Embodied Theology

The Relation of Image and Body
as a Theological Problem

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1.1. Leonine embodiment

A lion is a lion is a lion and never ceases to be. In the wild he simply is
what he is: a living animal, an ensouled body, a danger for his prey and
maybe for his hunters too, be they armed with guns or cameras. Could
we say, that the lion embodies a lion? No other lion would differentiate
between the lion and the embodiment.

This, though, is where the difficulties begin. For observers the lion
embodies for instance 'danger', the fulfilment of safari dreams, or even
the sublime. Perception makes it into the specimen of a genus (as synec-
doche) or the king of beasts (as metaphor) or the embodiment of wild
nature (as metonymy). The lion is always more to the observer than a
mere lion: predator and prey, admired and feared, mythical creature and
majesty, a *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinosum*. The lion embodies some-
thing else, that is seen in him one way or the other. We might call this an
elementary embodiment or embodiment *in vivo*, in nature, where we are, in
the midst of things, in the midst of bodies and powers.

If the lion fares badly he will be caught and caged, and so will become
his own picture. He is a lion and remains a lion but he is exposed, exhi-
bited and functions as a 'living image' of a lion. The visitor can observe
him in the safety of aesthetical distance, just as he observes humans in
containers and politicians in a glasshouse. When he is taken from his
natural 'Sitz im Leben', caged and fed, then the lion becomes his own
actor. We might call this a *schematic embodiment* (corresponding to the
schematic image act). Behind bars the lion becomes his own *tableau vi-
vant*. 'Man is the animal that keeps animals. First domestic animals and
later on zoo animals',[1] as Hans Blumenberg has noted.

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[1] 'Der Mensch ist das Tier, das sich andere Tiere hält. Zuerst als Haustiere, dann viel
später als Schautiere.' Hans Blumenberg, *Löwen* (Frankfurt M: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 90.

When the lion fares even worse, as every lion must, he will end up as a dead lion. Usually the dead are withdrawn from view, for in their corpselike likeness with themselves they are uncanny and frightening, more *tremendum* than *fascinosum*. But the dead can also be preserved. The lion might fare similarly, when he is stuffed and magnificently mounted, perhaps at the entrance of a museum. Whatever it is that the lion embodies is then a product of artificial preparation with a view to *substitutional embodiment* (which corresponds to the substitutional image act). He represents on one side the past and passed lion, which he once was, but on the other side he not only *represents*, he also *is* past yet present. He is no longer the living presence of himself, as in the wild or in the cage, but he still is 'really' present in his own preserved body although this presence might be artificially constructed. If we were to burn the stuffed lion, we would destroy the passed lion. In this way, effigies of leaders can be burned in substitution.[2]

When finally someone portrays the lion, he lives on or is resurrected as the image in the image, and becomes an *intrinsic embodiment*. Of what exactly? Is it embodiment of the lion, of the genus in symbolic generalisation, or used allegorically as a monarch's emblem? It seems that the first and elementary meaning of embodiment surfaces in the intrinsic embodiment, though it might be aesthetically sublimated: If we understand the image not as a depiction or representation of something withdrawn, then the image *is* an image (as the lion is a lion). The image *is* a body and embodies itself, so that it shall live eternally.[3]

1.2. Embodiments of God

Isaiah says: 'For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, (...) so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof' (Isaiah 31. 4).[4]

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[2] Stuffed lions are (fortunately) rare these days but not images (which 'are' what they show as well): shrouds and relics of saints, jerseys of stars and other contact relics of celebrities, a lover's ringlet, rulers who lie in state or the presentation of an embalmed pope. All of them are substitutive embodiments and it is just as difficult to understand what you see, what becomes apparent and how these images work.

[3] It should be noted that images themselves have to pass and vanish as time goes by. This is what anti-aging techniques and conservators try to counteract: images are embalmed so that their physical body stays young.

[4] Cf. Jer 49. 19; 50. 44; biblical quotations follow the New International Version (NIV).

God as a lion – that fits. For 'in the wild' God is perilous. Merely seeing God is deadly, according to Old Testament tradition. When Moses says, 'Now show me your glory,' Yahwe states clearly: 'But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live' (Ex 33. 18.20).

And why is that? Probably because the finite would vanish in the light of the infinite, would be the platonic answer. Or because his holiness would make the human fade away in his unholiness. Visual contact with God would in any case be insufferable. Later the simple rule reads: *finitum non capax infiniti*. Not because God himself would be deadly (for he is the creator and the cause of life), and not because his glance would turn us into stone (he is not Medusa), but, let us assume, because he is insufferably alive.

Leonardo da Vinci's note reads (as Horst Bredekamp reminds us): 'Do not unveil me, if you cherish your freedom, for my face is a dungeon of love'.[5] In regard to God this has to be more specific: 'Do not look, if you cherish your life, for to glance at my face is deadly.' Whether images can kill may be discussed. In regard to God it is unquestioned. That is why Yahweh takes curious precautions to prevent the encounter with Moses on Mount Sinai from ending fatally. Thus we read in Ex 33. 21-23,

> Then the LORD said, 'There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.

As life-threatening as it is for mortals to see God, it is yet assumed that he is not without a body. Though his *face* stays hidden eternally, his perceptible body is mainly the *voice* as phenomenon, as a trace in which God embodies himself and is truly present, as on Mount Sinai. Several such *sublimated embodiments* as the voice of God can be found in the Old Testament: the burning bush that does not consume itself,[6] the pillar of smoke and fire in the desert, or thunder, or a low whisper in a breath of wind. Those are *glare effects*, mostly reflected splendour (as on Moses' face), and *sound effects*. We could call them 'body-traces' that embody

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[5] Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts. Frankfurter Adorno-Vorlesungen 2007* (Frankfurt: M: Suhrkamp, 2010), p. 17.

[6] 'There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up' (Ex 3. 2, NIV).

God by either synecdoche (pars pro toto) or metonymy (concretum pro abstracto). But they are always *volatile* embodiments, traces of the withdrawn, which are nevertheless manifest, without becoming tangible or palpable.

This elucidates a symptomatic difference, a difference from the religious context of Israel in the ancient Near East. In this context, sculptural artefacts were usual, sculptures with a depictive quality such as statues, or a non-depictive quality such as stone pillars, which could, under ritually specific circumstances, embody gods.[7] Such material figures of presence, such tangible embodiments, were a problem for Israel, and even more were they 'abominations'. At first glance one might reasonably argue that in Israel there was no embodiment as presence, but only as a representation of God: commandments that represented his will but in which he himself was not present; practices of the temple, in which God was directly represented but not present in artefacts. That might well be so – but it is only half of the story.

Of course God is not 'only' represented: he *is* also present, again and again 'really present'. But how? To phrase it negatively: God is present without embodying himself in a way that would make him palpable and finite in an image cult, immanent in things. They are always embodiments at the level of immanence which nevertheless retain the transcendence. One could call them small incarnations, in which the corporeality however is always an external, precarious feature of the embodied, in no way 'intrinsic'. Therein Yahweh differs from other gods (which are but 'naught'), and therein Israel differs from other peoples. The relation of God and Israel as a 'covenant' will come to be ever more immaterialised more disembodied and more free. This has illuminated the problem of embodiment ever since. The solution seems to be: presence *without* embodiment – in an ever-widening divergence from their ancient Near Eastern and later Hellenistic environment.

There are difficulties. From both the inside as well as the outside, the history of divine embodiment could equally have been understood otherwise, in two respects. If we look at it from the outside, we clearly see wide differences between Israel and its environment, but the visible continuities are more prominent still. In Israel there undoubtedly were images, as well

as image-cult practices, and most of all there was an imagery, admittedly iconoclastic, in the realm of cult (temple, ark, cherubim, maybe even a statue of Yahweh?) And even if we look *from within* and *ex post*, through all the distinguished critique of the embodiments, a yet subtler refinement of divine embodiment appears in glare, voice, scripture and cult.

As little as Israel was aniconic, just as little did Yahweh only know non-visual or immaterial embodiment. When the divine will becomes the divine word, his covenant becomes a way of life and the rites become a temple cult, at which point Israel's religious history appears as a history of inventing non-depictive embodiments without an embodiment cult:

- *figurative language* in metaphor and the like (Yahweh as a lion)
- *iconoclastic cult images* (in the dark inner sanctum, in the empty ark, the empty cella)
- *ideography* in the graphic materiality of scripture and its visual staging
- *responding embodiment* in a *way of life* that accords to the Torah, and is in the ethos of the covenant. For the required equivalent to God's voice, command and promise is loyalty to the covenant from the Israelites, which means obedience to his voice and a lifestyle in accordance with his will, in the shape of the Torah. The embodiment of God's will *in vivo* is the religious way of life: the ethos. Therefore 'the righteous man' is the embodiment not of God but of his will. The righteous sufferer (Isaiah's suffering Servant of Yahweh) shows this as clearly as that suffering Servant, who was to be exposed to beatings and ridicule in the Ecce homo.[8]

God, the lion, was doubtless perilous in the wild. He did not remain so. His very voice and name were self-commitments in the self-revelation,

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[7] Cf. Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder. Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

[8] But this embodiment of God's will is morally not as pure and formal as neo-kantian philosophy of religion tried to portray it. Though fidelity to the covenant might not be represented in a cult of bodies, it is in fact represented in bodily aspects of the cult, as in circumcision. What is crucial is the responsory embodiment in life. It might seem exaggerated to speak of a 'biological power' that religions wield by ruling over the bodies of believers, but despite all restraint even in Christianity we find similar phenomena, not only in the case of the Jesuits or Opus Dei. An unostentatious version is the service law [Dienstrecht] of the principal protestant churches in Germany, which is supposed to regulate the lifestyle of pastors and their families. Seen from a socio-historical perspective, the pastors' family are the successors of conventuals who were to embody a sacred life. Hence the careful supervision of these rules, not only by church officials but by parishioners as well. Residental obligation, perpetual availability and rigorous moral standards codify a 'corporate identity' which embody the moral ideals of an institution.

which made him addressable and, if not controllable, then determinable after all. He could be called upon by his name and be taken at his word. The voice was not long the only sublimated trace of embodiment. God became word, Torah, inscriptions in Tablets of Law and scrolls. By this the liminal embodiment in voice is transcended and we enter the materiality of scripture – as far as the embodiment in iconicity of scripture, when the Torah scroll is carried around, dressed, celebrated and kissed (on Simchat Torah). At this point the 'actual' cult image is not a golden calf but the Torah scroll. For it does not only represent God's will, it also *embodies* him in the shape of the 'holy' scripture. For this reason Torah scrolls are ritually animated before they are used, and buried after long years in the burial place of liturgical scriptures named Genizah.

God's word as scripture is no longer God 'in the wild', but a God who is *bound* to his word, fixed in writing, embodied in parchment, celebrated, carried, and kissed. It does not follow that God is in some sense behind bars like the lion in the zoo, but he himself formed a bond, in the commitment of the covenant (whether it be the Old Testament or the New).

Evidently those determinations and bonds may only be attributions. But it marks an important difference to understand them as *self*-attributions and self-revelations of Yahweh. The attributions should be set as not-set. This means that the attributed one has attributed *himself* in this way and bound himself to his word. We could point to that as an ultimate self-empowerment of those attributions. 'From within' the religion (in vivo) it is understood as 'given' or, in religious terms, as 'revealed'. Hence these regulations (like a written constitution) are by no means the object of changes; indeed they are withdrawn from the later generation's disposal.

1.3. Christ as God's embodiment

With the lion in mind, we might expect that after the dangerous vision of God and the God who is bound in the word of scripture, the next step would be the dead God, or even the stuffed God who is displayed as an image in the image. If not impossible, such a development would be somewhat excessive and at all events much too fast. The 'crucified God' points to Christ as the embodiment of God. In retrospect Christians consider his life and death as the ultimate and definitive embodiment of God – well nested in media. For the 'true images' are once again embodiments of Christ (e.g. the Veil of Veronica, the crucifix, the Shroud of

Turin). Word and Eucharist become repeatable embodiments, to the end that the life of Christians shall *in vivo* be the final embodiment of Christ.

This cascade of embodiments has its beginning in the strong invisibility of Yahweh: 'No one has ever seen God' (John 1. 18). A new embodiment of God takes the place of temple cult and Torah: 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14. 9) is what the Johannine Christ says. This has ascribed to Christ an *ex post* characteristic, namely that he is *in vivo* the living image of God. It cannot merely mean a schematic or substitutive embodiment. As an *intrinsic* image-act Christ *is* actually the one he embodies – or he is the one who embodies himself in him.

The metaphysically dark-sounding predication of Christ as 'true God and true man', the Homoousian of father and son, insists that it is not a bodiless god who is (temporarily) embodied here. The familiar platonic model of immaterial ideas that become bodies in the depiction, or of disembodied souls, that inspirit different bodies on their journey, is here confronted with the christological de-platonisation. 'Platonic' embodiment is marked by the dualism, by which the true being is actually bodiless and immaterial, and its embodiment is only secondary, so that the embodiment can only be ontologically inferior and temporary. Whether that applies to Plato's theory of forms is another question, which, faced with his ambiguous relationship to art, should be evaluated in a more differentiated way. [9] That Platonists and Neoplatonists seem to have thought so is clear, from what is attested in gnostic and ascetic effective history.

The christological ultimatum contradicts the ontological dualism (or the ontological comparative 'per visibilia ad invisibilia'): Christ *is* God and vice versa God *is* Christ. This (for Greeks) absurd or (for Jews) blasphemous thesis may be called paradox, since on the one hand it is contrary to expectation and on the other is contrary to visual inspection. Who would call a human being God, even if it were an extraordinary person? And who would understand God as thoroughly present in this person? To that end the christological point shows a reversal of thrust in the perception and conception of the divine: God is not inhabiting the heavens only to be temporarily embodied in this world, and promptly returning, nor is he 'actually' transcendent and only 'non-actually' here and there immanent: he is, rather, actually and essentially immanent and

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[9] Cf. Maria Luisa Catoni, *Schemata. Comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica* (Turin: Bonglatti Bringheri, 2008).

therein transcendent. The difference from a transcendence without im-manence is self-evident, but the difference from an immanence without transcendence is considerably less transparent. For it is only if we see 'more' in Christ than a mere *exemplum* of immanent fate, that he is per-ceptible as an embodiment of God. And it is not until then that our un-derstanding of God is brought into play.

Without any further discussion of the christological paradox, its con-sequence for the embodiment is to that extent clear, that it by no means suggests and preserves the platonic dualism, but that on the contrary we should here (in allusion to Blumenberg's 'absolute metaphor') speak of 'absolute embodiment'. There is nothing that, actually bodiless, 'becomes embodied', but rather the embodied is only present in this embodiment and as this embodiment.[10]

Following the embodiment of God's will *in vivo* as a way of life ac-cording to the Torah, Christ can be grasped as the *embodied will of God*. But we must not overlook the distinction that *he*, not the Torah, embo-dies God in his person and his work. The protestant distinction of Law and Gospel is based hereon. Following the anti-platonic turn of Chris-tology we have to clarify the distinction that it is not merely the divine will that is illustrated by Christ's obedience, but that on the contrary it is the life and death of Christ which shows who God is and what his will is like. All other embodiments must be evaluated in his light. This is what the protestant 'solus Christus' means.

This exclusive attribution, condensed into the incredible sentence 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father', is located in *the place of scripture*. This is already Christ *in vitro*, Christ who has become scripture. Thus scripture embodies witness of him. Does that not mean that the scripture (as scripture!) becomes the *intrinsic* embodiment of what it bears witness to? Do its pages (called Gospel) become an intrinsic im-age-act? Or is this transition from life to scripture a relapse from spirit to letter? If we were to see it in that light then (according to the pla-tonic critique of scripture) the spirit would be actually alive, whereas

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[10] As a christological consequence those conceptions were refused that understood in-carnation as an embodiment (logos ensarkos) of a previously unembodied logos asarkos. Instead, Christ is originally logos ensarkos. The christological and trinitarian explanations have to be read as attempts to understand the very meaning of this ensarkos.

the letter would be dead (if not deadly). To understand scripture (as a book), as a similarly valid embodiment of God seems to equal the 'abso-lute embodiment': the Torah *is* God's will, the Gospel *is* the embodi-ment of Christ and therefore the Torah *is* God's word. Protestant teach-ing reasoned in this way only temporarily (in baroque scriptural doc-trine, with the theory of inspiration in mind). For Luther it was not scripture that is the Bible, which was understood as the word of God, but its appearance as *viva vox*, i.e. as scripture read and proclaimed. The 'absolute embodiment' is then neither a literary nor an iconic artefact, but rather a certain use in a certain context. The consequence of this distinction can be explained thus: what has to be called 'embodiment' can never be a thing 'in itself', a 'dead' thing like an artefact, it has to be the living form and the living use. A body like that of the scripture (or the Torah) is not *per se* an embodiment of God, but only its inspired use can be an embodiment: *in vivo*.

1.4. Embodiments of Christ: Christus in pictura?

God's embodiment *in vivo*, in Christ's life and death, *in vitro* of scripture and *in vivo* of scripture use – leads to the question: what does one see who looks at *pictures of Christ*? Christ *in picture* seems to suggest that such pictures are *substitute embodiments*, in which the picture is seen as the per-son and acts like that person. This leads to the tradition of Veronica, to pictures of Christ employed in cult practices, which are what they depict and depict what they are (such is the claim). Then pictures of Christ would be a substitute for him in 'happy exchange', just as are later the pictures of all saints.

