and present, text and practice, mind and body, collective system and individual case. Of high importance is the understanding that each of these antagonistic factors is not thinkable for its own. They refer to each other and only within this oscillating interaction they develop their impact.

Only within these dialectically accessible fields can culture be studied in its full richness and multifariousness including the phenomenon of tradition and change. In the consequent connection of theoretical, discourse analytical and field entering empirical, the researcher’s subject involving, approach the functional dimensions of culture for the people who realize it, can become understandable. Apart from the question how these requirements methodologically could be taken into account practically, wherefore I tried to give some suggestions, there still remains one problem at the end of every research project: If culture (and religion as well) is so much multi-layered, also implying non-verbal, corporal, haptic and other sensual aspects, therefore going beyond the scope of language and rationality, how the academically accepted presentation of the research results can adequately be realized?

In Cultural Anthropology/Volkskunde various efforts have been made to treat this problem: One of the found solutions is to present a rather high quality of the primary material (i.e. interview material) to transport not only the content but also the “flavour” and whole context of the situation and to make it at least better accessible for the reader. Another solution is trying to find other creative and surprising forms to present results: pictures,

9 Evaluating hitherto existing research activities, one has to state that Volkskunde/Cultural Anthropology has been mainly focussed on motive-historical studies, and questions of traditions, rites and usages (cf. Hartinger: 1992), even if some recent studies try to enter the field of religious practice (to give only a few examples – Aka: 2002; Hüttermeyer: 2004; Wiebel-Panderl: 2001).
films, graphics or auditory documents can be helpful instruments to mediate certain insights also in the academic field – even if they may sometimes tend to turn a little bit from science to art because of their aesthetic shape. Whatever effort has been taken to represent everyday life in academic formats, it necessarily has to remain fragmentary and therefore has to be marked as temporary and incomplete in any case.

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10 A nice example for presenting some aspects of religion within a semi-academic publication using visual material is Aka: 2003.