Of Masks and Men

Thoughts on Masks from Different Perspectives

Judith E. Filitz

Although European society has left only little space for material masks and, in most of the cases, has reduced their usage to special times like Carnival, the term *mask* as a metaphor has achieved an inherent part of everyday language.[1] By looking up the German word for *mask* ("Maske") in the well-known German dictionary *Duden*, one can find a not inconsiderable number of explanations: starting with masks as an object and continuing through protective masks such as may be used in the workplace, from made up faces to the entry field of search engines like Google. Following the definitions, and this is more revealing, there is a list of different synonyms for the German word *Maske*. This list of synonyms begins with *Gesicht* ("face") and *Larve*. The last is an archaic word for mask, which is related to the German word *entlarven* which means "to expose someone" or, better, "to unmask someone" and which also calls to mind the English word *larva*. These entries are not spectacular, but the second part of this list of synonyms is more interesting and shows what ideas and emotions are associated with masks in the German language. Here, one finds suggested synonyms such as falsehood, pretence, jugglery, duplicity, and hypocrisy, all concepts that have a negative connotation. The terms describe moments of dishonesty and insincerity, which are condemned by society. These are also associated with the above mentioned verb *entlarven* or the idiom *die Maske fallen lassen* ("someone's mask slips"). As can easily be seen, the English language offers similar ideas. The Oxford English Dictionary lists some definitions of *mask*, including: "[a] facial expression assumed deliberately to conceal an emotion or give a false impression; an outward appearance which belies a person's true nature."[2] Furthermore, there are many ways of understanding the term in the con-

[1] According to this, there are many approaches concerning masks from different perspectives including ethnology (e.g., LÉVI-STRAUSS, Way), ritual studies (e.g., GRIMES, Masking, 508–516), cultural history (e.g., WEIHE, Paradoxie), comprehensive cultural anthropology (e.g., EDSON, Masks), philosophy (e.g., OLSCHANSKI, Maske), pictorial science (e.g., BELTING, Bild-Anthropologie, 34–38), theatre studies (e.g., MÜNZ, Aldilà, 275–279), and many more. All of these approaches, which understand the term in different ways, have a claim to and shed light on one or more specific moments of masks. It is necessary to keep in mind that masks are a manifold phenomenon and that none of the named perspectives can give a complete examination and understanding. This little spotlight on masks cannot and shall not answer this claim, but tries to shed some light on different aspects of masks to encourage further research.

[2] OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Mask n.[3]; see also the entries to the verb: cf. OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Mask v.[4].

text of hiding, pretending, and deceiving. *Mask* as a metaphor is thus connected with the realm of falsehood in opposition to the truth. It is something that has to be dropped off and removed in order to see the true individual, the real and undisguised person. A human wearing a mask wants to hide something, wants to deceive and delude. The dialectic of the mask concerning both *hiding* and *showing*, which will be described below, is reduced to the moment of hiding. What the mask shows, is seen as something false and insignificant.[3] In the context of the search for the truth and authenticity of the individual, the mask has to be thrown off.[4]

To become free from these unilateral and mostly negative associations with the metaphorical mask as described above and also from the narrow and unreflected acceptance of an absolute understanding of what is meant by *theatre* or *ritual*, an inquiry about typical and characteristic elements of masks as an artifact is needed. Therefore, a look at the terminology is necessary and will lead to implied information about how to understand a mask and its usage. A concrete and final definition is waived, because masks are a cross-border phenomenon, located between cult and art as well as life,[5] while appearing in so many different cultures.[6] Hence, it is not appropriate to create universal statements, especially because masks are always part of their own cultural context.[7] Nevertheless, some heuristic differentiations and demarcations are helpful as well as some ideas on masks from other disciplines.[8] In the context of this volume, therefore, the emphasis is on masks of the eastern Mediterranean and the Ancient Near East from (but not necessarily restricted to) the 3rd millennium BCE to the early 1st millennium CE. However, the area of interest has to be limited, although this restriction is a provisional one. As a result, the focus will be on objects, as artifacts or shown in iconography, presenting aspects of human or animal bodies, which, in most cases, are just the head and the face, due to the condition of preservation. If iconographic material is involved, painted faces and bodies must also be taken into account.