The Christian acknowledgement of the picture as a medium that is worthy of God is a *wager* on the compatibility of the picture's potency and God's omnipotence. His potency should no more blast all pictures than should their power endanger his potency, but both shall coincide. This wager is of course founded in Christ as embodiment of God. When the Logos has become flesh and the visible creation has become the medium of reconciliation, then the visible becomes the place where the no-longer-invisible God is now perceptible. Accordingly metaphors can become the Word of God, and pictures can become images of God. God and Christ are now convertible, as are word and picture, because we see 'his glory,' and therefore the visible has become a fully valid medium of salvation. Thus the picture is now no longer a 'mere' medium that is *representing* x. It no

longer has the function of representing or depicting. Moreover it *is* the *presence* of the presented – as God's embodiment in Christ.

Christ as an image of God *is God*. Are then the pictures of Christ whom they represent also God? That would in any case be the maximum definition of an image: when Christ is that which he embodies, then the religiously strongest images can only be those, that not only represent and depict but *are* what they show; *they would have to show themselves, for they are what they show and show what they are*. These would be images that *went beyond the scope* of the preunderstanding of images as depictions, representations or symbols for a thing. These images would be not substitutive embodiments but rather *intrinsic embodiments in vivo*, if, in their effect in religious use, they were inspired.

Central to Christian tradition in this respect is the icon (Mandylion, Veronica), and in western tradition the Shroud of Turin, which plays a crucial role beyond all other relics. As a 'true icon' it claims to bear the imprint of Christ, and pretends therefore to be an imprint relic. (One could clone the deceased if we could find some cells on it…). The 'volto santo',[11] the 'Veil of Manoppello' claims the same with no less onto-iconological emphasis. It does not depict, but claims to be, the one it shows. The hand 'qui fecit' stays nameless and uncalled-for, concealed as well as repudiated, for it claims to be an *imprint*, a unique contact relic. The legend (which is similar to Veronica's) only knows one legitimate hand that made this image: it is the hand of the one who made this image himself. The hand of God authorises this picture.

Accordingly the holy image has to be loaded ontologically either, as in eastern traditions, by a platonic forma (eidos) with icons, or in Latin tradition by substance, body traces or even bones and the like. Then the image becomes the embodiment and essence of him that it shows. The image becomes an incarnation *sui generis*, an incarnation of the incarnated but meanwhile resurrected one, who now 're-incarnates' himself in the image as an image. In this way images of Christ would become derived but nevertheless (or to be more exact: therefore) equally valid embodiments (still dependent on founding legends, that shall guarantee the substitution of Christ's body by the body of the image.)

Viewed in that light the holy image becomes the embodiment of holiness. These pictures seen *as pictures* are not only substitutive image

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[11] A vultus sanctus: a holy face.

acts, but also at the same time *intrinsic* image acts. Because here both become effective, the body of the image and the image as a body – independently of their legendary ballast. All strategies that try to 'verify' the 'authenticity' of these iconic artefacts or at least disprove their falsifications by historical, empirical or scientific means are understandable efforts to keep the reality of the imaginary open for the religious desire. But this is already irritatingly self-contradictory: in historical and empirical apologetics, methods are used that are plainly incompetent regarding the pretended divine origin of the 'acheiropoieta'.

If we understand these images not against their legendary background, but as images and as iconic artefacts (just as scripture is also an artefact) then we are relieved at once of all apologetic strategies. To take the artefacts *as images* enables a distinctive increase of analytical sensitivity, opens a channel to their internal dynamics. They are potent, powerful, and effective, however they are viewed. We would be well advised therefore to perceive them as *image acts* and not in the spurious alternative of being either an act of God or of human origin. By showing themselves and their materiality, the images change *from being a substitute image act to being an intrinsic image act* beyond their founding myths. He who sees them, differently, in this way, sees something different – and the images act differently. This can be shown in two examples, which embody Christ in two quite different ways: one case is the pneumatic body of resurrection; the other is the injured body of the crucified.

The 'veil' is a sheer cloth of byssus (17.5cm x 24cm), kept since 1638 in a double-sided glazed monstrance in the Capuchin Church Santario del Volto Santo at Manoppello in the Abruzzi. Since the 1960s it has been located above the altar.[12]

The materiality of the picture affects us like the body of the risen Christ. In the doubling of print and trace it stages a 'real imaginary', i.e. a contact relic in which both *eidos* and *substance* coincide. The corporeality of the picture is seemingly a depicted and 'printed' representation, and an archetypical presence of the one depicted, at once. What is striking is the ethereal or pneumatic consistence of this image. It is as if it embodied the non-perishable and insubstantial body as an extremely fine trace of the risen Christ.

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[12] Benedict XVIth was the first pope to devote himself to a pilgrimage to Manoppello. Regarding the Veil he said that this was a place to meditate on the mystery of Godly love by contemplating the icon of the Holy Face (*L'Osservatore Romano* on 22 September 2006).
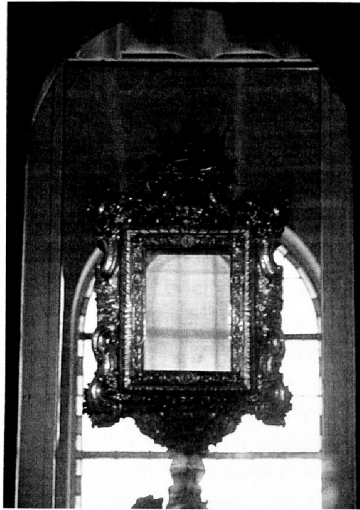
Fig. 1. The Veronica of Manoppello   Fig. 2. The Predella of Wittenberg

At a first and casual glance this seems to be a so-called 'educational picture'. On the representative surface it shows us what is taught by Lutheran theology, i.e. the preaching of the Crucified as the *viva vox* of exhortation to parishioners. It is not scripture in the shape of a book that is represented here, but the 'centre of scripture', that is 'external', not bound in with the pages. Christ as this centre is both the Other of scripture and of exhortation. And what of the relation of Christ and his rep-
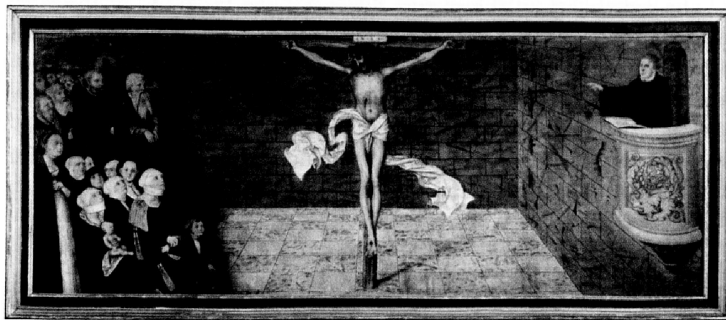
Fig. 3. Predella, St. Marien, Wittenberg (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

resentation in the picture as an image?

The preconception that this is an educational picture is not wrong, but gives us a one-sided view. For here much more is shown than our ordinary habits of seeing and thinking give us cause to expect. The enthralling question is of course whether the picture shows anything more and beyond what can be said or taught. Is this picture a mere embodiment (in the sense of representation) of teachings – or what is shown when we consider it as an intrinsic image act?

At the second glance the *background* catches the eye, the space that is framed and established by the base and the two walls. On

Fig. 4. Predella, St. Marien, Wittenberg (detail) (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

the one hand, the traces look like marks of flagellation – a portent of iconoclasm. On the other hand they might be traces of blood, as if the wall were embodying what happens to the Crucified: Ecce imago. The educated view may be reminded of photographs of Abu-Ghraib:[13] the room looks like a torture chamber. Does, then, the image as an image *become* such a chamber of horrors? When the background emancipates itself from the semantic surface, does it become a scene, a staging in which not only a teaching is staged but also the picture *itself* becomes a staging of itself? We could sense an uncanny presence in the representative image act by which the picture would become an intrinsic embodiment.

At third glance, we might notice an irritating *contiguity*: the marks of flagellation on the body of the Crucified and the traces of iconoclastic flagellation on the church wall. Here the painted wall becomes a metonymy of Christ (in spatial proximity, without ontological continuity) – or does the Crucified conversely become a metonymy of iconoclasm, of the marked wall? The view may oscillate and sway. Does the painted
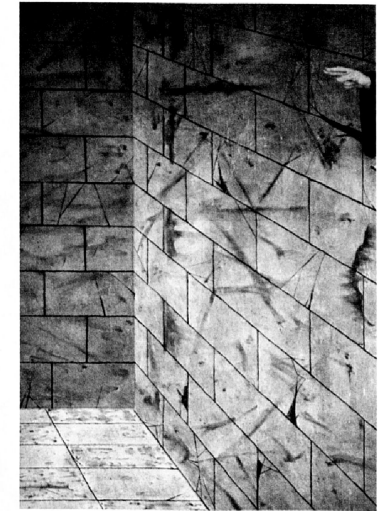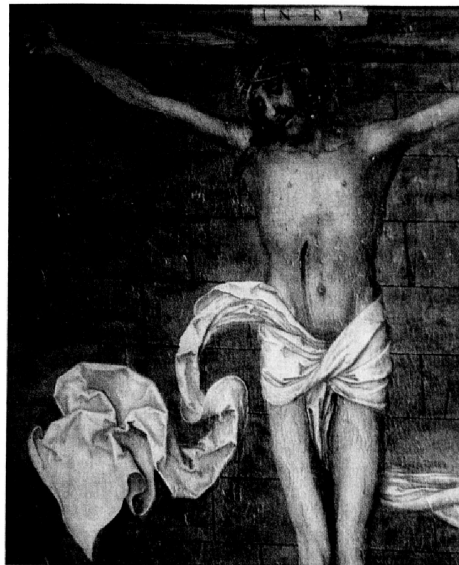
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[13] A hint by Michael Diers.

Fig. 6. Predella, St. Marien, Wittenberg (detail) (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

Fig. 5. Predella, St. Marien, Wittenberg (detail) (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

Christ become an embodiment of the treatment and use of images, or does he even resemble what happened to pictures in times of iconoclasm? Or is it merely a supplementary community of suffering between the background and the figure in the foreground?

At fourth glance one can once more see differently, and see something different: the image 'itself' in its physical materiality is marked, by age and usage. Reference to the usual *craquelure* could easily obviate this: signs of time in which the tension between colours and substrate leads to very fine ruptures. In these minute cracks the internal dynamics of the material are already manifest – they would otherwise stay latent, and are preferably suppressed by restoration.

But in our case these ruptures and striae are deeper, almost as if the paint were about to flake off. And next to the wound in the side, traces of stabs seem to be visible. The violations of the image embody traces of the interpreting eye, they address the spectators who look on. The Crucified becomes perceptible and effective in the picture as a picture. There is the tortured body, the beaten wall and in irritating correspondence to these there is the rupture in the picture as a picture. Could we say, at this point, that *the image's materiality becomes the body of the Incarnated and Cru-*

cified? In contrast to the aesthetically fine woven veil of Manoppello, this picture is opaque and physical to the point of withering. The picture's materiality shows in itself what the picture is showing – or does the picture, in its topic, show that which basically has the *picture* as a topic?

Taking a step back, we can in retrospect be somewhat affected and worried by the distressful state of the picture's materiality. It is as if the painting had suffered a degree of neglect, been allowed to decay like a dead body.

What is seen when one sees an image of Christ? The question changes in terms of embodiment: what does the image of Christ embody? Is it the subject of teaching and exhortation? Is it Christ himself – in the Veronica as a substitutive image act, in the rupturing Predella as an intrinsic image act?[14] Is it iconoclasm and its aftermath? An incisive manifestation of *protestant* idolatry?[15]

What is shown here, in the Veil of Manoppello and in the ruptured painting media, is the image's own momentum: *the obstinacy of sensuality.* If we were only to conceive images as the sensualisation of sense, as the sensual appearance of theological ideas, then they would basically just be 'extrinsic image acts', that are allowed to depict something but not to embody that thing intrinsically. For as intrinsic image acts they begin to show themselves, and to look, *different* from an object of praise or the illustration of a doctrine. Does the image actually emancipate itself from its depicted object, show itself above all, display its materiality and thereby show the event of showing, even showing rupture and decay? If these images have been 'embodied theology', then they no longer are. Or have they become more than 'embodied theology'? The momentum of embodiment helps theology overcome the habits of seeing and thinking to a point, where the accustomed sense begins to crack in the light of sensuality.

John Michael Krois has noted that 'Embodiment makes thought logically vague, but it also makes thought possible.' Vagueness grants

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[14] At this point we could consider if the images of Christ can or cannot become supplementary image-acts: if the supplements (in Derrida's sense) assume an independent reality such that they blur their origin. Not in the sense that they are actually discarded and forgotten – the veil as well as the Predella do in fact show where they come from and what they are about. But at least the Veronica tradition leads into images that (by their ontological charge) become mightier than the 'original', more present and more impressive.

[15] Cf. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation. A History* (New York: Viking, 2004), pp. 539–543.

interpretability and is required to allow for further definition.[16] The obstinacy of sensuality, as it appears in both examples, is and will remain vague, in an unsettling undecidability. But it is this very discomfiture that allows the image to come to life (and disturbs theological thinking habits).

1.5. Embodiment of theology?

The Predella of Wittenberg is therefore in no sense 'only' an extrinsic embodiment of Lutheran theology and mere illustration, but an intrinsic embodiment the effect and activity of which seem to be much more cunning than our habitual ways of thinking would have us believe. The aesthetic strategies of Protestantism, however, were not in all cases as ingenious as Cranach. The desire for the embodiment of what has passed, for its realisation, was able to follow other paths in which substitutive embodiment became physical in the manner of relics, as a curious case in Halle (Saale) shows.

Lukas Schöne was the name of the artifex who made a figure of Luther in 1663,[17] using the wax castings of Luther's hands and face, i.e. his death mask.[18] He made an *effigies Lutheri* in which Luther was embodied

[16] Cf. the author's article on vagueness ('Vagheit') in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (HWRh),Vol. 10: Ergänzungen A-Z, Register, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012 [forthcoming]).
[17] Considering the body of source material it is also possible that he only restored it; cf. Uta Kornmeier, "Luther in effigie, oder: 'Das Schreckgespenst von Halle'", in *Lutherinszenierungen und Reformationserinnerung*, ed. Stefan Laube and Karl-Heinz Fix (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), pp. 346f, 353f; cf. Jochen Birkenmeier, 'Luthers Totenmaske? Zum musealen Umgang mit einem zweifelhaften Exponat', in *Luther-Jahrbuch* 88 (2011), pp. 187–202, 191.
[18] Cf. on this topic: Kornmeier, 'Luther in effigie', pp. 343–370; id., 'Kopierte Körper. "Waxworks" und Panoptiken vom 17. bis 20. Jahrhundert', in *Ebenbilder. Kopien von Körpern – Modelle des Menschen*, (Exhibition catalogue, Essen Ruhrlandmuseum March–June 2002), ed. Jan Gerchow and Hans Belting (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), pp. 115–124; Otto Kammer, 'Lutherus redivivus – die Totenmaske und die umstrittene Effigie in Halle', in *Luther mit dem Schwan. Tod und Verklärung eines großen Mannes* (Exhibition catalogue, Lutherhalle Wittenberg), ed. Gerhard Seib (Berlin: Schelzky & Jeep, 1996), pp. 25–32; Inge Mager, 'Justus Jonas an Luthers Sterbebett. Zur Entstehung der Totenmaske', in *Luther* 77 (2006), pp. 164–170; Friedrich Loofs, *Die angebliche Totenmaske Luthers*, in *Zeitschrift für Religionskunde (RelKu)* 15 (1918), pp. 2–13; id.: 'Die Lutherfigur in Halle', *RelKu* 15 (1918), pp. 67–73; Bernhard Weissenborn, 'Die sogenannte Totenmaske Luthers. Zur Frage ihres Alters', *RelKu* 17 (1920), pp. 30–39; Paul Brathe, *Luthers Totenmaske*,

artificially, presumably not as an object of idolatry but for the – admittedly ambiguous – task of making him somehow 'present'. The wax parts, head and hands, were put on a wooden framework which, once it was cushioned and clothed, presented the 'corpus'. The figure was displayed in the Marienbibliothek[19] at the marketplace of Halle, near the Marienkirche, where it was stored until the end of World War II.

