

INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES TOWARDS EPIPHANIC ENCOUNTERS IN THIRDSPACE

Maik Patzelt *Freiburg i. B.*

Abstract

Religions of the (ancient) world knew about various strategies to encounter the Divine. Most commonly we would think of religious providers and entrepreneurs who enhance their cults with sensory (olfactory, visual, auditory etc.) manipulations and suggestive messages in order to evoke epiphanic experiences of some kind within the collective of worshippers they perform these rituals for (or with). This presentation however seeks to shift the focus towards the individual worshipper, who, as this presentation seeks to argue, appropriated a variety of strategies to facilitate a divine encounter beyond such public ritual gatherings. These strategies are informed by what E. Soja would describe as thirdspace - a hybrid assemblage of practices, objects and beliefs all bound together via varied layered communication levels within the realms of urban space. Such an approach details the connections of the globalised ancient world with the locality (or rather urbanity) of a place that both impact on how the individual worshipper innovates on religious practices and perceptions that in turn imprint on the urban environment and on its rather collective rituals. The purpose of these innovations as strategies of sensory experiences of divine encounters as opposed to daily needs is to be outlined by the help of recent cognitive models to religion(s). These models allow, on a last note, to identify a sensory logic to religious grouping processes.



BETWEEN LOCAL TRADITION AND URBAN INNOVATION
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