---

[3] For the meaning of mask in German see also WEIHE, Paradoxie, 25; for the negative perception see BAUMBACH, Maske, 105–107; FERINO-PAGDEN, Geleit, 12.

[4] Cf. BAUMBACH, Maske, 105–107; SCHÄFER, Maske, 81f.

[5] Even if they originate in cultic practices, masks can become objects of art, e.g., by transferring them to museum contexts.

[6] However, especially in the cases of the Neolithic objects, it will be helpful to refer to results of anthropology, comparative religion, ethnology, etc. A collection of some aspects associated with masks in different cultures is presented by WEISS, Universum, 39–43. Concerning the problem of definition, see GRIMES, Masking, 508. For the following aspects of characterizing masks, results of other interdisciplinary research projects are necessary, though this will be done with reservations.

[7] Concerning this aspect, see, e.g., the analysis of the Inuit masks of Northwest America by Lévi-Strauss. He worked out the interconnectedness of the masks and argued that masks must not be treated as isolated phenomena but must always be analyzed in the light of their neighbouring masks (cf. LÉVI-STRAUSS, Way, 144–148). For the masks of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East of Antiquity, this will not be possible in all cases. However, according to this, masks (and their appearance) should also be seen as a part of a concrete cultural region, among others including their mythical, religious, political, and social beliefs as well as their ideas of ‘aesthetics’ (see further EDSON, Masks, 56).

[8] This will be done in the following description of masks, their functions and their meanings.

Nevertheless, one must always keep in mind the idea of whole body masks,[9] as is seen, for example, on two Neo-Assyrian stone slabs in the form of lion-masks. As long as masks were made of textiles, it is unlikely to find more than just the head or face. These objects, especially when they present faces, can, and mostly do, fit human faces, but, as it is also possible that smaller objects were part of a whole body mask, this is not a requirement. It is of more importance that they do not form a sculpture or bust but an artifact that is mobile and can be worn in different ways by human beings or other objects such as divine images, cultic poles, or sarcophagi. In many cases, this can result in open eyes and/or an open mouth. Furthermore, a look at the function is helpful. If these objects allow or seem to allow a (cultic) presence of the figure associated with it and, thus, imply some form of transformation, then one can speak of a mask. These transformations can occur in different ways, including a total assimilation of the figure or the wearer as well as a partial, more or less embracive conjunction of them. Moreover, the transformation does not only have to touch the wearer (and the figure) but also can include other participants. At least, at the end of the event there is also a re-transformation. Here, the context of the mask-wearing is primarily ritual practices and can be paired with special movements such as dancing, which also belong to the event of the mask.[10] Although ancient masks are in many cases shown and viewed in isolation, for example in a museum, it is important to notice that they were part of a larger context. However, the object of the mask itself appears as a medium of communication and as a memorial of the transformational event.[11] If a wearer can be identified, for example by the iconographic material, this also refers to a mask, as there is no need for an identification of the wearer and the figure. There are some cases, as is seen in Egypt, in which the wearer can be identified as a priest. Nevertheless, there are many grey areas and open borders to other phenomena, such as amulets, protomes, divine images as the body of a god, plastered skulls, or tattoos,[12] so that each case has to be proven individually.

Meanwhile, for understanding these ancient masks of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, it is not only necessary to analyze the artifacts and the iconographic evidence, but it is also indispensable to reflect the particular culture's associations with masks. For the European region, as has already been seen, they often have negative connotations. When these connotations are transferred onto ancient masks, whether consciously or unconsciously, ambiguous aspects and striking features of the mask in creating a bridge between this world and beyond are lost.

This article attempts to provide insight into different aspects of masks and their interpretations. Therefore, the article begins with a closer examination of the terminology surrounding masks followed by a description of some of the ambiguities associated with them. The focus then turns to the ancient masks of the Eastern Mediterranean and

[9] Due to the complicated source situation, this focus is preliminarily on the outer appearances. References to body movements can only be made by iconography with clear evidence as well as by corresponding instructions in ritual texts.