RelKu 14 (1917), pp. 129–139; id.: 'Neues Material zu "Luthers Totenmaske"', *RelKu* 18 (1921), pp. 111–113; Alfred Dieck, 'Cranachs Gemälde des toten Luther in Hannover und das Problem der Luther-Totenbilder,' in *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* (NDBKG) 2 (1962), pp. 191–218; Stefan Laube, 'Von der Reliquie zum Relikt. Luthers Habseligkeiten und ihre Musealisierung in der frühen Neuzeit, in Archäologie der Reformation. Studien zu den Auswirkungen des Konfessionswechsels auf die materiale Kultur', *AKG* 104 (2007), pp. 429–466; Mirko Gutjahr,' "Non cultus est, sed memoriae gratia". Hinterlassenschaften Luthers zwischen Reliquien und Relikten', in *Fundsache Luther. Archäologen auf den Spuren des Reformators* (Exhibition catalogue, Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle/Saale), ed. Harald Meller (Darmstadt:Theiss, 2008), pp. 100–105. Unfortunately, we have no solid knowledge about the genesis of Luther's death mask. Justus Jonas was present when Luther died in Eisleben on 18 February 1546. On 19 February, Lukas Furtenagel from Halle drew a picture of Luther on his deathbed ('Kopf des toten Luther', pen and ink drawing 1546, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, accession number KdZ 4545). And it was probably Furtenagel who also took a plaster cast of Luther's face and hands. By means of this negative image a wax cast was made as a death mask in Furtenagel's workshop in Halle, which became the property of Justus Jonas who later donated it to the Marktkirche in Halle. But the origin and authenticity are still controversial. Cf. Birkenmeier, 'Luthers Totenmaske', pp. 187–202.
[19] Otherwise Fritze, 'Die Luthermaske von Halle', in *FZ* 1. Morgenblatt, 22/4/1927. The senior pastor Fritze wrote that the Marienkirche 'contains a much debated curiosity'. Kornmeier, 'Luther in effigie', 343, clarifies that it was in 1924 that the effigies were first displayed in the church and no longer in the corresponding library. Cf. Heinrich L. Nickel, 'Die Totenmaske Martin Luthers', in *Die Marienbibliothek zu Halle. Kostbarkeiten und Raritäten einer alten Büchersammlung*, ed. Heinrich L. Nickel (Halle: Selbstverlag, 1998), pp. 45–48.
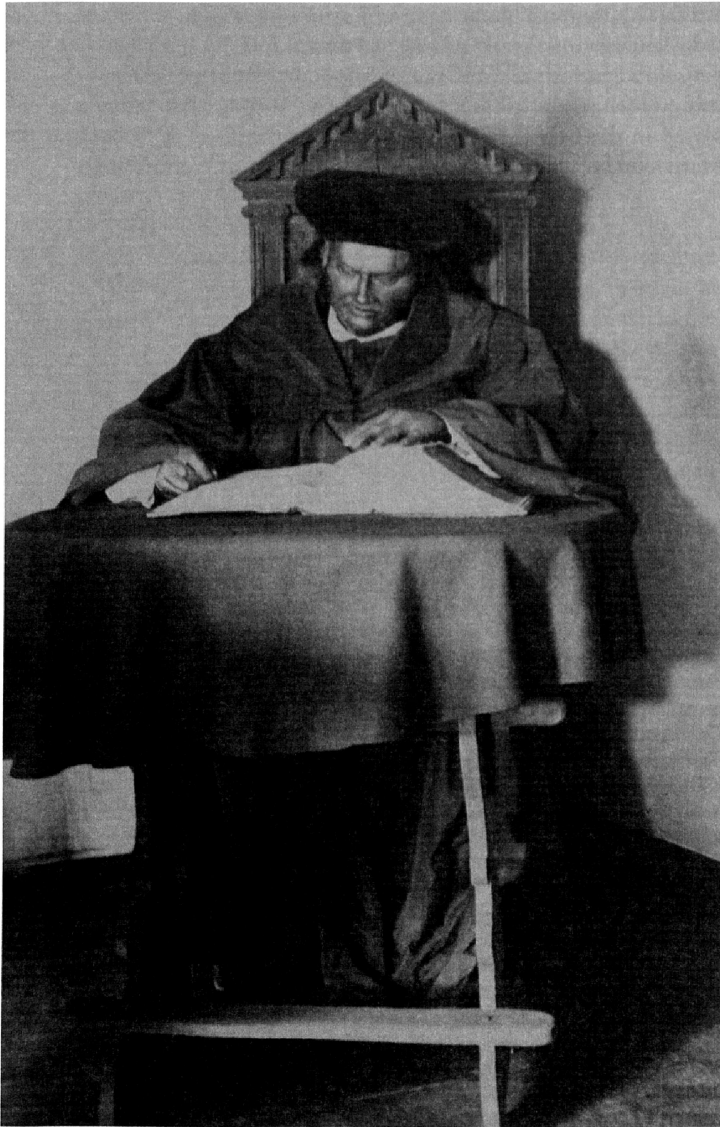
Fig. 7. Figure of Luther in the Marienbibliothek, Halle
(photo: Fritz Möller, 1915)

Ernst Benkard described this *effigies* as follows:

> The mannequin, attired with the dress of a protestant clergyman, is strapped to
> the high backrest of an old renaissance chair with a leather strap, due to which
> the sitting position was made possible. In front of the puppet stands an oval
> (modern) desk, where the arms with the waxen hands (also allegedly formed
> from the plaster casts of the corpse) have been placed. The right hand lies
> (slightly clenched) on a thick bible, the left rests sprawled out on the tablecloth.
> The waxen head is placed on a tightly stuffed bag and was originally wearing
> a wig, which is replaced today by a beret.[20]

The bizarre artefact has an unsettlingly severe look, and there is a slight squint.
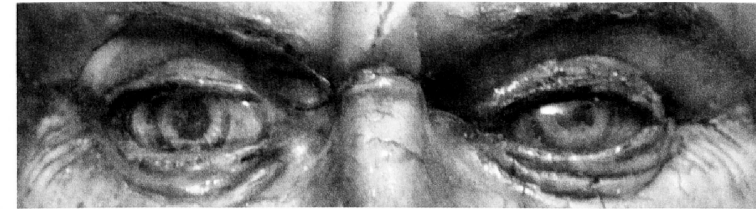

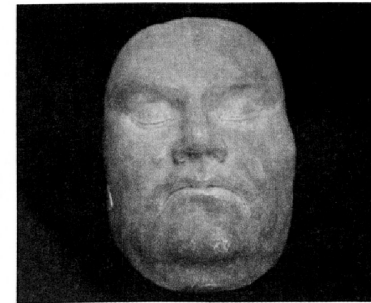Fig. 8. Luther's eyes, Marienkirche Halle (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

Fig. 9. Luther's death mask. Reconstruction by
Hans Hahne, Gypsum ca. 1926, on base of the
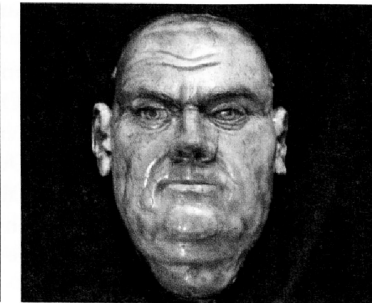Reworking of 1663 (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

Fig. 10. Luther's death mask. Lucas Schöne,
figuration 1663; since 2006 displayed Markt-
kirche of Halle. (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

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[20] Ernst Benkard, *Das ewige Antlitz. Eine Sammlung von Totenmasken*, with an introduction
by G. Kolbe, (Berlin: Societätsverlag, 1926), pp. 67f.

A cast, the death mask, became an *effigies Lutheri* to archive 'real presence', as one could assume. Not the resurrected but only an artificial revenant was offered to the curiosity of protestant pilgrims. The figure could be seen there until 1943, then it was transferred to a bank, while there should have been remnants in the sixties and since 2006 the figure is once again accessible in a side room of the Marktkirche.

That of all things this *effigies* was made at the height of baroque Protestantism is surprising, though it may be comprehensible in the light of iconic competition with the Counter-Reformation's politics of presentation. To invoke Benkard once again: 'Whenever this curious figure of the reformer might have been formed [...] in the heart of protestant Saxony it remains a piquant parallel to the veneration of saints by catholic believers. Aside from the fact that even today this holy Luther is offered posies from the populace, its existence already shows, that wide layers of society cannot do without hero worship. This general human sentiment found its highest expression in the cult of the saints. Therefore one is allowed to regard the curious figure of Luther as a product of psychological repression.'[21]

'Repression' is a surprising conclusion, explicable perhaps if this is the point at which a form of cult figures returns, that has been repressed by Protestantism – even if it is not part of an active cult. Even more explicitly: the figure depicts Luther *neither* as a saint *nor* as a saviour (e.g. in an attitude of prayer), but rather as a mundane protestant desk worker, nothing more.[22]

It is however noteworthy, that Benkard is hardly controversial with his parallel to the veneration of saints. On the contrary – the gallery's ornament (completed in 1549) in the Marktkirche even makes this 'piquancy' explicit. There it reads: 'Sanctus Doctor Martinus Lutherus Propheta Germaniae Decessit Anno 1546. Natus Anno 1483 – Docuit 1517.' The tondo by Jobst Kammerer (1533) shows the person thus spoken of as a saint, with a polemical motto in the circumscription: 'Pestis eram vivus,

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[21] Benkard, *Das ewige Antlitz*, p. 68. Senior pastor Fritze reacts with passion to Benkard: 'That is plain bunkum! There has never been a visitor who saw anything other in Luther's figure than a curious artistic rarity. [...] No one is thinking about cult or veneration' (Fritze, ibid.) It is hardly that unambiguous. Luther's birthplace in Eisleben had an allegedly incombustible effigy of him, a Luther portrait in Apolda is supposed to have wept several times, and it is reported that splinters of Luther's furniture were effective against toothache (Gutjahr, 'Non cultus est, sed memoriae gratia', p. 100).

[22] Cf. Kornmeier, 'Luther in effigie', pp. 354f.

Fig. 11. Gallery, Marienkirche Halle (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

Moriens ero mors tua papa', which might be translated as: I was your plague in life, and in death I will be your death, O pope.[23]

What is shown with the effigies, and what is shown unintentionally? In the light of the vague provenance of the figure in the Marienbibliothek,[24] it is a staging of a 'Doctor Theologiae', Luther in his *scriptorium*. They did not depict the young Luther of 'reformatory discovery,' but the old one. How could it have been otherwise, considering they used the death mask, which had to serve the authentication of the *effigies* as a print relic? The mask as the (legendary) mould of the artificial wax face is the symptom of a legitimatory desire: that here the face of Luther is visible *for real*, namely due to the causal connection with the reformer's dead body. Traditions of the pre-Reformation cult of relics, as it came back in the Counter-Reformation, are clearly surfacing here.

The maximum sense of a picture of Christ was to be what it depicted. All the pictures of saints still draw therefrom. But is it the purpose of the *effigies Lutheri*, to be what it depicts? An *effigies* is 'per definitionem' a

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[23] Cf. Susan R. Boettcher, 'Late Sixteenth-Century Lutherans. A Community of Memory?' in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Michael Halvorson and Karen Spierling Hampshire (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 121–142, 138f.

[24] Cf. especially Birkenmeier, 'Luthers Totenmaske?' passim.

substitutive image act in which the subject is not only represented but also presented *'in effigie'*. Though how 'really present' is he, or should he be, in his strange form?

It is noteworthy for the fabrication of the imaginary scene 'Luther at his desk', that the hands seem strangely fit for this situation (even though their joints appear to be damaged). If this casting had actually been taken from the dead Luther then they would have had to manipulate the hands (possibly quite forcefully) to bring them into the appropriate position.[25] But who in 1546 would have thought to prepare the hands in a manner that would allow casting them for a prospective *effigies*?

Fig. 12. Hand, Marienkirche Halle (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

As far as can be assumed *ex post*, the staging of Luther in 'his' scriptorium seems not to have been aimed at veneration, but at commemoration and remembrance; that is, it served a memorial identity policy of the local Lutheran church. At this point it would be appropriate to speak not of 'est, est, est' regarding the *effigies* but merely of 'significat'. Now a painting of Luther would have been equally sufficient for such a purpose.

[25]   Cf. ibid., pp. 193f.

Why, this being the case, has the desire for physical real presence been fulfilled? Today's fragmentary display of the artefacts may suffice as a 'tourist attraction' (whereas 'touristic repulsion' might seem more appropriate given the monstrous appeal of this wax mask). But what was the purpose then? The figure seems to be an aesthetically alienating monument of Lutheran memorial culture, in which it becomes symptomatically manifest how *memoria* has a deep desire for *more* than mere representation. In this context contact relics such as Luther's last drinking vessel[26] certainly are ontologically inferior to a death mask. And when the imaginative potentiality of *memoria* leads as far as the animation of an *effigies*, then that makes it an object-lesson in the genesis and appeal of a scenically composed substitutive image act.

Seen as an *intrinsic* image act, the animated mask and claw-like hands appear as eerie as many other wax figures. The legendary charging as an impression of Luther's own equivalent to the 'Veronica', the death mask, only heightens the repulsion. One could almost say that *contre coeur* Luther had posthumously fallen victim to the late medieval image politics that he opposed with his insistence on *sola scriptura*.

Devout desire can fabricate ghosts. It is as if with the *effigies* there were staged a revenant, who accidentally presents Luther's head and hands as severed organs, as if an executed criminal were displayed and prepared for touristic horror. Faced with this monstrosity one might be reminded of the debut lecture of Edgar Wind in Hamburg, where he spoke about 'Theios, phobos', the divine or saintly fear. When affected by such an artefact, its effective potentiality becomes manifest: nausea, fear, and horror – it is in any case a *phobos* that makes the confrontation an event of pathos.[27] Referring to Wind, John Michael Krois noted that 'The physical effect of art provides it with the political efficiency, that made art so questionable for Plato.'[28]

What we eye, looks back at us – but *how*? How does this hero's head, displayed like a hunting trophy, *appear*? There is the frowning forehead, seemingly angry wrinkles between the eyebrows, the bulldog-like ex-

[26]   Cf. Laube, 'Von der Reliquie zum Relikt', pp. 429–466.
[27]   Kornmeier sees a certain 'affinity between the exhibited wax figure and the Panopticon, which echoes in nicknames like 'bugbear' or 'Luther-dread'. But whereas in a chamber of horrors the cold chill is intended, Luther's waxwork evokes the same effects inadvertently' (*Luther in effigie*, p. 370).
[28]   John Michael Krois, 'Einleitung' in *Edgar Wind. Heilige Furcht*, in idem., *Körperbilder und Bildschemata. Aufsätze zur* Horst Bredekamp et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), pp. 25–42, 37.

pression with fleshy cheeks, a slightly sottish-seeming nose with the yellow complexion of one suffering from a liver disease, and to cap it all the chopped-off hands like claws crawling towards the viewer, which prompt a step backwards, and a sense of relief that they are trapped behind glass. There is no trace of the moral dilemmas, scruples and despair of the 'young' Luther, nor of the indomitable high spirits of his old age. Instead one takes fright, face to face with this bugbear, this mask, which makes the history of ideas resemble a chamber of horrors.

If that was 'embodied theology', embodied knowledge, then it would be of the kind that theologically leads us astray: the embodiment of the irate family man trying much too hard to be the heroic superego of the protestant family, through whom discipline can be enforced and indeed fear and trembling induced. Edgar Wind explains that 'All expression by muscle movement is metaphoric.'[29] So, what is shown here, *nolens* or *volens*, in this expression? Is it Luther as a substitute of the irate God, i.e. the very concept of God of which Luther has just helped us to take our farewell? The sense of this face's expression is nonsensical, at least for a theology that calls itself 'protestant' and which is determined by the 'Freedom of a Christian'. The strangely confused vision, the slight squint of the mask, indicates as much, even though involuntarily.

Cranach's Predella places Luther almost discreetly at the margin of the image in the position of an indicator, who, like John the Baptist, points away from himself at Christ – and thus he points as an image in a painting at the painted Christ. Amidst all self-reference the Predella becomes an embodiment of what is indicated: an image as Christ in chiasm to Christ as an image. Whereas in *effigies* Luther himself is displayed, he is exposed head and limbs and an imaginary figure is staged with a moulage realism that is simply horrifying. 'Here I hang. I can do no other.' He is exhibited to the tourists, displayed on blue velvet in the Jurassic Park of the history of religion.

In the course of time Cranach's Predella 'accidentally' became a metonymic embodiment of the crucified Christ. The Luther effigies became

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[29]   Edgar Wind, 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik', in *Vierter Kongress für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* (Hamburg, October 1930), *Beilagenheft zur Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. 25 (1931), pp. 163–179, 175; J.M. Krois referred to that point repeatedly (id., 'Einleitung', p. 37; id., 'Die Universalität der Pathosformeln. Der Leib als Symbolmedium', in *Bildkörper und Körperschema*, pp. 77–91, 79).

a monster. At the beginning there is a remarkable resemblance between the materiality of a moulage and the deceased – in some cases the dead bodies even seem to be made of wax (Lenin, Mao). But this alienating likeness changes into an unlikeness, until it is straightforwardly repellent. Uta Kornmeier comments aptly that 'Every alteration or violation of the waxen surface, appears, due to the similarity to skin and flesh, like a maltreatment or injuring of a real human body part.'[30] The original imprint of the death mask, which is not historically verified, was an early way of fabricating the expression of the peacefully sleeping dead. The desired '*similarity through contact*'[31] in the cast may serve as a 'model for the general concept of the image,'[32] as Didi-Huberman said. There he shows similarities with Krois, who understood tactility and schematising body image as the origins of image competence.[33] But this original contact remains in the dark of the imaginary; the authentication of the 'contact relic' remains fictional. It makes this origin yet further withdrawn, so that the death mask itself is already a merely fictional reconstruction that the 'animated' face of the *effigies*, which itself was wrought later, has used.

The animation was then a form of 'intensifying presence'[34] brought about by pushing up the expressive quality much too far. This afterlife of the presence of the withdrawn becomes a Passion narrative, when the momentum of the material leads to an intensifying alienation. The initial index becomes unfamiliar because of its iconic composition, but even more alienating because of its alteration – so that the symbolic quality is anything but an embodiment of Luther, or even of his theology. The afterlife becomes the iconic suffering of the man, who is sen-

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[30]   Kornmeier, Luther in effigie, p. 345. The same effect is also known from computer simulations of persons as the so-called 'uncanny valley effect'. Whenever a simulation of a person becomes too 'realistic' the acceptance on the part of the onlookers begins to break down. Whenever the resemblance is especially high but not yet perfect, the repulsive effect is also especially high. Cf. Horst Schumann and Thomas Nocke, 'Computerbilder, Visualisierungsstrategien und Informationsdarstellung', in *Präsenz im Entzug. Ambivalenzen des Bildes*, ed. Philipp Stoellger and Thomas Klie (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2011), pp. 519–534, 522ff.
[31]   Georges Didi-Huberman, 'La Ressemblance par contact. Archéologie, anachronisme et modernité de l'empreinte', in id., *L'Empreinte* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1997), pp. 15–192.
[32]   Ibid., p. 36.
[33]   John Michael Krois, 'Bildkörper und Körperschema', in Krois, *Körperbilder und Bildschemata*, pp. 253–271, 271.
[34]   Gottfried Boehm, 'Repräsentation – Präsentation – Präsenz', in *Homo Pictor*, ed. Gottfried Boehm, (Munich/Leipzig: Fink, 2001), pp. 3–13, especially 4, 5, 8, 13.

tenced to be an eternal revenant. To become an artefact in this way could be described as 'hell'.

