

**Das ‚Ich‘ zwischen Selbst- und Fremdbezug. Individualität in Moderne und Vormoderne**  
*The "I" between self-reference and hetero-reference. Individuality in the modern and pre-modern*

University of Bielefeld, 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> May 2009, at the Mövenpick Hotel Bielefeld

Organizer: Franz-Josef Arlinghaus

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Guests are most welcome. Please contact [iris.toermer@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:iris.toermer@uni-bielefeld.de) or [franz.arlinghaus@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:franz.arlinghaus@uni-bielefeld.de)

**Concept**

'Individuality', together with 'freedom' and 'rationality', is one of the central categories of modern society, which claims these categories for itself and seeks to use them in order to distinguish itself from other epochs. The identity of the modern, its 'self-confidence' derives in large part from these attempts at demarcation.

Seen in this light intensive historical research on the subject of 'individuality' has largely provided positive confirmation of this self-assessment of our period. This is true not merely of that branch of historical research in which the idea that there was little or no individuality in the pre-modern period still persists. Even if one locates the beginnings of the modern individual, with Jacob Burkhardt, in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> cent. or its 'discovery', with Colin Morris, in the 12<sup>th</sup> cent., there seems always to be a teleological movement of thought that postulates the fully developed self of the modern as the final point. While this point of view says nothing about the accuracy of its results, nevertheless a certain scepticism seems appropriate.

A central problem is surely to circumscribe precisely the object of research, that is, to define what 'individuality' really is. A descriptive approach is mostly used here, in which different aspects of individuality are assembled additively. There is the added problem that in this way the alterity of pre-modern characterization can be considered only conditionally, which makes an historicization of the phenomenon extremely difficult.

Bearing these lines of argumentation and problems in mind, we propose to discuss new theoretical considerations, as have been developed particularly in recent sociological research, in the conference and compare them with the findings of historical source analysis. In concrete terms this refers to the suggestions, based on a systems theory approach, first made by Cornelia Bohn and Rudolf Stichweh. A distinctive feature of this approach is the innovative combining of the social structure of the present with the phenomenon of modern individualism. The starting point is that, because of the differentiation of society, the subject participates in it only in very limited roles and finds no place in it as a whole. The answer to this exclusion, according to this approach, is that the individual has been thrown back on himself. It is now totally up to him to construct a self that can serve by itself as a fixed point, because the modern no longer offers a social reference point for the whole person. It is thus no coincidence that modern introspection targets the self and not, as in the pre-modern, knowledge of God.

This approach can be adopted to study pre-modern individuality, for example, in terms of the following questions:

- 1) If the outstanding characteristic of modern individuality is the *self-referentiality* of the I-experience, it must by contrast be determined how and to what extent *hetero-reference*

(*Fremdreferenz*) in the pre-modern, that is the relationship to society and the relationship to God, is to be regarded as the vanishing point of self-construction (Cornelia Bohn, *Inklusion, Exklusion und Person*, 2006; Eva Kormann, *Ich, Welt und Gott*, 2004.). Thus, instead of additively assembling various aspects of what is or might be individuality, it is proposed to choose the relationship of the single person to relevant groups, society and the world as a whole as the defining starting point of the study of them.

- 2) The aim is explicitly to include the social context in which the relevant texts were produced and the literary discourse in which they are embedded in the interpretation of them more clearly than has so far been the case. If the supposition that 'hetero- reference' can be taken as the *modus operandi* of pre-modern self-testimonies is true, the emphasis should be less on – problematic – psychologizing interpretations and more on the social and literary ambience in which the writings were produced.
- 3) Instead of postulating explicitly or implicitly a linear, continuous development, the conference aims to focus on discontinuities and surges of development. This will be done in two ways: one within the period under consideration (for example in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> cent.) and one, in particular, at the beginning and end of the epoch (12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> cent. respectively).

The approach developed here and the questions arising from it are to be seen as suggestions and a basis for discussion. Naturally a critical view of the concept is welcome and it is hoped that other approaches will be forthcoming.

The subject and the concept aimed at here require an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to those who practise the discipline of history, scholars of German have dealt intensively with texts in which concepts of personhood are addressed. Moreover, sociological theory, which forms a possible basis for the concept of the conference, is also intended find a place in the discussion.

The speakers are requested to limit the time of their papers to 30 minutes, so we have 45 minutes time to discuss each paper.