[10] Cf. HERSHMAN, Image, 30.

[11] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 18.

[12] Cf. EDSON, Masks, 13–15.

the Near East and their role in scholarship. The paper then ends with some ideas regarding the treatment of masks and their functions in modern society.

1. What Characterizes a Mask?

Terminology: Persona, Mask, Larva, Mask-Figure, and the Other

That this negative understanding of the modern, metaphorical use of *mask* does not correspond to the phenomenon and event of the mask is already widely known. One can see this easily by looking at the Latin word for mask, which is *persona*, and the developments of this term, which has led to the modern understanding of the idea of *person*.

fig. 1: Dancing (?) Phersu with birds

The origin of the term *persona* was controversially discussed for a long time, and there have been different ideas of its etymology.[13] It was and is often still said that it derives from a Latin word *personare* which means "to sound through". However, this is a pseudo-etymology, which was mentioned by the Latin writer Aulus Gellius while citing a grammarian called Gavius Bassus and his work *De origine vocabulorum* (1st century BCE).[14] Bassus considers that the mask covers the whole head of an actor and that the only opening was at the place of the mouth. This opening and the extension of the mask enabled a strengthening of the sound, and this helped the audience to understand the actor's speech.

fig. 2: Phersu, a dog and a man

[13] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 27–29; BRASSER, Rolle, 53–59; see DELUMEAU, Development, 13–18.
[14] Cf. GELLIUS, Noctes Atticae, V,7; see also WEIHE, Paradoxie, 27f.; BRASSER, Rolle, 54.

Nevertheless, there is a more convincing proposal for the term's origin, which comes from the Etruscan culture and a figure, possibly divine or demonic, called Phersu. He is attested by iconography and epigraphy in an Etruscan tomb called *Tomba degli Auguri*, which is located in the Italian Tarquinia, nearly 90 kilometers northwest of Rome, and is dated to 540–530 BCE.[15] A rectangular burial chamber is embellished with wall paintings, and the figure appears here and is identified by an inscription below the paintings as Phersu. The paintings show him in interesting but confusing positions. In one scene, Phersu, surrounded by birds and plants, is just going to jump to the right, while his head is turned to the left; perhaps, he is dancing or imitating a fight (fig. 1).[16] In the centre of another scene, there are two wrestlers with two persons to the left of them, coming to join the event. On the right side of the wrestlers, one can find Phersu holding a leash in his hand (fig. 2). Left to him, there is another person wearing a white bag on his head and a club in his hand. He is getting caught up in Phersu's leash and simultaneously attacked by a dog. This and the other paintings imply that Phersu belongs to funeral games in Etruscan culture.[17] While Phersu's dress differs in the scenes, although it is scanty in both cases,[18] he is always wearing a red face mask with a long goatee; pointed ears, though the normal ears are still visible; and a pointed brimmed cap.[19] It is controversial, if the name Phersu refers to an actor or to a figure, a demon or a god. The latter is uncertain, because there is no clear attestation of Phersu being a part of the Etruscan pantheon.[20] Otherwise, according to the context, there is a clear attestation of Phersu belonging to funeral rites and therefore of a connection to the afterworld. Perhaps, the term Phersu names both a figure of the otherworld and the actor wearing its mask.[21] This is indicated by the pictures, which show a doubled being: Phersu as the figure becoming present and affecting the scene on the one hand and the wearer of the mask on the other hand. It must be noted though that this does not seem to be a concrete individual but rather a functionary such a pro-

[15] Cf. WEBER-LEHMANN, Etrusker, 129–135; STEINGRÄBER, Tarquinia, 23–28. Different interpretations of the paintings are listed in DOST, Strukturfigur, 169–174. For other attestations of Phersu see DOST, Strukturfigur, 174f. and his article in this volume.

[16] This might be indicated by his clenched fist (cf. WEBER-LEHMANN, Etrusker, 132).

[17] Cf. BEVAGNA, Sport, 404f.

[18] His dress recalls the Anatolian traditions and is, perhaps, an indication of its origin in the east (cf. WEBER-LEHMANN, Etrusker, 131f.).