Does the image as an image posthumously avenge itself on its critic?[35] The independent existence of the materiality of the *effigies* and the obstinacy of its sensuality appear merciless. In the time of the Reformation the once-venerated relics were buried discreetly in the churchyard. Art objects can hope for no such mercy.
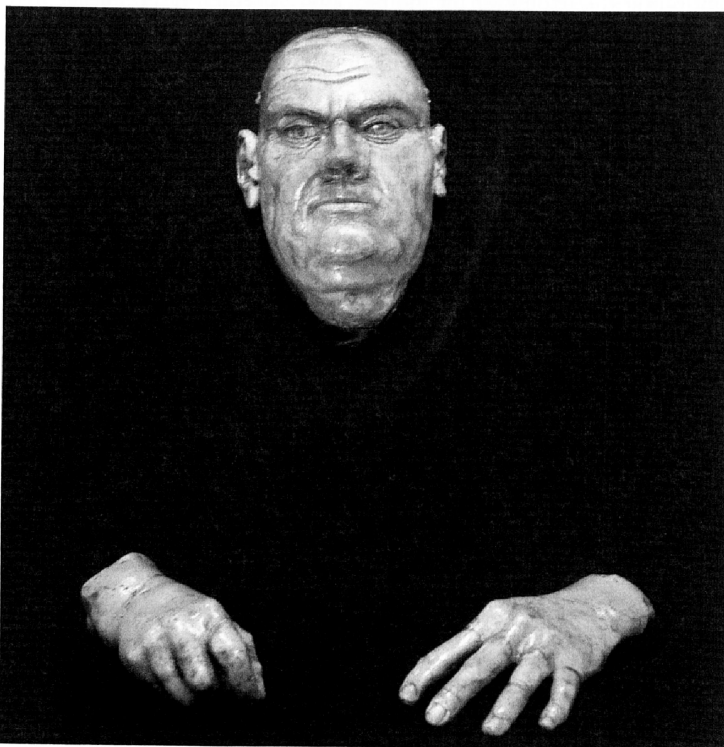

Fig. 13. Luther, Marienkirche Halle (photo: Philipp Stoellger)

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[35] It should be noted that Luther was no enemy of images but (as with the Apocrypha) he considered their pedagogical and didactical function to be sensuality sensuality 'good and useful'. According to the hermeneutical benevolence (the principle of charity) this function can be understood as the intentio recta of the manufacturers of the effigies.

2. Embodiment theory and critique?

2.1. Embodiment as embodied cognition – and embodied theology

'Embodiment makes thought logically vague, but it also makes thought possible', John Michael Krois has told us. It follows that after working on the phenomenon of embodiment, there is a need to work out theories to articulate those 'possible thoughts'. 'Being able to say what I see' was 'the perfect earthly happiness' for Hans Blumenberg.[36] The semantic concentration of images and their respective vagueness provoke attempts to differentiate, and to make predicable, what appears in them altogether.

John Michael Krois' work on 'embodied cognition' embodies a respective requirement for all sciences, among them also theology and philosophy of religion. For in platonic[37] but all the more in *neoplatonic*, Cartesian and idealistic tradition, and in theology as well, the 'body' was under the suspicion of being the base of all desires, and perturbations that are located in the semantic field of sin and debt. The traditional topoi of this 'dual system' are: the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak; the letter kills but the spirit makes alive.

Cognition, especially *cognitio Dei*, meant rejection of flesh and body as a de-sensualisation (as was the case in Plotinus and Augustine, in the variants of gnosticism and later in mysticism too – until the variety of 'puritanism'), or detachment from the world (as even Heidegger and Bultmann deemed to be right). When our bodily nature becomes the source of sinful desires, and all longing and seeking (as in Commandments 9 and 10) becomes damnable, when 'world' becomes the opposite of 'church', then de-sensualisation to the end of insensitivity, and detachment from the world to the end of unworldliness, becomes the ideal of cognition: 'regressus' comes to be the avoidance of the world in the cognition of God.[38] This leads to ascetic exercises in which the struggle against the body becomes a negative expression of devotion to the bodiless divine. Sacralisation as denaturation to the point of disembodiment is the *'via negativa' of embodiment*: becoming invisible in the final extinc-

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[36] Hans Blumenberg: Fragebogen, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Magazin*, Edition 118, 4/6/1982, 25.

[37] Having that in mind that Plato was much wiser than most Platonists, just as Aristotle was wiser than most Aristotelians, and so on.

[38] But this is very seldom advocated nowadays. A neo-platonising pope could talk in that way or a neo-idealistic theologian be mistaken in that manner.

tion of the body in pursuit of companionship with the invisible. Socrates instructed his disciples to sacrifice a rooster to Asclepios after his death – as a thank offering for the gift of death as the cure from bodily existence. This intuition determines the negativistic tradition of *disembodiment*. It does not follow that it has to be called gnostic straight away, but looking at the potential of its recorded history it undoubtedly generates gnostic traditions: it is potentially gnosis-productive when the epistemic dual is 'constituted' ontologically and leads to metaphysical dualism.

Vico, Blumenberg, Cassirer, Wind and Krois strove against this precarious tradition. Embodiment instead of disembodiment is to them not a mere contraposition, that would repeat the model of their 'against'. It is much more a replacement, in the same sense as our reconstruction of the point of Christology above. Embodiment in a programmatic sense cannot mean that something once bodiless is now embodied or embodies itself (as immaterial ideas were supposed to be imprinted in matter). A thing does not *become* embodied but it *is* ineluctably embodied. In analogy to Blumenberg's 'absolute metaphor' this could be called 'absolute embodiment', i.e. it cannot be reduced to anything previously or subsequently bodiless. Just as man cannot be thought of as bodiless (even in visions and heavenly journeys at least the 'soul' remains irreducible as a sublimated body), just as little is it possible with regard to expression, display and symbol, not even in the view of God.

The persistency and effectiveness of the old dualistic mindset is astonishing. On the one hand the 'dualising' purview seems to be so old today that it rather belongs in a museum of science history, on the other hand it still bewitches the mind as some kind of revenant in popular science. The problem of 'dualisation' (of mind and body, God and world) is as persistent as it is strangely anachronistic. First of all it seems to be an *invitro* product, something induced by theory, a creation of the mind. For it seems absurd *in vivo* and put next to 'the phenomenon' of embodiment. It is therefore all too plausible that John Michael Krois' work on *embodied cognition* chose embodiment as a paradigm. Therefore it is not a question of the visualisation of thoughts, not even of the vividness of God, but 'speech, scripture and all symbols embody sense',[39] as Krois explains, referring to Edgar Wind. At the same time perception and cognition are no longer conceived in the model of consciousness, but basi-

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[39]   John Michael Krois, 'Kunst und Wissenschaft in Edgar Winds Philosophie der Verkörperung', in Krois, *Körperbilder und Bildschemata*, pp. 3–23, 6.

cally from the viewpoint of bodily perception: 'The ability to feel one's own body image as a moving tactile image, is the beginning of image competence.'[40]

'Embodiment' therefore has to be differentiated (in the sense of a *declaratio terminorum*). Similar to the double contingency of each communication, one has to assume that there is a double embodiment: on the side of the artefact and the artifex and on the side of the artefact and the perceiver.[41] Additionally embodiment should be understood not as a term of 'substance' but as a term of function, in the sense of Cassirer's distinction.[42] For with the substance model one would assume (at least usually) that there is a form that is distinguished from its embodiment and could just as well be embodied in this or that 'matter'. This would promote a 'physical' conception of embodiment instead of a procedural conception as it exists in the forms of life. But embodiment as a term of function is on the contrary a *relation* as in a relational function in which the respective figures are embodied. Krois' thesis on the origin of image-competence and his studies on the basic meaning of corporeality in perception indicate such on the side of the perceiver and the side of the perceived. As far as he assumes (with Cassirer) the 'expression' to be the fundamental phenomenon, the meaning of expression is always constitutionally *sensual* and for all living beings that means 'corporeal'.

Against this background embodiment has firstly a literal meaning: the perceiver is and has a body. Therefore when applied to the received (metaphorically speaking, not without anthropomorphism) one has to state that secondly: the received is a body (like 'me'). If this is presumed, then embodiment functions thirdly as a scheme or a model of the image agent and the image interaction. If furthermore this scheme becomes the basis of image theory then fourth, embodiment develops a theoretically central meaning. Embodiment is not a 'mere' basic aspect of subjects and premises, but is guiding all further developments of theory. This theory can fifth be made principle, as it is in Edgar Wind's work, when sixth a metaphysical meaning is attributed to embodiment. Therefore Wind calls

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[40]   Krois, 'Bildkörper und Körperschema', p. 271.
[41]   Insofar as the double contingency is also a multiple contingency: since in communication we never have a 'one to one' situation but there is always an (at least figurative) third person implicated.
[42]   Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function, and Einstein's Theory of Relativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

the 'radical embodiment' (related to Cassirer's 'radical metaphor')[43] a 'metaphysical' process, such as Krois implemented.[44] Following which it is only consequent, seventh, to understand embodiment as a basic term of theology.

Reverting to the Jewish origins of Christianity, we can observe that God is constantly embodied, in whatever way – and therefore that theology is a theory of embodiment

- in the form of the Torah (in the iconicity of its 'graphé' or the imagery of its narrations and some of its metaphors, in the visual quality of the artificial scrolls),
- in the form of temple cult (cult-imagery, however sublimated),
- in the mindscape of the symbolic and the imaginary, as in eschatology
- or in the shape of the way of life that correspondends to the Covenant.

The New Testament follows this quite radically: there is no 'human-lessness' of God. This is why God and faith are always embodied, incarnated with a 'Sitz im Leben'. *De(neo)platonisation of Christianity* would be a programmatic formula to understand theology as *'embodied theology'* in the sense of John Michael Krois, and to refer it back to its *Lebenswelt* and forms of life as hermeneutics of Christian ways of life and phenomena of perceptible embodiments. It is easily comprehensible, that image and imagery, i.e. the visual cultures in which Christian religion becomes visible, are fundamental for that purpose, even if in so doing the eye is *not* the sole focus. For images are not only visible but also *perceptible*. The theme of embodiment poses the challenge to comprehend image perception as a *bodily* event, similar to accessing iconic artefacts in religion and 'art scene' likewise. Therefore the embodiment of theology should not be taken prematurely in the sense of a Luther *effigies*. The artificial simulation of a body is in a way an embodiment that has been taken literally. Then again the gruesome appeal of such an *effigies* is by all means an affective indication of the fact that such an artefact 'acts', 'moves' and is able to develop potentiality and effect of the kind that 'moves to tears',

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[43] Cf. Philipp Stoellger, 'Die Metapher als Modell symbolischer Prägnanz. Zur Bearbeitung eines Problems von Ernst Cassirers Prägnanzthese', in *Die Prägnanz der Religion in der Kultur. Ernst Cassirer und die Theologie*, ed. Dietrich Korsch and Enno Rudolph (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000), pp. 100–138.
[44] Krois, 'Einleitung', p. 33.

which is a phenomenon that Krois repeatedly points out, referring to James Elkins.[45] Even such a late *effigies* can affect us like an 'alter ego'[46] and interact eerily with our inner fears.

2.2. Embodiment – recourse to Cassirer

When every discipline reaches the limits of its media (in terms of Friedrich Kittler), then it is necessary to take the 'material' means of religious communication into account, viz. *all* of its aspects. This is so because they are not merely subservient carriers: instead their bodies co-determine communication. Originally this applies to the embodiment of God in Christ, but derived from that it applies to all supplementary embodiments, regardless of whether they are substitutive or intrinsic, the Eucharist being the most prominent example. The 'real' bodies in religious practices always have symbolic quality. They are charged and formed interpretatively. According to Cassirer's thesis on 'symbolic pregnance' there is no sensuality without sense (in religious communication as in any other) and, vice versa, all sense requires sensuality, without which it would be incomprehensible and 'out of the question'.

This means – still with Cassirer – that we must assume a sensuality for all kinds of sense and that we cannot reasonably posit final de-sensualisation as the ideal of cognition (as in the 'pure concept'). Now as far as I know this is controversial. In Christian tradition the *visio Dei* as the final vision of the invisible God was supposed to leave behind everything sensual, perishable and worldly. Let us note in passing that this ideal is neither justified by the Old Testament sources nor appropriate in the light of the New Testament and Christology. What follows is rather the hermeneutics of suspicion against the visible, the earthly, the bodily. That there is more than the visible, i.e. that visibility and being are not convertible, is only one side. But that the essential is invisible and therefore the visible is nonessential, is the opposed fallacy. This fallacy should actually be thoroughly disproved with the topos of 'seeing His glory' in the

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[45] Krois, 'Bildkörper und Körperschema', pp. 254f; id.: 'Für Bilder braucht man keine Augen. Zur Verkörperungstheorie des Ikonischen', in *Körperbilder und Bildschemata*, pp. 133–160, 159f.
[46] Krois, *Bildkörper und Körperschema*, 256; cf. the author's 'Das Bild als Anderer und der Andere als Bild? Zum Anspruch des Anderen als Bild seiner selbst und zum Bild als Anspruch des Anderen', in *The Paths of the Alien. On the Philosophy of Bernhard Waldenfels* 1, ed. Ferdinando Giuseppe Menga (Ethica & Politica XIII, June 2011), pp. 230–247.

ignobility of 'Ecce homo'. This sole argument suffices to dispose of the desire for non-sensual vision of the invisible, as well as all disparagement of the visual (which is creation after all). But that is not enough on which to base the cognitive potentiality of *sensuality*, as in the *cognitio sensitiva* or in passive synthesis (e.g. Husserl's association or affection).[47] And to underpin only the *cognitive* potentiality of sensuality, it would still not be enough. For Krois too has repeatedly shown that the *emotive, moving* potentiality of sensuality is basic and momentous to the extent that Plato could bring aesthetic sensuality under suspicion because of it. Therefore Warburg's and Cassirer's basic thesis of 'moved man',[48] that refers to *pathos* and *pathe*, implicates anthropology. Because of this the moving image corresponds to the moved man in the manner of iconic and symbolic media and their potential to move. A theory of image acts is in these terms based on *living* concepts of potentialities, i.e. a constellation of potentialities, which is essentially a theory of pathos.[49]

Some of its premises and consequences can be brought out by resorting to Cassirer in the sense of Krois. Regarding the theory of science he noted: 'Science was at first unable to formulate its fundamental principle except as embodied in things.'[50] Here the subject of science is understood as necessarily embodied (similar to Wind) and the scientific practice itself is understood as a process of embodiment, as in the experiment of 'metaphysical embodiment'. In Cassirer's work *The Problem of Knowledge in Modern Times*, we read, regarding Hegel:

The depiction of the non-material, which is necessary for man, cannot remain mere thought, but must become 'powerful generality', which is able to embody and realise itself historically. Only in this embodiment, the particular would be the general, the general would really be merged in the particular – within it the rational would have become real, the real would have become rational.[51]

This is all very well, but reality is rarely so reasonable, nor is the reasonable often so real. This could apply theologically to the embodiment of God in Christ, juristically to the constitution (maybe even to the Holy Office, or in the case of law, the Federal Constitutional Court or prospectively to the European Court of Justice) – or alternatively, as Cassirer concisely puts it, it could apply to language as the sensuality of sense, insofar as it

... is confirmed that the spiritual factor of signification is closely bound up with the sensuous factor of expression; it is both factors together in their close inter-determination that first constitute the actual life of language. This life can never be merely sensuous any more than it can be purely spiritual; it can only be apprehended as body and soul at once, as an embodiment of the logos.[52]

The irreducibility of embodiment is represented – and by all means made plausible anthropomorphically – in this *simul* of body and soul, body and logos. A 'way of seeing' is premised here, because this is epistemologically speaking a matter of a preference criterion, rhetorically speaking a matter of the topos, which is the initial point of perception. Cassirer follows a mode of thinking that is usual in Jewish and Christian traditions, and presumes that language comes along with logos just like God and word. This thought is surprisingly contemporary in the context of media theory, in addition to which it is highly compatible with Jewish and Christian theology: the logos is never bodiless. Instead it is always embodied so that the body of rationality, language and also of speaking and writing is not external but essential.

It remains however noticeable that although Cassirer understands *language* as a separate 'symbolic form', such does not apply to *image and im-*

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[47] Hogrebe points to Alexander Baumgarten's 'cognitio sensitiva' as a 'sense of contingency' and the 'soul of our 'Deutungsnatur' ('interpretation nature' or 'interpreting character')' but he refers to Leibniz' anti-cartesian rehabilitation of the 'cognitio confusa' as well (Wolfram Hogrebe, *Metaphysik und Mantik. Die Deutungsnatur des Menschen (Système orphique de Iéna)* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 65f). He thereby alludes to forms of pro-nominal knowledge and communication that precede all forms of 'lexis'.

[48] Cf Krois, 'Die Universalität der Pathosformeln', p. 78.

[49] Cf. Philipp Stoellger, *Passivität aus Passion. Zur Problemgeschichte einer categoria non grata. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2010).

[50] Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Vol. III: Phenomenology of Knowledge* (PSF III), trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 19. Cassirer continues: 'There prevailed a kind of methodological materialism, which was by no means limited to the concept of matter but which can also be demonstrated in the other fundamental physical concepts, particularly that of energy.'

[51] Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und der Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, Vol. III (ECW 4), ed. Birgit Recki (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009), p. 281.