### ***Conference Programm***

#### ***Wednesday, 27/05/2009***

*Gelegenheit zu gemeinsamem Abendessen ab ca. 19.00 Uhr im Mövenpick Hotel, Bielefeld  
Arrival, possibility of a common meal at around 7 p.m. in the Mövenpick Hotel, Bielefeld*

#### ***Thursday, 28.05. 2009***

**Moderator: Heike Schlie????**

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| 9:00  | Franz-Josef Arlinghaus, Bielefeld<br>Introduction: New Possibilities of Conceptualizing Premodern Individuality |
| 10:15 | Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, New York<br>Loci of Medieval Individuality. A Methodological Inquiry                      |
| 11:30 | Kaffeepause / <i>coffee break</i>   |

- 12:00 Eva Kormann, Karlsruhe  
 Gespiegelte Norm – gespeicherte Erfahrung. Autobiografik, Autonomie und Genus an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit  
*Mirrored Norm – Stored Experience. Autobiographic Writing, Autonomy and Gender at the Beginning of the Early Modern Period*
- 13:15 Mittagspause / *Lunch*
- Moderator: Brigitte Bedos-Rezak ?????**
- 15:00 Sabine Schmolinsky, Hamburg  
 Dialogische Situationen. Überlegungen zur Selbstidentifikation im Mittelalter  
*Dialogue Situations. Reflections on Self-Identification in the Middle Ages*
- 16:15 Carol Symes, Cambridge, Mass.  
 Individual, Community, and Representation in Twelfth-Century Arras: Jehan Bodel, the Commune, and the Confraternity of Jongleurs
- 17:30 Kaffeepause / *Coffee Break*
- 18:00 Ludolf Kuchenbuch, Berlin  
 Zur Soziogenese des administrativen Ichs: Caesarius' Kommentar des Prümer Urbars (893/1222)  
*The Sociogenesis of the Administrative Self: Caesarius' Comment on the Prümer Urbar (893/1222)*
- 20:00 Gemeinsames Abendessen / *Dinner*

**Friday, 29.05. 2009**

**Moderator: Caroline Symes?????**

- 9:00 Marina Münkler, Berlin  
 Formen und Aspekte von Individualität im Tristan Gottfrieds von Straßburg  
*Forms and Aspects of Individuality in „Tristan“ of Gottfried von Straßburg*
- 10:15 David Gary Shaw, Middletown, Connecticut  
 Expressing Your Self in Later Medieval England: Social or Individual?
- 11:30 Kaffeepause / *coffee break*
- 12:00 Matthias Meyer, Wien  
 Textuelle Individuation und Narration. Die Fälle von Ulrich von Lichtenstein, Helene Kottanerin und Johann Tichtel  
*Textual Individuation and Narration. The Cases of Ulrich von Lichtenstein, Helene Kottanerin and Johann Tichtel*
- 13:15 Mittagspause / *Lunch*
- Moderator: Marina Münkler?????**
- 15:00 Christof Rolker, Konstanz  
 Me, myself and my name: Naming practices and the social self in the late medieval town

- 16:15 Gregor Rohmann, Bielefeld  
 Das Subjekt als Produkt einer Emanzipation – nur: wovon? Verwandtschaft als Katalysator der Individuation in Familienbüchern des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts  
*The Subject as a Product of Emancipation – but from which? Relationship as catalyst of Individuation in the housebooks of the 15th and 16th centuries*
- 17:30 Kaffeepause
- 18:00 Heike Schlie, Berlin  
 Selbstdarstellung als individuelle Vergewisserung in sozialen und kosmologischen Ordnungen: Mattheus Schwarz (1497-1574)  
*Self-Portrayal as Individual Self-Ascertainment in Social and Cosmological Orders*
- 20:00 gemeinsames Abendessen / *Dinner*

***Saturday, 28.05. 2009***

Moderator: Simon Teuscher, Zürich

- 9:00 Michael T. Clanchy, London  
 Ego non sum nisi unus homo': Henry III of England as individual and as king
- 10:15 Gabriele Jancke; Berlin  
 "Individualität", Beziehungen, Worte über sich selbst: Autobiografisches Schreiben als Ressource (15./16. Jh.)  
*„Individuality“, Relations, Words about oneself. Writing Autobiographies as Resource (15th/16th centuries)*
- 11:30 Kaffeepause / *Coffee Break*
- 12:00 Mareike Kohls, Kassel  
 Selbstverortung(en) im Spannungsfeld zwischen Nation - Geschlecht - Stand: Gesundheitspraktiken in den Briefen Liselottes von der Pfalz (1652-1722)  
*Self-positioning between between the contradictory contexts of nation - gender - state: health practices in the letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz (1652-1722)*
- 13:15 Gemeinsames Mittagessen / *dinner*

*Staturday afternoon an excursion will take place. Details are being announced. Saturday evening: possibility of a common meal. Am Samstag Nachmittag besteht die Möglichkeit, an einer gemeinsamen Exkursion teilzunehmen. Das Ziel wird noch bekannt gegeben. Abends besteht die Möglichkeit zu einem gemeinsamen Abendessen.*