[19] There are a few other pictures of Phersu showing him in similar scenes with music and athletic contexts (cf. AVRAMIDOU, Phersu, 73; WEBER-LEHMANN, Etrusker, 132). To understand Phersu as a combination of Fufluns (as a local version of Dionysus) and Orpheus (cf. AVRAMIDOU, Phersu, 73–78) reduces Phersu to an actor impersonating the initiator of the Orphic mysteries. By understanding him in this way, the figure loses his own, Etruscan identity and is interpreted only from the outside. For other interpretations in short see BEVAGNA, Sport, 399.

[20] Many researchers postulate that he is a god or a demon without verifiable arguments, including WEIHE, Paradoxie, 28.181.

[21] Concerning the problem of identifying Phersu and deciding whether the term means a transcendent figure, an actor, a mask, or anything else see DOST, Strukturfigur, 176–184.

fessional belonging to a cult and/or a sport.[22] According to the connection with funeral rites, both belong to the context of death. In this way, the mask and its wearer seem to create something like the presence of a mythical figure. In fact, if *persona* is derived from this Etruscan phenomenon and can be translated as "something belonging to Phersu"[23], then the term primarily indicates the red face mask as the key feature of the mask-wearer as well as the represented figure and, therefore, of the event of the mask.

However, over time, the term *persona* was used to name the mask as an object and artifact, particularly in contexts of ancient theatre. In the course of philosophical and theological discourse, its meaning changed. Essentially this occurred in the context of the Christian discussion about Trinity, which transformed the term *persona* from a mask as a material object to the three persons of the Trinity: God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As early as the 1st century BCE, the term was understood by Cicero according to behaviour and action; thus there is already a connection to the aspects of acting.[24] Ranked as one of the most important pioneers of the Christian interpretation of *persona* is Tertullian, from whom the concise expression used to describe the Trinity originates: *una substantia – tres personae*.[25] With these words, he could characterize the paradox of thinking of the unity and the trinity of God at the same time without overemphasizing either of these poles. With this narrow concept of *persona*, it was possible to name the distinctiveness but not independence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within their relational structure. Afterwards, this could be transferred to the description of the human, in which personhood was understood in terms of distinctiveness and relationship regarding God and fellow persons.[26] Equally, with the Cappadocian Fathers, especially Basil the Great in the 4th century CE, we find this interpretation formulated as μία οὐσία τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις.[27] The emphasis on distinctiveness is most important for the further development of this term, and concerning this, Boethius, a Roman scholar of late Antiquity, is very important. He promoted this idea and defined *persona* as "persona est naturae rationabilis individua substantia"[28]. In this way, *persona* became a word to name the individual, and this is how it is still used today, as *person*.[29]

---

[22] As in many cases of ancient cultures, a clear distinction between sacred and profane and between religion and sport is not indicated here (cf. BEVAGNA, Sport, 405f.). Nevertheless, this differentiation is done because of heuristic reasons.

[23] In the Etruscan language, the ending *-na* indicates a belonging to someone (cf. BRASSER, Rolle, 57f.).

[24] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 183f.330–332.

[25] Analogous to the statements in *Adversus Praexan* (e.g., TERTULLIAN, Praxean, ch. 11,10).

[26] Cf. HAUDEL, Gotteslehre, 63–66.177f.; DRECOLL, Entwicklungen, 87f.; see also WEIHE, Paradoxie, 190–195.

[27] Cf. HAUDEL, Gotteslehre, 73–79.

[28] BOETHIUS, Contra Eutychen et Nestorium, III,1–5 (BOETHIUS, Traktate, 74); see also SCHLAPKOHL, Persona, 20–71; WEIHE, Paradoxie, 195–206; DRECOLL, Entwicklungen, 134f.

[29] See also BAUMBACH, Maske, 118f. In law, the term is differentiated between the *natural person* as an individual having legal capacity and the *juridical person* as an entity, to which legal capacity is ascribed by law (cf. GRUBE, Person, 731f.).