[52] Cassirer, *PSF III: Phenomenology of Knowledge*, p. 111.

agery (except in the focus on art). That can be changed, as John Michael Krois has suggested (with Pierce beyond Cassirer).[53] For the *iconicity* of all semiotic processes (e.g. diagrammatic representations in science), the figurativeness in language and the imagination and depiction in myth and religion all show, that imagery in particular can be described as symbolically concise in an exemplary sense. There are now at least two possible interpretations: one can either understand imagery as a separate symbolic form, or one can see imagery as something transversal to all other forms, so to speak as an *intersymbolic* form, as far as it surfaces in all symbolic forms and pervades them in every way.[54] This seems to be more appropriate, even if it contradicts the architecture of Cassirer's theory.

But in that case more complications arise. The '*symbolic pregnance*' would premise the dominance of the 'pure function of meaning'. That would be a restricted view, considering the *pathic* dimension of images and their productive uncertainty with respect to *vagueness*.[55] It would be more appropriate to speak of *iconic* pregnance.[56] Probably we have to go even further. When processes of embodiment (which could be called *transfigurations* because of their diachronicity) basically accompany phenomena of bodily expression,[57] then this is not solely or above all a question of symbols but of *symptoms*. Georges Didi-Huberman established this difference programmatically in 'Devant l'image,' ensuing from 'La Ressemblance par contact'.[58] We are basically confronted by a momentous contraposition: there are aesthetics that focus on symptoms, and there is the tradition of renaissance (and Cassirer) that is orientated towards symbols. Now as a *contra*position that would be an exaggeration, which is neither necessary

nor desirable. But as an expansion of our horizons it increases the capability of perception. In this perspective the iconic would be interesting not only as regards its symbolic quality but also as an index, for example as the display of pathematic image effects. Determining the image by 'showing' (as opposed to to saying) virtually demands that the symptomatic be taken retrospectively into consideration.

Cassirer, on the contrary, remained surprisingly aloof when it came to image theory. But what if not only language, but image and rationality also, or even God and image, were compatible? That would primarily be the world of myth for Cassirer (in neo-Kantian and Jewish tradition). Accordingly we read in 'Philosophy of Symbolic Forms' on myth, referring to Egypt:

> From the material, concrete corporeity with which the cult is originally concerned religious thought and intuition rise more and more to the pure image form. Now the statue comes to be regarded as the main assurance that the self will endure and take its place beside the mummy as an equally effective instrument of immortality. It is this fundamental religious intuition that gives rise to the plastic arts of the Egyptians, particularly sculpture and architecture. The tombs of the Pharaohs, the pyramids, become the mightiest symbol of this spiritual trend, which aims at the temporal eternity, the unlimited duration of the I and which can achieve this aim only in architectural and plastic embodiment only in the intuitive visibility of space. But one can only advance beyond this whole phase of intuition and representation when the ethical motif of the self becomes more sharply defined.[59]

This short survey of the historical development shows the point of an image-anthropology in which artistic processes are expected and where the complicated nexus of 'image and death' comes into view.

For this reason the phenomenological distinction of *corpus and body* is required in questions of 'embodiment,' to distinguish living bodies from dead, external perception from internal, and the relation to ourselves from relations to others. It is a momentous discovery, that we 'have' a corpus, but live in a body, which moves and affects us. This *ensouled corporeality* of having a body resonates in the concept of embodiment, and Krois never forgot it. Computers cannot recognise images because they

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[53] John Michael Krois, 'Was sind und was sollen die Bilder?' in id., *Körperbilder und Bildschemata*, pp. 291–306.

[54] Which would apply to language as well, not to mention questions regarding the concept of 'number'. Cf.: *Bild – Schrift – Zahl*, ed. Sybille Krämer and Horst Bredekamp (Munich: Fink, 2008).

[55] Cf. Krois, 'Was sind und was sollen die Bilder?' pp. 300ff; cf. the author's article on 'vagueness' ('Vagheit') in HWRh, (forthcoming).

[56] Cf. Philipp Stoellger, 'Das Bild als unbewegter Beweger? Zur effektiven und affektiven Dimension des Bildes als Performanz seiner ikonischen Energie', in *Movens Bild. Zwischen Affekt und Evidenz*, ed. Gottfried Boehm et al. (Munich: Fink, 2008), pp. 183–223, 201ff; id., 'Entzug der Präsenz – Präsenz im Entzug. Ambivalenzen ikonischer Performanz als Grund von Iconoclashs', in *Präsenz im Entzug*, pp. 1–41, 40f.

[57] As they were scrutinised by Aby Warburg.

[58] Cf. Georges Didi-Huberman, 'La Ressemblance par contact', in id., *Devant l'image. Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art* (Paris, Edition de Minuit, 1999), pp. 15–192.

[59] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Vol. II: Mythical Thought*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 166f.

have no *body*.[60] That programs and data can be embodied too but cannot become a bodily self, is critical. Computers have no relation to their environment because despite their corporeality and design they cannot move or be moved bodily. They might grow ever better at simulating these things (Apple's 'Siri' is a cheerful example). But even with Siri no one would attribute a soul to his iPhone – even when it becomes more and more 'animated' as a transitional object and is therefore treated *like* a ensouled counterpart. One stumbles into a twilight that makes 'experienced phenomena'[61] indeed undecidable or at least ambiguous.

Looking back, it can be noted that 'embodiment' is a basic form of pregnance for Cassirer, primarily in myth and religion (not, as far as I know, in the context of art). Embodiment is sensual, iconic and vivid – but only an aspect of symbolic pregnance, in contrast to Krois, Bredekamp and also Didi-Huberman. But Cassirer's concept of symbol is broader than Pierce's. 'We on the other hand have given the concept of the symbol another and broader meaning from the very start. In it we have attempted to encompass the totality of those phenomena in which the sensuous is in any way filled with meaning, in which a sensuous content, while preserving the mode of its existence and facticity, represents a particularization and embodiment, a manifestation and incarnation of a meaning.'[62] Consequently 'embodiment' can be understood in Cassirer as a metonymy of symbolic pregnance. As far as I can see the (symbolically 'pregnant') term 'embodiment' serves Cassirer for the elaboration of his concept of symbol but does not appear as a significant difference from it. But that especially seems to be the main aspect in John Michael Krois' and Horst Bredekamp's work on 'embodiment': to understand embodiment not only as the sensuality of sense but also as the sense of sensuality, to pursue the pertinacity of sensuality in art, science and also in religion.

2.3. Embodiment in the light of iconic differences

An image is nature that has been manipulated. Such could be an abridgement of the view of Alberti, who is Horst Bredekamp's reference for a broader concept of image. An image is nature that shows signs of human

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[60] Cf. Krois, 'Für Bilder braucht man keine Augen', pp. 156f.
[61] Which John Michael Krois insisted on (*Körperbilder und Bildschemata*, p. 257).
[62] Cassirer, *PSF III: Phenomenology of Knowledge*, p. 93.

treatment[63] – and by virtue of that every image *is* basically a manipulated *corpus*, that can never be 'denatured'. Such manipulation might be to set a lying stone upright like a stele, or put one stone upon another. This shows in all likelihood human interference, however actuated, that leaves a visual mark.

An image is, what catches the eye. This shows its potency only *ex post*, when what has caught the eye will not leave the mind. What has once been seen cannot be made unseen. The image is *exposed* to catch the eye. It is made visible to the sight of others (like the host during the elevation), and it thereby becomes vulnerable and an object of possible mockery and destruction. But that the image does not *solely* catch the eye is evident, considering the double embodiment: the inter-action and inter-passion of image and spectator is a *bodily* relation, i.e. affective and moving. But that increases the power of the image and the power *over* the image as well.

This already assumes that the image interacts as a 'bodily self'. For the image not only *has* a *corpus*, but it *is* a body (materiality), be it be the ethereal body of a projection or the crackling, crinkling and breaking body of a wafer. From this perspective, image objects are incarnated sense, that would never be sense beyond their body, form and flesh (otherwise they would only be eerie). Sense is only sense as sensually incarnated sense, as a way of showing, and showing itself, where it is vulnerably exposed and powerfully effective at one and the same time.

That which has been so manipulated and prepared for the eye, is tied to a pretension: it claims to be taken out of the context of 'normal' usage, and is reserved for a very special use only. There are sundry rules that usually apply to 'image objects': just looking, no touching, by no means consuming, kissing, or biting. The use makes the distinction, which differentiates an object from an image object.[64]

The image is never a mere depiction or representation of a thing; instead *it shows* that thing (as something), itself and, in a way, especially in aesthetic contexts, it also shows the act of showing. As an event of showing, the image is not only representation but also primarily it is presence. It does not merely show or mean something but it *is, what it shows* and it *shows, what it is*.

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[63] Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts*, p. 34.
[64] Another difference could be 'feasible' too: if we desist from the difference between nature and culture, literally every 'thing' could be an image that is out of ordinary use, as is the case in Blanchot's 'desoeuvrement' or Agamben's 'inoperativeness'.

This strangely relational 'identity' of the image is ambiguous – and therefore inevitably in need of differentiation. To what extend *is* the host Christ, *is* Christ God, *is* the image of Christ himself? The religious desire looks for maximum identity in the host, in relics, especially in the Shroud of Turin. It wants to grasp God by seeing him, devour him while grasping, to the end of bodily merging with him in his embodiment. On one side theological concerns are aimed against this desire,[65] on the other side there are the early medieval metaphysics, that especially emphasised Christ's and God's identity: and in the High Middle Ages it was made concrete in the identity of Christ and the host (in the doctrine of transubstantiation) and of the pope and Christ (*vicarius Christi*).

The relational identity of images and their iconic differences are more distinguishable with the aid of tropes[66]: e.g. as the difference relation of metaphor and metonymy. Blumenberg's 'absolute metaphor' is a hint in that direction. Theology is familiar with biblical parables, in which the kingdom of God is not only articulated but becomes present, and realises itself, in a 'speech event'. Accordingly the kingdom of God comes up in the parable as a parable (Jüngel). This claim remains precarious, for the wager on the performance of such utterance can be lost, as it can with love declarations and songs. When the wager is won, it becomes present instead of remaining a mere representation. – But *is* the parable the kingdom of God, and vice versa?

An image is not simply what it shows, for example an apple. But it is, what it is, as far as it shows itself. It is and it is not – that was the ontological determination that Ricoeur attributed to the metaphor: the pope is a fox and yet he is no fox. The approach to understanding this in terms of analogy as 'similar and dissimilar' does not quite fit. For with 'similarity' one would stay in the scheme of depiction, which can be more or less similar.

In aesthetics the metaphor has rarely been used as a model for the understanding of images, unlike the symbol and the allegory.[67] E. Gom-

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[65] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 1: 'Whenever images threatened to gain undue influence within the church, theologians have sought to strip them out of their power.'

[66] Given that we understand tropes, like figures of rhetoric, as not external or inauthentic, nor as a mere means of description, but as figures in which what is spoken, and what is spoken of, are present.

[67] Bernd Mohnhaupt, ' "Das Ähnliche sehen" – Visuelle Metaphern von Sexualität in der

brich was an exception with his statement that 'The possibility of metaphor springs from the infinite elasticity of the human mind; it testifies to its capacity to perceive and assimilate new experiences as modifications of earlier ones, of finding equivalences in the most disparate phenomena and of substituting one for another'[68]. Thus an image can be a metaphor, e.g. a church window can metaphorically be the gates to heaven, with the promise of godly light.[69] But – is this a matter of seeing similarity and the exchange of attributes?

An image can indeed be a *substitution*, as Hans Bredekamp elaborates in the theory of image acts with the example of the *substitutive image act*: when body and image are 'reversed' in the case of image punishments and iconoclasms, as well as in idolatry. Substitution can be used both destructively and affirmatively, as is apparent when looking at the magic of contemporary relics of celebrities.

The primary impression of a substitutive relation between image and body is of course Christ himself, as a really present substitution of God, with the Veronica as a derivative substitutive image act. The substitution of image and body enabled the veneration of saints as well as their destruction in iconoclasm. For iconoclasm is the concise manifestation of (reformed) *Protestant* 'iconolatry,' and especially its selective nature: the *faces* of pictures, statues and jube figures were diligently 'scratched off' and stabbed all over.[70] To a certain extent, iconoclasm can be seen as an inverted testimony to the power of images *sub contrario*. It does not necessarily lead to destruction. There were less drastic means such as shrouding the images, or taking them down and depositing them somewhere safe. Saving and disempowering images is withdrawal, a silent iconoclasm. Other than that, its manifestation as selective destruction, even more than total destruction, means drawing attention to the attack, during which the expression of liveliness (the face) is destroyed so that the

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christlichen Kunst des Mittelalters', in *Ästhetik des Unsichtbaren. Bildtheorie und Bildgebrauch in der Vormoderne*, ed. David Ganz and Thomas Lentes (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), pp. 199–217, 200.

[68] Ernst Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1963), p. 14.

[69] In this sense Christoph Wagner could not only analyse colours according to their conventional symbolic quality, but he could also interpret their poetical dimension (in Aristotle's sense) as metaphors. Christoph Wagner, *Farbe und Metapher. Die Entstehung einer neuzeitlichen Bildmetaphorik in der vorrömischen Malerei Raphaels* (Berlin: Mann, 1999), pp. 9, 13ff.

[70] MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, pp. 539–543.

image is killed publicly. What is embodied in those disfigured, ostentatiously 'defaced' images and sculptures? Is it vandalism, or enraged zealots who erupt into violence towards such objects? Do they embody the power of the image in all its powerlessness? Or is it the power of Reformed Christians against the embodiments of Rome and the Old Believers? At any rate there is at least the aspect of public image punishment, in which the image serves as 'substitution' for old beliefs and Rome. When the images, that have been 'decapitated' and 'tortured' to death, remain on display, then the dead are displayed, similarly to the exposed corpses of the Anabaptists of Münster.

An image can also be a *metonymy*, most elementary perhaps in relics, which visually evoke the presence of the venerated thing or person 'pars pro toto'. The iconic difference (in terms of Waldenfels) enables the difference of the 'who' and 'what' from the 'wherein' and 'how'. Bones as remnants of the body are visual artefacts, which produce imaginary presence of a symbolically represented 'who', where there is actually real absence. Both venerators and destroyers wager that the metonymic contiguity pertains, that the 'how' and the 'wherein' are indeed remnants of the alleged 'who'. And what if, in undecidable contiguity, someone associates a bone to a grave and this grave to a saint and to the church, which vaults the grave? With such a loose 'chain' of missing links it is possible that some accidentally sainted disciple such as Peter is venerated – as if his alleged grave were, pars pro toto, the invisibly visible form of his real presence.

It would be not dissimilar with the *synecdoche*, i.e. *concretum pro abstracto*, the particular stands for the general. Whoever sees Jesus' martyrdom and its soteriological meaning in a splinter of wood, and venerates the unoffending artefact accordingly, will therein find the whole history of salvation made concrete.

The suggestion arising from this is plain but highly consequential: the iconic difference terms a difference-relation that itself is differentiable and demands further distinction, just like the 'is and is not' of the metaphor in Ricoeur. The relations of tropes and figures may provide examples for the performing non-identity, which faces us in the image.

2.4. Image criticism as embodiment criticism

'Embodiment' demands differentiations, which, as has been suggested, could be done by orientating our thoughts onto tropes and figures.

When topics and rhetoric belong to the periphery of image theory, as the 'enargeia,' pointed to by Bredekamp, shows,[71] then the figurative differentiation should be appropriate. And of course thorough work on the distinctions of embodiment calls for embodiment criticism just as much as image criticism. Ethical and political questions will inevitably arise, as well as questions of potency and embodiment competition. Against the background of Warburg and Gestalt theory, Cassirer's pregnance as well as 'image act and embodiment' appear to be anthropologically constituted. This is shown in the pregnancies *on and with* which we live, and it is shown in the need for embodiment in the visualisation of what is otherwise invisible and withdrawn from visual perception. Embodiment arises from the 'Prägnanztendenz',[72] a 'pregnance-tendency', as one could term it with Hans Blumenberg (and Gestalt theory): for sense must be *sensual* or it will remain ungraspable. Theologically this would read 'quae supra nos, nihil ad nos'. That is not an oddity of religion, but can be formulated in terms of cultural anthropology. Embodiment is a function of the human need for visibility, all the more so for the personification of obscure quantities – because of the pregnance-tendency of human culture.

But pregnance comes at a price: it lightens and it shades, it makes concrete and it blocks. But exactly by doing so it is *symptomatic*: a thing is shown in pregnant and concise concretions, intentionally, but other things are shown as well, unintentionally. It is not coincidental that Didi-Huberman justified his orientation towards the symbol with reference to Freud (and Lacan).

An iconology of *diabolic* forms (or the diabolical per se) would be an appropriate way to put a symbol theory to the test. For the diabolic is the traditional counterpart of the symbolical. It is the chaos in and against the symbolical. And it is not by accident that the passions, *pathe*, were paradigmatic in that juxtaposition as embodiments of the slightly abstract 'sin'. Concupiscence and desire (primarily of the sexual kind – of course) were considered as *the* embodiment of malady (not to mention snakes and women). The invisible was seen to become visible in passionate perturbations, in which the latent became manifest – and sin became effective.

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[71] Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts*, pp. 20ff.

[72] Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 59ff, especially p. 104.

Dante's 'Inferno' imagines (in iconic pregnance) the punishment of the sinners (or rather of their souls) according to a strict principle of classification, i.e. *contrapasso*. The similarity and contrast to the sin determines the punishment. Thus the false prophets have their heads turned, so that they must always go backwards and can never face 'forward'.[73] What might be considered, under the premise of a punishing god, brute retaliation is termed more appropriately the fulfilment of a self-chosen destiny. With this in mind we could say, everyone chooses his own hell – which is the everlasting realisation of the dream. Hieronymus Bosch visualised the consequences in fine detail on the right wing of his triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*.

