

**Philipp STOELLGER**

### *Living Images and Images We Live By*

*Images* are media of showing (more than of saying). They show, show something (as something), show themselves (and are shown and used, so that something can be shown by them), and at any rate they hide a lot. *Showing* and *saying* is the guiding difference I follow in understanding images.

Thus the *power* of images can be conceptualised: it is the power of showing, let us see, make us see something as something and perhaps even more: they can let and make us seeing, feeling and acting in accordance to their showing. The power of images then is a “deictic”, or “monstrational” power – what I would call “*Deutungsmacht*” (interpretational power).

We not only live in iconic environments. Our life is embedded in images. We live *with* images. Some of them are quite powerful and “vivid”: they are living images of our desires, rules, traditions and ideals. They may be vivid representations (and performative presence) of cultural imaginaries we live *in* and *by*. Such images we live by are figures of orientation. They (claim to) direct our lives: that we are following them in living *by* them, like to “reincarnate” them.

The life of such images is “given” by us. *We* are animating them by desire and belief. But already animated and living images can be vivid as well against the belief of others. Image-politics and -performance implies as well that we *have* to live by them and *have* to believe in them (normative orders).

Whenever we live by images (animated by our will to believe in images), we become more or less living images ourselves. There is a miraculous transformation (not to say a transubstantiation), whenever one lives by certain images. May one call it “mimesis” or imitation, orientation or following: images we live by become present in and *as* our lives. We become their medium of distribution and re/presentation. It may be that education and religion, politics and economies are systems, communicating in and with images: images they want to distribute and spread. They make us believing in them and thereby make us to become living images.

**Philipp STOELLGER** is full Professor for Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Rostock. In 2007 he founded, and is director of, the Institute for Iconicity at the Faculty of Theology of the University



of Rostock. He is President of the Interdisciplinary Society for Picture Theory (Gesellschaft für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft, GIB), and Speaker for the post-graduate seminar “The Power of Interpretation” (DFG-Graduiertenkolleg *Deutungsmacht*). Some main publications: *Metapher und Lebenswelt: Hans Blumenbergs Metaphorologie als Lebenswelthermeneutik und ihr religionsphänomenologischer Horizont*, Tübingen: 2000; *Passivität aus Passion: Zur Problemgeschichte einer categoria non grata*, Tübingen: 2010; with I. U. Dalferth, *Interpretation in den Wissenschaften*, Würzburg: 2005; with J. Huber, *Gestalten der Kontingenz: Ein Bilderbuch*, Zürich/Wien/New York: 2008; Ulrich Ratsch – I. O.

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