With this change from an object to a subject, *persona* lost its semantic range of mask, and, in European languages, the term *mask* became preferred as a name for objects used in the cult or theatre.[30] At this point, one can also turn to early studies in psychology. C.G. Jung once again used the term *persona* in his psychological theories. With *persona*, he names that part of the "I" that is responsible for the connection to the outside world and is, therefore, strongly shaped by adaptions to social norms and behaviours. It is a mask, which is worn by the "I", to communicate with other people. Also, in Jung's concept, this mask hides and protects something, namely the (alleged) true nature of the individual.[31] Once again, there seems to be differences between the true and authentic "I" and the mask of pretence which keeps up appearances.

Nevertheless, the most important and best-known term is *mask* itself. It is the typical name in many European languages (*masque*, *maschera*, *máscara* etc.) referring mostly to material objects, which can be worn on the face. However, also according to European traditions, one should always include whole body masks, such as Harlequin shows in the *commedia all'improvviso*.[32] Although this term is used in everyday language, there is no unquestionable etymological derivation for it. Notwithstanding, there are some ideas, which are quoted in the research literature. The first suggestion deduces *mask* from the Langobardic word *masca*, what meant something like a net, in which a decedent was wrapped. This would prevent the dead from coming back. The term was then used for those actors, who embodied such a demonic revenant. However, this etymological proposal has some linguistic difficulties.[33] Another idea is to derive the term from a non-Indo-European word **mask*- meaning *black* or *sooted* and which refers to a black, demonic being, associated with a mask.[34] Although controversial, the last etymological theory often found in the research literature is an assumption of an Arabic root *sḫr* with the prefix *m* to be the origin of *mask*. In this way, it names both an object of mockery and the jester, a buffoon and at the same time a masked person.[35] Although there are many possibilities, the origin of the term seems to lead either to a

[30] Furthermore, it appears as a description for social behaviour and social role over the centuries, e.g., with the social mask.

[31] Cf. JUNG, Beziehungen, 201, §305; HARK, Lexikon, 122–124.

[32] Cf. BAUMBACH, Maske, 105.

[33] This concerns the etymology of German *Masche* ("mesh"), which is not connected to *mask* (cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 25–27 by discussing the thesis of MEULI, Schriften, 84).

[34] This is also associated with a witch (cf. PFEIFER, Wörterbuch, 844f. referring to KELLER, mask-, 429–441).

[35] Cf. GRIMM/GRIMM, Wörterbuch, 1702; KLUGE/SEEBOLD, Wörterbuch, 604f.; WEIHE, Paradoxie, 25–27.52; Baumbach assumes a combination of Arabic, Latin-Langobardic, and Celtic influences (cf. BAUMBACH, Maske, 120). Interestingly, there is an Akkadian word that means *skin*, *hide,* and *leather* (see CAD M/1, *mašku*, 376–379) among others definitions. In the Gilgamesh Epic, in a passage describing the king's mourning rites after his friend Enkidu has died reads (VIII, lines 90f.): „After you are gone [my hair will be matted in mourning,] clad in the skin of [a lion I shall wander] the wild" (GEORGE, Epic, 66). Gilgamesh breaks up with the urban society and its conventions and moves to the steppe. Tablet X, line 6 mentions this clothing again. Perhaps the formulation is not meant to be taken literally and instead focuses on his extraordinary amount of body hair. Nevertheless, the wearing of a lion skin seems to be a possible interpretation, so that the term might refer to what is meant by the modern word *mask*.

non-human being, such as a god, demon, spirit, or ancestor, or to an issue or person associated with laughter, mockery, and reversal. Both of these ideas fit well with the characteristics of material masks.

It is easier to explain another term, which seems to be out of date: the German *Larve* or English *larva*. The modern understanding refers to insects and amphibians and their metamorphosis into adults, but it is also an older term for *mask*. It originates from the Roman *Lares*, which were protective spirits in Ancient Rome and may have been some sort of heroes or ancestors.[36] Although they were also worshipped in the official cult, they and their statues played a special role in the domestic cult of the Roman *familia* and were, therefore, closely connected to the house and all inhabitants, including women and especially slaves. Particularly at the important transitions in life, such as birth, initiation rites, or death, they received sacrifices, which were offered at the hearth as the place of community. Provided, that the later word for mask is derived from these primarily domestic spirits,[37] it establishes a connection between the mask as an immanent object and benevolent beings belonging to the otherworld but efficacious in this world. This is also shown by the later meaning of this term as *spirit* or *ghost*.