Fig. 14. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (around 1500), triptych, oil on wood, 220 cm × 389 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Garden_of_Earthly_Delights_by_Bosch_High_Resolution.jpg)

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[73] Dante, *Inferno*, 20th canto ('Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso'; 28th canto, 142). For the background in Thomas Aquinas see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Dieu conduit choses vers leur fin. Providence et gouvernement divin chez Thomas d'Aquin*, in *Ende und Vollendung. Eschatologische Perspektiven im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan Aertsen and Martin Pickave (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 561–594; Rudi te Velde, *Christian Eschatology and the End of Time according to Thomas Aquinas* [Summa contra Gentiles IV, c. 97], ibid., pp. 595–604; William J. Hoye, *Die eschatologische Vereinigung des Menschen mit Gott als Wahrnehmung der Wahrheit nach Thomas von Aquin*, ibid., pp. 605–625; Wilhelm Metz, *Das Weltgericht bei Dante in Differenz zu Thomas von Aquin*, ibid., pp. 626–637.

The concise rule of *contrapasso* for the award of future punishments makes a tremendous claim. It claims to be able to see, foretell (with *enargeia*) and visualise the future, and therefore it ought to be able to depict and show what fate awaits those who act in this or that way during their lives. This pretends no less than that the symbolic order (of law, i.e. God's will) is able to include and regulate even malady and evil. In this way punishment follows law in fact with an imaginary incursion, so that malady falls back on the sinners. From that one could easily conceive *contrapasso* as the *perversion of perversion*.

The order of malady can become the malady of order. The order can be 'infected' by what it tries to organise. This is the consequence, when the symbolic order of law is eternal and omnipresent (as God's will) and therefore everything is everywhere and finally in order, in *that* order. Not only the evil of order (as violation and incursion) but also the evil punishments would therefore be wholly just and *in order*.[74] This universal order thesis (not a pre-, but post-stabilised harmony) allows for a (dubiously) righteous passion for the imagination of perversions, in the form of the righteous perversion of perversions. The imaginations of punishment could be considered as 'de Sade avant la lettre'. The design and embodiment of even the most abysmal torture becomes pious imagination of the alleged will of God. This organises the cultivation even of sadistic fantasies. Herein lies the potential for self-deception. For the pious legitimation of such punishment fantasies about the perversion of perversion is not beyond being perverse itself (for instance by nourishing the lust for cruelty, retaliation and revenge). The exponentiation of perversion is this, that the ultimate and eternal punishment can be imagined without remorse and contemplated with pious pleasure. The spectacles of public punishments, all the more of executions, show what *potency to satisfy needs* such cruelties have. Whoever thinks that this is essentially 'medieval' should be reminded of the media practices of *THE SUN* newspaper, blogs and flamings, of the anticommunism of the McCarthy era and of the never-ending history of the persecution of Jews. The same can be seen when looking at a symptomatically ecumenical project in the times of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation: the witch-hunt.

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[74] For the problem and its critique see the contributor's 'Alles in Ordnung? Die Ordnung des Übels – und das Übel der Ordnung. Ordnung und Außerordentliches in theologischer Perspektive', in *Ordnung und Außer-Ordnung. Zwischen Erhalt und tödlicher Bürde*, ed. Brigitte Boothe (Bern: Huber, 2008), pp. 111–141.

The moral of this story simply is that a symbolic order of even the dia-
bolical is in danger of becoming diabolical itself. The imaginary exuberance,
with which fantasies of punishment and suffering escalate,[75] makes the
'rightly suffering' sinner into an embodiment of those fantasies, even though
he should 'actually' have embodied the eternal and righteous order. What
shows here unintentionally (as a symptom) acts against what should have
shown intentionally (the symbolic order). It is self-evident that both em-
bodiments and their imaginative staging are in need of embodiment *criticism*.

Where then do these imaginary embodiments come *from* and *why*?
Especially in questions of *responsibility* and *imputation*, there is the desire
and need for 'graspable embodiment', which is always an artefact, which
is made, designed, staged and exposed. News broadcasts and newspapers
are, one way or the other, a daily updated collection of examples of this.
Criminals, enemies and strangers are altogether *the* malady, and *the* evil
becomes *someone* evil. In this process it is crucial to give the other or the
enemy a *face* – so that he may have a vulnerable body. Bin Laden quickly
became 'the terrorist,' and Josef Ackermann 'the banker,' and just recently
he became 'Der Hungermacher',[76] responsible for hunger in the devel-
oping world. The malady is given a face and is embodied in a person.

That strangers are embodied as the evil and made destructible at least
in effigies, shows the ambiguities and abysses of embodiment practices –
and the necessity of criticism of images and embodiments. Seen in this
way the 'homo sacer' seems primarily to be a figure of image and media
practice, and not only of legal history. The *homo sacer* is an image, more
precisely a substitutive embodiment. Selected persons are set up as em-
bodiments of malady in order to perform iconic executions in the tradi-
tion of image punishment.

One could presumably speak accordingly of the fabrication of martyrs
and saints (and saintly bodies). The image becomes the body of the saint,
or rather it becomes his *transfiguration,* when he acquires an iconic body
not only for preservation or remembrance, but also for the resurrection
in the image as an image. Image punishment and image veneration com-
ply with one another. This is why the saint becomes an image, so that he
can be venerated in the image as an image.

75 Cf. Edgar Wind, 'Der Verbrecher-Gott', in id., *Heilige Furcht und andere Schriften zum
Verhältnis von Kunst und Philosophie*, ed. John Michael Krois and Roberto Orth (Ham-
burg: Meiner, 2009), pp. 347–355, 349f.
76 http://www.fr-online.de/home/1472778,1472778.html

The need for embodiment that emerges from the pregnance-tenden-
cy applies, we should add, not only to 'the dark sides of power'. Blumen-
berg once remarked against Kant: 'Love deeply needs the face', for it
'quails before the "physiognomically" ungraspable, before that, which is
too "pure" to possibly take shape, "become flesh".[77] It is as if Blumen-
berg (as a former seminarian) speaks against Kant with incarnation criti-
cally in mind, as the presumably most prominent paradigm of embodi-
ment – i.e. love.

There is an endless number of derivations, which are modelled on
biblical patterns. For example, in times of crisis Obama becomes the
'Messiah', who then embodies hope of salvation: he becomes something
similar to 'the pope' at best, a figure of light (not to say a bringer of light).
The pious production of new saints such as Antonietta Meo[78] is a conse-
quently enhanced version of this kind of embodiment. Her beatification
procedure was initiated in 1942 and in 2007 Benedict XVIth acknowl-
edged the 'heroic nature of her virtues' and thereby paved the way for
her beatification.

The procedure of beatification is the institutionalised formation of a
holy body (which is venerated, included in liturgy, asked for intercession,
and so on). Primarily there is an embodiment of the exceptional living
and dying (martyrdom) of a saint, which is secondly augmented by be-
lievers 'from below'. In a third step, usually taken much later, these events
are checked and observed in a regulated process during which a new
body is institutionalised 'from above' (Mondzain would speak of incor-
poration vs. incarnation). This body is then beatified *de jure divino* and
can and must be venerated legitimately. The fourth and final embodi-
ment is the arrangement where applicable of places of worship and cult,
preferably with picture and sculpture of the venerated *in effigie*.

Even though this might appear disconcerting to secular and protestant
eyes, there are analogies, albeit sublimated, both in the democratic state
and in Protestantism. What are we to make of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom
(death because of witness), the ambiguous veneration of him, i.e. devo-

77 Hans Blumenberg, 'Kant und die Frage nach dem "gnädigen Gott"', *StGen* 7 (1954),
pp. 554–570, 570.
78 She died of cancer in 1937 at the age of six. Pope Benedict XVIth acknowledged her
'heroic degree of virtue' in 2007 because she had testified her faith in an especially com-
mendable way, by patiently supporting her disease. Cf. http://www.vatican.va/holy_fa-
ther/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20071220_
acr_ge.html (12/12/2011).

tions based on his writings, and devotions in front of his images and statues? But this is the point beyond which it does not go: protestants usually do not know veneration *in effigies*, not even regarding the Luther-effigies in Halle. Presumably the deceased and their image bodies are not approached with expectations of salvation. This applies to 'secular' saints too, be they Adenauer in the Rhineland or Willy Brandt's statue in the central office of the SPD.

Exposed positions (i.e. expositions) foster iconic pregnance. They increase the probability of the icon's being 'chosen' as the embodiment of something. This corresponds to the basic determination of symbolic pregnance:[79]

> By symbolic pregnance we mean the way in which a perception as a sensory experience contains at the same time a certain non-intuitive meaning which it immediately and concretely represents. Here we are not dealing with the bare perceptive data, on which some sort of apperceptive acts are later grafted, through which they are interpreted, judged, transformed. Rather, it is the perception itself, which by virtue of its own immanent organization, takes on a kind of spiritual articulation – which, being ordered in itself, also belongs to a determinate order of meaning. It is full actuality, its living totality, it is at the same time a life 'in' meaning. (...) It is this ideal interwoveness, this relatedness of the single perceptive phenomenon, given here and now, to a characteristic total meaning, that the term 'pregnance' is meant to designate.[80]

When the point of symbolic pregnance is, that sense makes itself concrete in the sensuality of perception, i.e. sense is perceived in sensual experience, when therefore perception *itself* is synthetic to such an extent (not simply by means of an accessory concept) – then the exposed

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[79] 'On sharper analysis even the apparently 'given' proves to have passed through certain acts of linguistic, mythical, or logical-theoretical apperception. Only what is *made* in these acts 'is'; even in its seemingly simple and immediate nature, what is thus made proves to be conditioned and determined by some primary meaning-giving function. And it is this primary, not the secondary, formation which contains the true secret of all symbolic form, which must forever arouse new philosophical amazement' (Cassirer, *PSF II: Mythical Thought*, 94). This primary formation is the very pre-predicative synthesis or Lotze's 'first universal'.

[80] Cassirer, *PSF III: Phenomenology of Knowledge*, 202; id., 'Zur Logik des Symbolbegriffs', ECW 16, pp. 121ff, in id., *Wesen und Wirkung des Symbolbegriffs* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1977), pp. 212, 214.

visibility becomes prone to pregnance. This applies to Ackermann's 'victory'-sign as well as to the imaginary figure of Luther, who stands in front of the Emperor with his finger on the bible. These are scenes and gestures of pathos, that is, 'figures of pathos', which become pregnant as embodiments – because of the perception of others. Embodiment as a form of pregnance is therefore not *only* an effect of visibility and exposure. There probably are people who would like to be the 'new bin Laden' or a 'new saint'. It is not the 'will to power' that constitutes embodiment, instead it is always the 'other's power of interpretation'. It is the power of perceivers who make *ex post*, what seems in retrospect to be the beginning and the cause.

This insight shows up a problem of such embodiments: the relation of 'is' and 'is not'. For 'is' bin Laden the evil? Or 'is' Ackermann the evil? 'Is' a (soon to be) saint 'the sacred'? The embodiment of *something* is not without differences. It is not a 'seamless' identity. Ackermann 'embodies' the banking system, but he 'is not' the banking system. If we were to treat, or decapitate, Ackermann, it would not change the system. One might be tempted to make an analogous objection to the political illusion, that corrupt systems and structures are eradicated with the overthrow of dictators.

There surfaces some kind of 'is not'. For the identity of embodiment and the supposedly embodied is precarious. One could as well ask: is the golden calf Baal? Is a relic the saint? 'Is' the Veronica Christ? Or finally: *is* Christ God? Or is it the same case with Christ as with Ackermann? Does Christ embody God as did Moses and the prophets, so that he merely expresses and presents God's will? Or 'is' he more than the embodiment of the will? This is exactly what the metaphysics of 'high Christology' state: the consubstantiality, to be ontologically *more* than the embodiment of something. Does this mean that embodiment is the representation or the presence of something? Is there the 'real presence' of the (not only) represented? Is the represented alive and present in its embodiment? This difference is decisive, just as when the image does not merely represent (or depict) but instead 'acts' *as an image* and becomes a living event. But the Christological problem shows that this 'more than representation' is ambiguous and tends towards metaphysics. Image criticism demands embodiment criticism, which differentiates the 'is not'.

This can be explained with a more 'simple' example. We constantly deal with 'data', day-to-day at the computer. Does the machine do anything other than make data *visible* and thereby make it *editable*? Surely it does much more: it *embodies* the data as sensually as possible (up to the

point where there are curious little helpers scurrying over the monitor). This was inevitable as soon as Apple design advanced from a *graphic* user interface to a *haptic* interface. The Mac becomes a *buddy*, a *best friend*, and a loyal fellow in every condition of life, who always does what he should when he is caressed. The *contrapasso* for Mac users would probably be to use Windows for evermore.

This embodiment of abstract data points at an ambiguity: *are* the animated interfaces, what they embody – or are they merely veneer, beyond which the essential happens and lies? One would probably say 'neither – nor'. Programmers and hackers, the scribes of the digital world, would always say that graphical user interfaces (GUIs) are merely appearances for the ignorant. They are colourful depictions of the essential, which is the information and the data. A book by Neal Stephenson (who already imagined the iPad and a coming nano-world in the 90s)[81] was entitled in German 'The Dictatorship of Veneer. How Graphical User Interfaces Control their Users'.[82] The problem is theologically all too familiar: the essential (the binary code) is invisible, while the surface is something for the ignorant, the children that let themselves be held captive in self-imposed ignorance by Windows and MacOS. The intuition is, that the 'essential' would be the invisible data 'beyond'. As if the invisible God were the 'actual' and visibilities and embodiments were only semblance and not being. Contrary to that the phenomenological hypothesis reads: so much semblance, that much being.[83] This is theologically agreeable: so much revelation, that much God; so much Son, that much Father. What else remains is *absconditus*:

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[81] Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age. Or, a Young Lady's Illustrated Primer* (London: Spectra, 2011).

[82] Neal Stephenson, *Die Diktatur des schönen Scheins. Wie grafische Oberflächen die Computernutzer entmündigen* (Munich: Goldmann, 2002); the original English title is Neal Stephenson, *In the Beginning ... was the Command Line* (New York: William Morrow, 1999).

[83] Heidegger alludes to the German saying 'mehr Schein als Sein' (verbatim: 'more semblance than being') which accuses whatever is so described of being more illusion than reality, 'merely appearing' to be something it is not. In contrast Heidegger himself equates 'Schein' (semblance) and 'Sein' (being) in a phenomenological manner, a phenomenological version of *esse est percipi*. For the equation 'soviel Sein, soviel Schein' cf.: *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet*, Gesamtausgabe (GA) 34, ed. Hermann Mörchen (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988), p. 322; cf. id.: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (GA 20), ed. Petra Jäger (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1979), p. 119; for the reverse version 'soviel Schein – soviel Sein'; cf. id.: *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), p. 36.

supra nos, nihil ad nos. But that does not release us from the burden of criticism as differentiation.

The question is, whether embodiment can be understood as (more or less) arbitrary *representation* of a thing, or as a form of *presence* of the depicted. *When* there is talk of embodiment, then it is not only a matter of arbitrary or external representation, but also of presence. Now the perception of presence is not mere transmission of information. That which is present is instead incarnated and corporeal (not to say 'entirely') itself. 'Look and feel' as a rule of intuitive user guidance is a metonymic principle for living as realities, which are continuous embodiments and which pass from transfiguration to transfiguration by living. In the words of the theoretically well-aware Gospel of John: 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.' (John 14:9) The claim is manifest: the Father *is* embodied in Christ, and is present in person and flesh. Who wants to be with the Father, is allowed, able and obliged to follow the Son. Christ as the interpreter and hermeneut of the Father *is* the 'accessibility of the originally non-accessible' (Husserl's terminology, regarding the problem of experience of the Other, Hua I, 144). That is why we can confidently abide by the interpreter.

Starting from there, there are two established ways forward. The first takes the Gospel of John *itself* as scripture to be the embodiment of the spirit that recalls Christ and posthumously takes his place. 'No-one comes to the Father, except through me,' is what this Gospel (14:6) says, and therein it claims to be the needle eye of accessibility. The protestant insistence on the accessibility of God by means of scripture (propagation) incorporates that. The other way is to devolve the problem onto the institution of the church. The Roman Catholic version of Christianity understands the church as the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, and thus grants access to God exclusively to those who participate in this institution.[84]

Torah and Christ, scripture and image, or scripture (propagation) and church, can become *competitive* embodiments of God (or his will, or his spirit). They have this in common, that these 'graphical user interfaces' are indispensable as an access to the non-accessible. And they are not only external means, but in them God *is* embodied and present (his will in the Torah, the spirit of Christ in scripture, or in the body called the church).

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[84] Already the claim of Jesus would be an odd incapacitation for Jewish ears (Rosenzweig), since everyone could immediately turn to God himself and observe his will anyway.

2.5. Embodiment rivalry: host and pope

The embodiment rivalry leads to the never-ending history of *supplementation* of embodiments. There are sacraments, scripture, propagation and images, for example of saints with or without reliquaries, in which alleged relics, such as the bones of saints, are regarded as the embodiments of the respective saints to whom one turns for intercession (not unlike some whisper down the lane from Mary to Christ to God etc.). Thus never-ending circuits and religious epicycles unfold in the media maze on the way to God. Faced with this irreducibility of embodiments, and the impossibility of immediacy, one will readily feel the need to lift the veil and see, think and grasp 'God himself'. It is the dream of the shortcut, the direct way to pass all the bodies and to be with God directly in spirit.

