

Christian Kern

Work profile

My basic understanding of theology in a methodological perspective is **heterotopological and heteromorphological**: One of the starting points of theological reflection and practice are particular, significant places or situations where human and non-human beings struggle with/for the livability of their lives, often under precarious conditions. Theology exposes itself to the realities in these places, pays attention to situated knowledges and cultures, reconsiders and reformulates itself so that it gains relevance in the respective contexts as well as a certain capacity to contribute to social change and critique. Theology is a particular form of embodiment or enactment: It does not stabilize or strengthen power relations and structures, but breaks them up by pointing to and testifying an ungraspable relation to a surprising 'alterity' which reveals critically the boundaries of what can be seen/done/said and discovers creatively an open space here and now where new forms of live emerge.

Authors I work with: Charles S. Peirce, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Michel de Certeau, Jacques Rancière, Édouard Glissant, Judith Butler, Walter Benjamin. In order to understand and articulate in more detail the heteromorphological dynamics of **theology as a form of embodiment of the 'other'**, I make currently use of performative theories and performance theories (John L. Austin, Peggy Phelan, Shoshana Felman, Richard Schechner, Jon McKenzie).

In my current research project, I am interested in "**provocative political performances**", i.e. activities by which artists and ordinary people intervene in the public sphere and articulate urgent social, political, economic issues, by making use of artistic, poetic, bodily, ritualistic elements.

Examples:

Milo Rau's "New Gospel", a hybrid process of exploratory research, movie, documentation and political action in Italy 2019: <http://international-institute.de/en/the-new-gospel/>

The action "Look-for-us", performed by the Centre for Political Beauty, Berlin, December 2019: <https://politicalbeauty.de/sucht-nach-uns.html>

"Monument", by the Syrian artist Manaf Halbouni, Dresden 2017: <https://www.manaf-halbouni.com/work/monument/>

I see these activities as a particular **locus politicus / forma politica**: They open an ambivalent space of negotiation about given sociopolitical conditions. They modify performatively given conditions of visibility and claim new conditions of live here and now. At the same time, they represent a **locus theologicus / forma theologica**: On the level of content, regularly, they pick up elements of religious traditions. They articulate more or less explicitly questions of live and death. On the performative level, they create (? - testify) a rupture in the structures of visibility and livability at a particular place and establish (? - reveal) a reference to alterity.

Performative political theology analyses the performative dynamics of these performances/actions and develops criteria for their evaluation: Do they maintain this precarious reference to alterity or do they close themselves up again? How do they contribute (or not) to an open society, capable of dissent, ambivalence and plurality, addressing critically and creatively the different forms of violence in social, discursive, representational structures?

Some publications

- 1) Wirksame Verkörperungen des Evangeliums? Feinschwarz 29.9.2020,
<https://www.feinschwarz.net/wirksame-verkoerperungen-des-evangeliums/>
- 2) Outside human lives. Liberation Theology as Critique of Anthropological Integrals, in: Louvain Studies 42 (3), 2019, 335-357. DOI: 10.2143/LS.42.3.3286898 https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=article&id=3286898&journal_code=LS
- 3) Inkarnative Erzählungen. In: Lebendige Seelsorge 70 (6), 2019, 388-393
- 4) Im Scheitern aufhören können. Praktisch-theologische Impulse zum Umgang mit bedeutsamen Verlusten. IN: Lebendige Seelsorge 70 (2), 2019, 97-103.
http://www.b.echter.de/images/isiweb-import/PDF-Lebendige-Seelsorge/LS-2019-02/LS_2_2019_Kern_Im_Scheitern_aufh%C3%B6ren_k%C3%B6nnen.pdf
- 5) Ziemlich menschlich. Zum gesellschaftlichen und spirituellen Umgang mit Scheitern heute, in: Bibel und Kirche, 72 (3), 2017, 163-169
- 6) Fragiles Menschsein. Sensibilisierungen durch eine Theologie des Scheiterns, in: Strube, Sonja: Das Fremde akzeptieren. Gruppenbezogener Menschenfeindlichkeit begegnen, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder 2017, 138-151.

Bio fragments

- 2020, Oct 1 – Research Assistant Institute for Catholic Theology, TU Dresden
- 2018, Oct 1 – Postdoctoral Researcher, KU Leuven, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, RU
Sept 30 2020 Systematic theology
- 2018, Sep 4 Ph.D in Systematic Theology
Paris-Lodron-University, Salzburg, Austria
Thesis: “Spatialising failure. A Theology of Fallibility” (German, “Scheitern einräumen. Eine Theologie der Fallibilität”)
- 2010 Lic. Theol. in Fundamental Theology
Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy
Dissertation: “The Church and the World. A Differentiated Hermeneutical Approach with Giuseppe Ruggieri and Gregor Maria Hoff” (German)
- 2007 Bacc. Theol., Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy
- 2004 Intermediate Diploma (“Vordiplom”) in Theology, Julius-Maximilian-University, Würzburg, Germany

Christian Kern

Dr. theol.

christian.kern@tu-dresden.de