The listed terms show that there is a connection to the wearer of the mask as well as to a figure or spirit. Therefore, a distinction between the *mask* as an object and the associated figure is needed. In the following, the *mask-figure* will be referenced and can be an ancestor, a demon, a spirit, a deity, or anything similar. Thus, it can also refer to generalizations or archetypes of emotions, conditions, or powers. By wearing a mask, this transcendent, or at least invisible, figure of another or invisible world becomes physical in this world and creates the possibility of communication between these spaces. In this way, masks are a place of or conduit for epiphany.[38] Therefore, a transformation of the mask-wearer as well as of the ancestor or deity occurs, creating a another, temporally singular being,[39] made of manifold, varying, and simultaneous conflations, which appears amongst the other participants. This is the temporary *event of the mask.*[40] For all of the participants, regardless of whether they wear the mask themselves, the mask-figure becomes present in this special form.[41] Having differenti-

[36] Cf. MASTROCINQUE, Laren, 1147–1150; CARDAUNS, Lar, 978–989; BODEL, Minerva, 248–275; KAUFMANN-HEINIMANN, Religion, 188–201.

[37] Cf. KLUGE/SEEBOLD, Wörterbuch, 560.

[38] Barasch calls these masks theophanic, albeit the appearing figure does not need to be a deity (cf. BARASCH, Tiermasken, 126f.). That's why the term epiphanic is more accurate. His distinction of theophanic and anthropocentric masks are, in the case of this article, unrewarding, because he deals with medieval issues of physiognomy.

[39] Because the figure is known otherwise, e.g., by myths, it is also transformed by receiving a physical form in this event.

[40] See below.

[41] E.g., Grigull distinguishes between *larva* as a term for the face-mask and *mask* as a term for the mask-figure (cf. GRIGULL, Larven, 6). Difficult in this case is the missing argumentation for this attribution. There is no reason why *larva* should name the artifact and *mask* the figure. Besides this aspect, there are unfortunately many other points in his interpretation of mask-terminology (cf.

ated between the mask as the material object and the mask-figure as a being of the otherworld associated with and made manifest by the wearing of the object, one can describe the Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian masks in more detail.[42]

Beyond *mask* and *mask-figure*, there is another significant term: the *other*. Once again, for a better understanding, a differentiation is necessary, namely between *other* and *foreign*.[43] Otherness is a term of relation; something or someone is other than a subject and differs in particular aspects. However, foreignness results from the unfamiliarity of a subject to a counterpart and is, therefore, a term of relation*ship*; something or someone is foreign and unfamiliar to a person. Hence, foreignness can be based on otherness, which means that someone is foreign, specifically because they are different from a counterpart. The other way around, that everything that is other is also inherently foreign, is not implied. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that a subject, whether a group or an individual, can constitute itself only in the face of the other and finds its own identity in the distinction of what is the self and what is the other. Even the other is only different because of its positioning to the self. With this correlation, the self becomes the self by the other and the other becomes the other by the self. In this process, the tension persists, that identity might become fluid and cross the allegedly clear boundaries of self and other.[44] The highest form of the other is death; thus, being alive is constituted essentially in opposition to death. Therefore, the encounter with the other is of upmost importance for the stability of the individual as well as of the group. This explains why psychology and sociology[45] as well as politics have great interest in this topic.

For the analysis of masks as an encounter with the other, the term's character of relation is significant. There is no unfamiliarity or foreignness in the relation of the mask-figure and the participants of the event. If the mask really permitted an ancestor or someone (or something) similar to become present, they are not foreign but, in one way, a part of the community,[46] because they are worshipped by the community. However, the figures are not equal to the participants, because they belong to the realm of

---

GRIGULL, Larven, 1–7), which are incomplete or inaccurate such as the understanding of the Greek term.