2.5.1. The host as an embodiment of Christ
– for the transfiguration of the communicants

The Eucharist as the central 'rite of embodiment' in Christianity is traced back to a pathos scene, the Last Supper, as it was repeatedly depicted in iconic pregnance. We are dealing here with a multi-layered embodiment: Christ embodies God the Father and the bread and wine embody Christ. This divinely ordained rite leads to 'difference and repetition' of these (*metaphorice dictum*) 're-incarnations'. Their point is that not only are bread and wine miraculously changed, but by consuming them, the believer himself becomes an embodiment of Christ (even if only a member of his body).

The question: '*Is* Christ the embodiment of God?' (not merely a representation but his incarnation) repeats itself in view of *the* central cult image of Christianity, which is the host. *What does one see, when one sees the host*, e.g. in the elevation of the host?
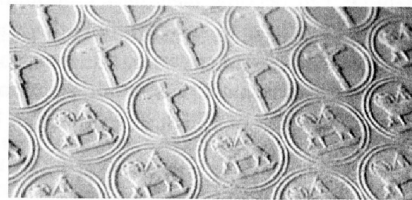

Fig.15. Host (https://www. hostien.com/hostien-c-21.html)

Fig.16. Host design (http://www.ekd.de/aktuell/63071.html)

What is apparent to the eye is a wafer, usually stamped with a cross or other Christological imagery. The iconic artefact is thus explicitly marked with a symbol, which is here an index that has iconic form and symbolic meaning and evokes imaginary identity.

One sees therefore not only a wafer, but an image (an iconic artefact), which is made to be eaten but can also be consumed by the eyes. Was such consumption sufficient in exceptional cases in the Middle Ages? Is the vision of the host a salutary vision – where there is *more* to receive than a visual impression?

Augustine declared the host, the Eucharistic *caro*, to be a *figura Christi*, against the background of (Neo-) Platonism: 'Figura est ergo praecipiens passioni Dominicae communicandum'.[85] By doing so, he constituted, with recourse to neo-platonic theurgy, his own *image theoretical* interpretation of the Eucharist, which repeatedly collided with the Aristotelian substance-ontological interpretation. The Eucharist as either an image event or transubstantiation presents us with two essentially different models: the validity of the first was unfortunately rejected[86], unfortunately because it could still offer considerable potential for understanding, even in modern Eucharist controversies.

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[85] Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana libri quattuor*, ed. William Mac Allen Green (Wien: Pichler, 1963), III, p. 16. Cf.: 'non dubitavit Dominus dicere, h.e. corpus meum, cum signum daret corporis sui' (c. Adim. 12, 3). Cf. Karl Adam, *Die Eucharistielehre des hl. Augustin* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1908), p. 102.

[86] Cf. Innocent IIIrd, letter 'Cum Marthae circa' to archbishop John of Canterbury, November the 29th, 1202, DH 782 (PL 214,1119A-1122B (= letters V 121) / Gregor IX., Decretales, l. III, tit. 41, c. 6 (Frdb 2,637–639). – Reg.: PoR 1779): 'From the expression, moreover, concerning which your brotherhood raised the question, namely 'mysterium fidei', certain people have thought to draw a protection against error, saying that in the sacrament of the altar the truth of the body and blood of Christ does not exist, but only the image and species and figure, inasmuch as Scripture sometimes mentions that what is received at the altar is sacrament and mystery and example. But such run into a snare of error, by reason of the fact that they neither properly understand the authority of Scripture, nor do they reverently receive the sacraments of God, equally 'ignorant of the Scriptures and the power of God' [Matt. 22:29]...' (for this translation see: http://www.catecheticsonline.com/SourcesofDogma5.php) (Ex eo autem verbo, de quo movit tua fraternitas quaestionem, videlicet »mysterium fidei«, munimentum erroris quidam trahere putaverunt, dicentes in sacramento altaris non esse corporis Christi et sanguinis veritatem, sed imaginem tantum, et speciem et figuram, pro eo, quod Scriptura interdum commemorat, id, quod in altari suscipitur, esse sacramentum et mysterium et exemplum. Sed tales ex eo laqueum erroris incurrunt, quod nec auctoritates Scripturae convenienter intelligunt, nec sacramenta Dei suscipiunt reverenter, Scripturas et virtutem Dei pariter nescientes [cf. Mt 22,29].)

What does one *'see'*, when looking at the host? It makes sense to transform the question (like Christ) and to ask what it is, that the host *embodies*. The answer alas will not become simpler, but more complex. Is it the Body of Christ or the ultimate remedy (*pharmakon*)? Could it possibly be the sublimated materiality of a communal meal, and therefore of the communion of saints? Is it a coin from the *thesaurus gratiae*, which the church doles out according to the economy of salvation? Or is it a sacrifice that is offered and celebrated? Perhaps it is merely a commemoration entwined in legends. Is it maybe even holy matter, with which one can do magic and practice witchcraft?

Catholics and Lutherans agree[87]: bread and wine *are* Christ, in real presence. The host embodies him, truly is his body and blood and does not only mean or represent him. The real is the present, the present is the real and not merely representation. But this real presence is not guaranteed by a symbolic order. Instead it is determined by a certain contingency, which means that only that can become an event, which cannot be stated but only witnessed. This is why the identity of the real and the present is *imaginary* and not guaranteed by the rite. The problem of this explication lies in the guidance of awareness, that all too easily slips into the metaphysical. Everything focuses on the ontology of this artefact, the host, and the differences of the constitution theory of this cult image (be it sacrifice or not, transubstantiation, and so on). The *metaphysical* hardening of this *'is'* bewitches the mind and the ecumenical understanding as well. For the symbolical and imaginary elaboration of this cult image, the host, is defined more closely by the pragma and its history. There are traditions, rites, celebrations, memories, hopes and theologies that in- and unfold it. The iconic artefact itself does not *become* an embodiment (as a cult image) as soon as it is in bodily and social use – when it is consumed and vanishes. We might call that 'presence in withdrawal'. For it is a cult image that is meant for consumption, so that it will take *effect*. Its effect is, that the communicants collectively embody what has been pre-embodied by the host both really and in imagination. The host is *sacramentum* so that the consumer may become *exemplum*.

In this light the metaphysical constitution theories only distract from the concise punchline. The host embodies the unrestricted gift, to wit devotion, which is passed on and shared and creates community. Then the rite is not only the miraculous event of real presence *in the given* (datum, host), but is

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87   Even if the theories differ as to how this event of real presence occurs.

also the scene of giving, sharing, passing on: it becomes the embodiment of future community.[88] It is only with this *Sitz im Leben* that the ritual celebration becomes the incarnation of a certain spirit, in which the community bears witness that it lives. That goes further than probably thought. For the actual miraculous transformation is not that the wafer becomes a host, but that the participants in that embodiment ritual become 'members of the Body of Christ'. Whoever receives, passes on and celebrates here becomes, what he eats. For the meaning and purpose of this ritual, embodiment is of course *not* the embodiment of bread and wine, but that the consumers embody the form of life, that is symbolically shown in the ritual.

Hence Luther can say, in an almost heretical manner: 'unnd gegen meynem nehsten auch werden ein Christen, wie Christus mir worden ist' ('Dabo itaque me quendam Christum proximo meo, quemadmodum Christus sese praebuit mihi').[89] When the consumer becomes Christ to every neighbour, then one could call that the final embodiment *in vivo*. It is a subtle embodiment, quite unspectacular, but it is not invisible and not ineffective. The embodiment returns here to its *Sitz im Leben*. Therein Jewish understanding (i.e. that the righteous one embodies the will of God) meets a protestant understanding (i.e. that the Spirit of Christ is embodied in way of life of Christian freedom). Yet – both remain discrete as long as they do not pretend that the Jew or Christian, who lives in that manner, *is* God. In the best case, they would be living images of God. Do the consumers therefore become schematic, substitutive or intrinsic image acts? The genuine sense seems to be more basic. The consumers seem to become a living image act, *in vivo*. That is neither an animation of a 'machine', nor a substitution (rather a supplementation). If anything, those who embody the will of God become *intrinsic* image acts, and therefore effective *exempla*.

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88   This indicates both a proximity to and a distance from Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); in this connection see Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt, (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); cf. Philipp Stoellger, 'Mit-Teilung und Mit-Sein – Gemeinschaft aus "Neigung" zum Anderen. Zu Nancys Dekonstruktion der Gemeinschaft', in *'MIT-SEIN'. Gemeinschaft – ontologische und politische Perspektivierungen*, ed. Elke Bippus et al. (Zürich/Wien/New York: Voldemeer, 2010).

89   'I will therefore give myself, as a sort of Christ, to my neighbor, as Christ has given Himself to me; and will do nothing in this life, except what I see will be needful, advantageous, and wholesome for my neighbor, since by faith I abound in all good things in Christ.' WA 7, p. 66 (§ 27).

2.5.2. The pope as an embodiment of Christ – and his third body
We have already noticed some rivalry of embodiment between the *Torah and Christ*. It might come into play, when Luther's daring thesis is taken too literally. Then the *Christian as exemplum* would rival Christ himself as *sacramentum*. The distinction between *sacramentum* and *exemplum* should prevent precisely that: traditionally expressed, the original image is present in the copy, but the latter is what it embodies, only by means of the former. This can tilt – and ways of life differ on that question. A complex embodiment rivalry can become manifest, when the relation of *host and pope* is considered. *Prima facie* this might seem irrelevant or absurd, but it becomes inevitable when the high-medieval interpretation of the papacy is recalled. This is what Agostino Paravicini Bagliani did in 1994 with his monograph 'Il corpore del papa', translated as 'The body of the pope. A theology of invalidity'.[90] It focuses on the 'invalidity' of the supreme pontiff in contrast to the king. 'The King is dead. Long live the King!' This indicates that the king is (*qua officio*) considered immortal. The Vicar of Christ, on the contrary, dies and is *not* above all that. Therefore this concerns *that* invalidity, which distinguishes the pope both from the king and from Christ.

But the theological and ritual emphasis of this invalidity and mortality is already noticeable. For emphasising it causes, or indeed implies, doubts. And such doubts only increase with further imagery of the invalidity of the pope. This is not without cause. In the High Middle Ages the Holy See was more and more exalted in interpretation: he went from being the traditional *vicarius Petri* to being the *vicarius Christi*.[91] Bernard of Clairvaux asked: 'Let us now, as far as it is possible, think about who you are, which person you represent, for a certain time, in the church of God?' – and the answer reads: 'You are the high priest, the highest spiritual leader [...] Aaron by your authority and Christ by the anointing.'[92] Therefore Innocent III was 'Bone of Christ's bone, flesh of Christ's flesh'.[93] In biblical tradition the church was regarded as the Body of Christ, who himself is the head of all the members of his body. But what if Innocent III understands the church as a body and its head as the

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[90]   Augostino Paravigini Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, trans. David S. Peterson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[91]   Cf. ibid., pp. 68ff; with Bernard of Clairvaux.

[92]   Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, lib. II, c.VIII, 15 (Opera III, 423).

[93]   Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistolae I*, Opera VIII, 313.

pope?[94] Innocent IV follows this line of thought, when he states that 'Christ however reigns through his substitute, the pope.'[95] This is brought into theological terms, when Alvarus Pelagius (1275-1352) says, 'The Church is the mystical body of Christ and the community of Christians is not confined by the walls of a town. The mystical body of Christ is, where its head is, that is, the pope.'[96] Bagliani speaks here of 'the significance of the equation Christ=pope that was established in the twelfth and thirteenth century.' Alvarus Pelagius even answers the question as to what one sees, when looking at the pope: 'Since the sovereign pontiff represents Christ and takes his place on earth, the faithful who look at him with the eye of faith see Christ.'[97]

It should now be comprehensible, what at first sight seemed to be overlooked: that the pope embodies Christ, just as much as the host. The problem comes to a head when the pope performs the Elevation of the Host during High Mass: is Christ seen doubly?

In any case this latent embodiment rivalry cannot be avoided, when both theories of embodiment, i.e. the pope theory and the Eucharist theory, are set into relation. Both appear as *substitutive* embodiments, where an image substitutes for Christ, and what is more not only represents him but presents him in real presence. This has implications both institutionally and sacramentally. And when the church (mainly its head) administers the sacraments, according to Roman Catholic understanding, then there is a determined hierarchy. To this end God wanted the pope to be the *vicarius Christi* 'by a special office, in
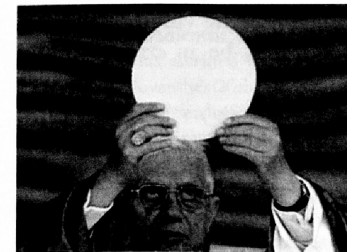

Fig.17. Pope and host (http://www. traditioninaction.org/religious/e023rp_ TacticsChange_Stabinski.htm)

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[94]   Innocent III, Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, MPL 217, 551 (cf. ebd., 656), according to Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, pp. 59f (273, fn. 18).

[95]   Jean Leclercq, *L'idée de la royauté du Christ au Moyen Age* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1959), p. 59; quoted by Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, pp. 59f (273, fn. 21).

[96]   Nicolas Jung, *Alvaro Pelayo* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1931), p. 150 ('Corpus Christi mysticum ibi est, ubi est caput, scilicet papa'), quoted by Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, p. 63 (274, fn. 38).

[97]   Alvarus Pelagius, *De statu et planctu*, lib. I, c. 13, f. 4r, quoted by Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, p. 69 (p. 277, fn. 64).

his image and likeness.'[98] And this image acts in a godlike manner: 'What the pope does as the representative of God, must be seen, as if God alone had done it; the actions of the representative are the actions of God.'[99]

The anthropological background and theological sense of the *vision* of holy images is comprehensible (with Th. Lentes[100]): man is *imago Dei*, although he has lost *similitude*. In the vision of holy images, the unveiled *imago* is perceived in a way, that lets the image take effect in pathos and imagination, so that what is seen may become real in real life *imitatio*. Man 'becomes the image, which he looks at'.[101] This becoming needs clarification – and the vision of the host, which effects and communicates as *sacramentum* what it shows and is, can serve as an approach to that endeavour. From this point the effect of holy images can be conceived analogously to the sacrament. The deciding and theologically problematic consequence is to understand images sacramentally even if they 'only' show exceptional *exempla*, or maybe paragons. When the communicated is determined as *virtus* (i.e. as the paragon virtue of saints[102]) and the vision of the images is understood as a receptive contact, then the oral '*manducatio oralis*' becomes secondary, if not inferior to immaterial vision.[103] Theologians have always insisted that this 'spiritual communion' during the vision of the host (or analogously the vision of an icon such as that of of Saint Christopher) should only be an *exception*[104] for

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[98] Alvarus Pelagius, ibid., f. 4r, quoted by Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, p. 277, fn. 63.

[99] Antonius de Butrio, *Super prima primi decretalium commentarii*, glossa a 2, X, I, 7, f. 154ra, fn. 9; quoted by Michele Maccarrone, *Vicarius Christi. Storia del titolo papale* (Rom: Lateranum, 1952), p. 237; dito. Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, p. 277, fn. 66.

[100] Thomas Lentes, *Inneres Auge, äußerer Blick und heilige Schau. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zur visuellen Praxis in Frömmigkeit und Moraldidaxe des späten Mittelalters*, in *Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter. Politisch-soziale Kontexte, visuelle Praxis, körperliche Ausdrucksformen*, ed. Klaus Schreiner et al. (Munich: Fink, 2002), pp. 179–220.

[101] Ibid., p. 188; cf. Christof L. Diedrichs, *Wahrnehmung des mittelalterlichen Kirchenraums*, in *Kunst der Bewegung. Kinästhetische Wahrnehmung und Probehandeln in der virtuellen Welt*, ed. Christina Lechtermann et al. (Bern: Lang, 2004), pp. 267–284.

[102] Cf. Arnold Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: WBG, 1997), pp. 118ff, 160ff.

[103] Cf. Robert W. Scribner, *Vom Sakralbild zur sinnlichen Schau. Sinnliche Wahrnehmung und das Visuelle bei der Objektivierung des Frauenkörpers in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert*, in *Gepeinigt, begehrt, vergessen. Symbolik und Sozialbezug des Körpers im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Schreiner et al. (Munich: Fink, 1992), pp. 309–336, 311ff; cf. Jakob Torsy, 'Eucharistische Frömmigkeit im späten Mittelalter', in *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 23 (1971), pp. 89–119.

[104] The Council of Trent already formulated (Sess. XXII, c. 6., DH 1747): 'The holy

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those, who are unable to fully attend the Eucharist (for health or other valid reasons). A similar consideration applies to the penance by means of indulgence images.[105]

The differences between the icons and the host (only the latter being eaten) and the relations of *sacramentum* and *exempla* in the Eucharist were overlooked. Was it because they were just too evident? However, on this point P. Browe writes, concerning the display of monstrances and the elevation of the host, that 'people […] just came to get the passionately desired look at the consecrated host. As with the elevation, one hoped, that it would serve the salvation of the soul and avert damage from the body.'[106] There were priests who were against the practice of showing the 'unveiled' sacrament, and to carrying around and exposing on the altar what was supposed to be a sacrifice and to be consumed. Cusanus protested against the transformation of the salutary meal into the salutary vision: the Eucharist 'was instituted as nourishment, not as an object of

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Synod would wish indeed that at every Mass the faithful present receive communion not only by spiritual desire, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist, so that a more abundant fruit of this most holy Sacrifice may be brought forth in them.' ('Optaret quidem sacrosancta Synodus, ut insingulis Missis fideles adstantes non solum spirituali affectu, sed sacramentali etiam Eucharistiae perceptione communicarent, quo ad eos sanctissimi huius sacrificii fructus uberior proveniret...') The papal encyclical of Pope Pius XII of November 20th, 1947 formulates: '116. The Church, as the teacher of truth, strives by every means in her power to safeguard the integrity of the Catholic faith, and like a mother solicitous for the welfare of her children, she exhorts them most earnestly to partake fervently and frequently of the richest treasure of our religion. 117. She wishes in the first place that Christians – especially when they cannot easily receive holy communion – should do so at least by desire, so that with renewed faith, reverence, humility and complete trust in the goodness of the divine Redeemer, they may be united to Him in the spirit of the most ardent charity.' http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei_en.html; the original Latin text in: AAS 39 (1947), pp. 521–595: ('Quemadmodum autem Ecclesia, ut veritatis magistra est, catholicae fidei integritatem omni ope tutari enititur, ita, ut suorum est filiorum sollicita mater, eosdem summopere adhortatur ad maximum eiusmodi religionis nostrae beneficium studiose frequenterque participandum.')

[105] Cf. Hartmut Kühne, *Ostensio Reliquiarum. Untersuchungen über Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Gestalt und Funktion der Heiltumsweisungen im römisch-deutschen Regnum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000); Hans Dünninger, 'Ablaßbilder. Zur Klärung der Begriffe "Gnadenbild" und "Gnadenstätte"', in *JVK NF* 8 (1985), pp. 50–91.; Anton L. Mayer, *Die heilbringende Schau in Sitte und Kult*, in *Heilige Überlieferung. Ausschnitte aus der Geschichte des Mönchtums und des Heiligen Kultes. FS für Ildefons Herwegen*, ed. Odo Casel (Münster: Herwegen, 1938), pp. 234–262.

[106] Peter Browe, *Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter* (München: Hueber, 1933), p. 169.

vision.'[107] Hence in many places under his administration (as a cardinal legate) the uncovered display of the sacrament was forbidden except for the feast of Corpus Christi.[108] But his restrictive position could not prevail. The pious desire was evidently stronger. This had liturgical consequences as well in the form of the 'exposure of the sacrament'[109], which is the exposure of the altar sacrament for visual consumption, and which has been repeatedly debated.

When the host was elevated after the words of consecration, so 'that it shall be visible to all' (ut possit ab omnibus videri),[110] then this highly pathic image act became the centre of the mass or the sacramental processions. But what exactly is seen in these embodiments? How does this image take effect? It is more or less self-evident that no one perceives Christ in the optical sense, when seeing the host (even if the Nominalists believed that to be possible, because of God's omnipotence).[111] But the veneration of the host is based on the potency of the image as the embodiment of Christ, as his body. Recalling the emission theory of seeing, and the visual contact with what has been seen, one will come to the realisation, that the host is a substitutive image act par excellence. He who gains visual contact with the host is in the holy *communio*, in which the perceived takes salutary effect.[112]

Church is where Holy Communion is received. The coming communion is embodied exactly at that point and not vice versa: Holy Communion is where the church is. But when the host embodies Christ both really and imaginarily (as something really imaginary and imaginarily real) – what is the pope? What is seen, when looking at the pope, with regard to whom or what the pope embodies? *Prima facie* it is obvious:

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[107]   Ibid., p. 170.

[108]   Ibid., p. 171.

[109]   Ibid., pp. 141–185.

[110]   Odo von Sully, MPL 212, 65; quoted by Peter Browe, *Verehrung der Eucharistie*, p. 31.

[111]   Cf. Peter Browe, *Die eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters* (Breslau: Müller & Seiffert, 1938), pp. 48f. A consideration of the Spanish priest Guido de Monte Rochen from 1333 elucidates these rather strange complications: 'When a priest elevates the host and a child or flesh appears, what is he suppose to do? Either it is seen by all or only the priest or only the people. When the miracle is seen by all, people and priest alike, he has to pray that it becomes bread again. If the prayer is answered he has to consume it, if not, he has to consecrate once again. But if the child or the flesh is only seen by the people, he has to consume.' (Manipulus curatorum IV, c. 11; quoted by Browe, *Die eucharistischen Wunder des Mittelalters*, p. 201).

[112]   Cf. in detail Lentes, *Inneres Auge*, 'äußerer Blick', pp. 179–220.

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whoever looks at the pope does not see Christ (in the physical sense of seeing), and whoever looks at the host sees him just as little. But the aforementioned embodiment rivalry arises, when both pope and host embody, be it substitutively or intrinsically, Christ. This could easily be avoided by making an objection: who consumes the host, is and eats the Body of Christ. One who (visually) consumes the pope on the contrary, is of the body of Christ but *eats* neither of those bodies. The participation in embodiment is medially different (seeing and hearing the pope; seeing and tasting or eating the host) but both are image act processes, in which acting images take effect on the 'consumers'. The vision of the host might be salutary but that does not apply to the vision of the pope. The host becomes what it is and gains its effectiveness due to a miraculous transubstantiation, whereas the pope is not 'transubstantiated' – or is he? This gives reason to distinguish the three bodies of the pope (not to speak of a 'threefold' body).

Sometimes the Renaissance artist was referred to as *alter Deus*, but at that time the same applied to the pope already. He was dubbed *alter Christus* and sometimes even *Christus ipse*. Thus the pope could *qua officium* be considered 'Christly visibility', as Bagliani heads a chapter of his study.[113] When this exaltation of the pope (which *rivalled* with kingship) on the part of theology caused various escalations, there was a need of analogous degradations – which are identified in Bagliani's perceptive study. But when the lowliness meets the thus exalted, it remains notoriously ambiguous or dangerously plain in terms of Christology. For the degradation of what is exalted comes under the suspicion of intending a sublime raising up, that reveals itself especially in its humbleness.

As a consequence we find a precarious ambivalence regarding the iconic staging of a 'dying pope', to which we will come shortly. The simple question is, then: what is seen, when we look at a dying and finally a dead pope? *What does the dead pope embody?* Is it a holy body? Like all the dead, the late pope has become an image of himself, in the sense of Maurice Blanchot.[114] The embalmed and artificially prepared, decorated and exhibited body becomes the image of the dead – who is really present (and really absent at the same time) in this substitutive image act.

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[113]   Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, p. 65.

[114]   Maurice Blanchot, 'Two Versions of the Imaginary', in idem. *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 254–263, especially pp. 257–260 ('The Cadaverous Resemblance').

As is generally known, the pope embodies more than a worldly insti-
tution as long as he is alive and in office. He embodies a symbolic order
named 'Holy Church'. As the head of that body he is, and has been since
the eleventh century, no longer only *vicarius Petri*, but *vicarius Christi* –
with all the ambiguities that follow from that. For actually Christ is con-
sidered to be the head of that body, while at the same time the pope is
regarded as its visible head in all eyes.

On the occasion of the death of John Paul II, Horst Bredekamp (fol-
lowing Ernst Kantorowicz) expounded the iconic complications of the
pope's *two bodies*.[115] The medial staging especially of the suffering and
dying pope put into focus, how this body became its own image (ap-
proaching Blanchot's strong thesis). 'The not yet deceased became a stat-
ue of himself, which would stay alive, even if he should die.'[116] Bredekamp
sees here, above all, how the pope falls silent. He sees the 'departing of
the individual body from the body of the office', which climaxed in the
burial liturgy, 'because even after death the pope remained in the realm
of the living for days.'[117] The dead physical body becomes the ambivalent
image of the deceased natural person, and at the same time of the still
present and vital body of the office.[118] Bredekamp quite plausibly makes
use of the thesis of two bodies, which however has to be differentiated in
the case of the pope. It was Kantorowicz who discovered the thesis of
the king's two bodies in a text, that had been written around 1100 AD
and is accredited to an 'Anonymous of York', otherwise the 'Norman
Anonymous',[119] whose identity is unknown to this day. Person and of-
fice, or two natures (like Christ) in one, lead Anonymous to the thesis of
two bodies, one physical and the other symbolic.[120] It is decisive that this

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[115] Cf. Horst Bredekamp, 'Vom Birett zum Camauro. Zum Zusammenspiel von Kleid-
ung, Körper und Papstwürde (2006)', in id., *Bilder bewegen. Von der Kunstkammer zum
Endspiel. Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. Jörg Probst (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2007), pp. 42–62, 52.
[116] Ibid., p. 56.
[117] Ibid., p. 56f.
[118] Seen from a phenomenological point of view, we can hardly speak of a body here,
since it is no longer ensouled or alive.
[119] Cf. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theol-
ogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 42–60; following Kantorowicz but
focusing on the theory of images, see Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha M.
Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minensota Press, 1988), where the theological back-
ground is faded out altogether.
[120] *Die Texte des Normannischen Anonymus*, ed. Karl Pellens (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966), p.
130.

theory regarding bishops, popes and kings is not statutorily legitimated,
as it was in the case of the distinction of person and office, which was
already common at the time, but that the two-bodies doctrine 'is not
founded in law or constitution, but in theology: it mirrors the duplica-
tion of natures in Christ. The king is the perfect impersonator of Christ
on earth.'[121] It is all the more surprising that the theory of the pope mat-
ters not at all to Kantorowicz, whereas it has a special point for the Nor-
man Anonymous. For he unfolds his Thesis on the king's *gemina persona*
against the background of his – often overlooked – theory of the *three
bodies of the pope*. This should be kept in mind because it thus becomes
clear, that in the indiscrete embodiment that the pope *is* (especially in
death), the *third body of the pope* withdraws from vision and is therefore
overlooked in the substitutive image act, that meets the eye in the shape
of the dead pope.

Concerning the pope, Anonymous writes:

> Such a figure is not simple but multiple, and has several persons. The pope
> possesses the person of the supreme pontiff and of a man, as well as that of a
> homicide and of a sinner. (...) In the person of the supreme pontiff, he sins
> not but can remit sins; as such, he is to be venerated and honoured above all
> other men, and to be judged by no one. In his human person, even if he sins
> not, he cannot remit sins, and as such he must be venerated, honoured and
> also judged as a man. In his person as a sinner he is to be neither venerated
> nor honoured, but judged as inferior to man. It is not in fact just to reverence
> and honour in the same way the apostle, the sinner, the homicide, and the
> adulterer, or rather, the most sacred order of the pontificate and the base
> crime of the homicide or the adulterer.[122]

This is the unthinkable and therefore invisible par excellence: the pope is
a 'murderer and any sinner' *in persone*, too. And as such he stands *below*
man and would have to be judged accordingly. This distinction is similar
to Luther's later description of the Christian as *'simul iustus and peccator'*.
Like everyone else the pope as a natural person is a creature and 'under
the power of sin' – which implies a monstrous tension, a conflict of
power, in this threefold person, that is not explained here.

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[121] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p. 58.
[122] Bagliani, *The Pope's Body*, pp. 67f, referring to *Die Texte des Normannischen Anonymus*,
ed. Pellens, p. 6.

The symbolic over-codification of the pope makes this more than a little complicated. He embodies

First: Christ in the person of his office as the head of the church, as it is elaborated above. Second: He also embodies *naturaliter* a human being as the second body, but with the exception, that this human is 'tanquam homo reverendus'. This venerability justifies the way in which the deceased pope is treated: he is about to become a holy body, because his life (if not his death as a martyr) and his posthumous effects (miracles) enable this human being to become an *exemplum* of true life. The dead pope is the body of a saint in the making. The interferences or interactions of these two bodies make ambiguous what is seen when one looks at a suffering and dying pope. For the white-dressed and sinless Holy Father, who is presented in suffering, can only suffer innocently and therefore his can only be the suffering of the righteous. And innocent suffering is salvatory suffering. The *exemplum* becomes *sacramentum*: a sign that effects what it designates. Third: Thereby the third body (or the *persona*) is 'invisibilised': we can no longer see that he is a sinner like every man – and therefore he rightly faces death as a man, who dies for the sake of his own sins. Only the invisibilisation of this (theological) banality in the first place makes it possible to prepare the dying and the dead as a holy body. For when a 'holy father' suffers, when this suffering is exposed and he, who is the head of the 'sinless Mother Church', finally dies – is his death then the death of a 'sinless sufferer', even the 'suffering righteous,' and therefore a repetition of the death of Jesus? And is the vision of such suffering salutary, because the event is salvatory? In short: does a dying pope embody Jesus' death on the cross?

When the pope himself has three bodies, how many bodies might an image of the pope have? It may be expected, that it has a real image-body in all its materiality. It may also be expected, that it has a symbolic body in all its meaning, be it art historical, economical or political. We can expect an imaginary body of religious desire, for instance, or the extraordinary fascination of admirers. The Norman Anonymous on the contrary differentiated theologically between the creatural (man), the holy (forgiveness of sin, like Christ), and the unholy (sinner, murderer). This can easily be met. The venerators of images primarily see the holy in the image; the iconoclasts see the unholy – and both act out their desire for the creatureliness of the image. This becomes more complicated, when both intermingle – for instance in the form of the pope, or when the 'creatural' body is indefinitely supplemented in medial inter-

lacing of reproductions, virtual repetitions and distinctions up to the simulation of the image.

So what became of the three bodies of pope John Paul II, when 'his' dying body was exposed with all the iconic power of the media? It was the *cantus firmus* of comments from church leaders, some theologians, media professionals and politicians to appreciate, what the pope was doing, or rather what the media did with him and to him: they displayed the sick and old body. It was to be appreciated because it allegedly countered the *mainstream* of 'modern society' and its media, which try to conceal illness, age and death. This would not only suppress a part of our reality but it would also demonstrate a normative selection of our communication and perception: that suffering shall be suppressed instead of letting it become manifest, so that we can 'learn' from or at least face up to it. 'Suddenly and unexpectedly', the *whole* person as an object of media attention was considered desirable, not only the young, the beautiful and the rich. Is that only true, because it was the pope (who is geared towards the media) who was made an example, or would it also hold, if it were a dying former US president, who was displayed? What if it were an even more negligible figure? I very much doubt that. It is true that this broadening of the horizon concerning the perception of reality (or its medial construction) hits a plausible point, but it seems that in the process an ambiguity is surprisingly reduced to something decisively positive.

In the tradition of *Legenda aurea*, the depiction of extraordinary suffering is not only commemoration to the end of repeating and working through the gladly repressed shady sides of human existence. The commemoration of the *memento mori* belongs to the Sunday of every Christian anyway, namely as *memento Christi*. Therefore the lives of saints such for instance as Heinrich Seuse have their special function: they are narrative *exempla* of the *imitatio Christi*. They are paragons in living and believing, and are exceptionally commendable in their 'heroic' obedience in yet greater suffering. Thus they take over or translate the function of an *exemplum*, that is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as even Christ learned to obey by suffering:

> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. (Hebrews 5. 7f)

The exposition of a suffering body up to death is hardly surprising in the light of this 'exemplum-Christology' (which dominated medieval passion piety) and its narrative multiplication in the Acts of the Saints, even if there has been a change in media. These *exempla* prove to be convertible to contemporary media. However, it is new that by now the creation of legends happens 'live', in real time and in the lifetime of the hero. What happens is much more than enabling the perception of what is repressed in everyday reality. The media initiate, anticipate and stage a canonisation – no matter if *nolens* or *volens*. The extraordinary obedience during the utmost suffering becomes the epitome of wilfully accepted suffering – up to the point that at Easter 2005 the body of the pope seemed to supplant the *corpus Christi*, at least in the media. Did the substitute become (or was he made) the 'reincarnation' of the substituted, whose death and resurrection were in the process of celebration?

With all the *benevolentia spectatoris* we can see here an exemplary and edifying 'conformity of head and members' in suffering, of which Thomas Aquinas spoke.[123] But in the passion plays of the Dying Pope, the actor of the passion becomes the embodiment of what he was merely supposed to depict. Thomas added that 'Christum per passionem suam initiavit ritum christianae religionis'.[124]

Is the same true for the restaging of the suffering and dying of his substitute? Who can decide whether the repetition converges or competes with its 'original image'? Who could restrain the force of the impression of the living image in full view, so that the supplement will not hive off? When an apparently 'sinless Holy Father', clad in white, has to go the way of all flesh, then that is the staging of a to some extent politically correct passion 'without Jews or Romans'. This death cannot be punishment. For what indeed should this innocent old man be punished? Instead it can only be the suffering of a substitute *for* adherents, if not for all.

There is a *meaning* ascribed to this suffering, that is actually reserved in theological tradition for *solo Christo*. At least one thing becomes all but unthinkable in the light of all the exemplary patience under his suffering: that the pope could have suffered in himself and for himself, instead of *for* others. In terms of theology, his death is the 'wages of his sin'. But in as much as he was staged as a saint-to-be, it might well become un-

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123 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (STh), III q. 49, a. 3.
124 Thomas Aquinas, STh III q. 62, a. 5 (cf. q. 63, a. 8).

thinkable and unspeakable that he died for *his* sin and not substitutionally *for* the world. Because of its canonisation by the media, this *exemplum* gains a dangerous momentum of its own. The dying paragon and exemplary sufferer was glorified more and more until he became a *sacramentum*, even if it is only due to the pious desire of the witnesses of his suffering. In every rogation, with every 'pleading and begging', that the pope brought before God with 'loud cries and tears', he became less distinguishable from the one, whom his predecessor denied three times. What distinguishes this heroic death from the death on the cross?

Something else happens that is quite incidental. Because the audio-visual media are the distributors of this passion, they virtually are the new scriptures. There is no exposition of supplementary suffering without them. And the media gain thereby a kind of moral nobility, after the depths of reality-TV. Live coverage no longer from containers but from the Holy City. It is the self-portrayal of the media and their medium: the body of the pope and those who convey its meaning. From a theological point of view we cannot help but notice, that the media, which transmit this exposed salutary event, themselves become sacramental. The slight difference is that in this case the media institute themselves, and there is neither a distinctive institutor nor an institutional act. But what makes the media thus powerful? It seems that the desire of the spectators is ultimately responsible. Or is it the veneer, which stages itself as the embodiment of the essential?

TRANSFIGURATION

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