[42] Of course, this is also a heuristic distinction, which helps to illuminate the event and its facets. To distinguish between this world and beyond is characteristic to a modern understanding of the world and to transfer this to the ancient cultures in a non-reflective and unconscious way can be anachronistic. Here, it serves as a heuristic tool.

[43] For the following cf. WALDENFELS, Topographie, 20–23; see also SCHÄFER, Maske, 78–81.

[44] Using the example of the Egungun-cult, such a complex relation is described by SCHÄFER, Maske, 81–87; see also his article in this volume.

[45] See, e.g., DEGER, Masken, 187–207. In many cases, modern social studies are more interested in the metaphors of theatre and roles, e.g., according to GOFFMAN, Presentation, 1–17. For some examples of the long tradition of masks and roles in society see BELTING, Persona, 29–37. For masking and psychology see (apart from the already mentioned Jung) LEOPOLD, Zo-onna, 45–49.

[46] Especially if it refers to an ancestor (or a deity developed of ancestral worship), an earlier period of the community is remembered when the ancestor still was a (living) part of the group. The situation is different when the ancient masks of the eastern Mediterranean are analyzed by modern scholars (from the Western world). In this case, there might also be foreignness due to the different culture.

the dead or the myth. Likewise, the wearer of the mask is not equal to the participants while they give their body to the figure and together both create another being. This otherness is characterized by the fact that the figures are not part of the tangible world. The encounter in the event of the mask creates a familiarity, but in the end, it cannot resolve the difference between this and that. Thus, the phenomenon of the mask connects two aspects: the hyper-individual figure standing in the form of the other as an object and as a hybrid of this world and the other and, at the same time, the subject needing this other in order to be constituted.[47]

A Space for Communication Between this World and Beyond: the Event of a Mask

In addition to *mask* and *mask-figure*, there is a third, already indicated aspect: the *event of the mask*. What is meant by this will be elucidated by looking at the functional dimension of masks.

In its materiality, the mask prefigures the mask-figure, which in turn can be present physically only by the mask-wearer and the participants of the event. Thus, it refers to what is totally other than human and which manifests in death in opposition to life. For the region of interest, the connection between life and death in the phenomenon of the mask is obvious in the examples of the mummy masks from ancient Egypt, which are placed on the dead mummy and its sarcophagus. However, this is already confirmed by the oldest findings of masks in the Levant, which date to the Neolithic Period (7th millennium BCE).[48] Here, one obviously does not see living faces but rather the form of skulls.[49] It can be seen clearly, on the basis of secondary mortuary practices and plastered skulls among other things, that in this early period of mankind the relation to death and the dead was very important.[50] There are many findings indicating that the Neolithic practices dealing with the deceased focused on the head and face as a "centre for memory"[51]. Among the best known examples are the skulls found in Tell es-Sulṭān/Jericho, though there are also findings from Naḥal Ḥemar, which were male as well as female and of different ages. They were plastered with different materials such as clay or asphalt, and, in the case of the Jericho findings, they have eyes decorated with shells. Probably, they would have looked lively, which assumes that they had been positioned visibly in housing spaces for a span of time.[52] Nevertheless, these practices were part of the community and not done by private persons. It is probable that there was ancestor worship in the background. Through the use of a kind of 'replacement-body' of the decedent, it was possible for a time to remove the disturbance

[47] See also BAUMBACH, Maschera, 141–143.

[48] Cf. the article of CORNELIUS in this volume.

[49] Cf. HERSHMAN, Image, 35–39; GROSMAN/OVADIA/BOGDANOVSKY, Masks, 56–58; WEIHE, Paradoxie, 20–22. This connection has been detected for many masks around the world (see, e.g., FERINO-PAGDEN, Maske, 57–63; WEISS, Masken, 66f.).

[50] Although the findings of different Neolithic sites show local variations (e.g., the use of the mandible), there was a shared tradition and belief system concerning mortuary practices (cf. KUIJT, Regeneration, 172). For the many findings of plastered skulls see also BIENERT, Skull, 9–23.

[51] KUIJT, Regeneration, 186.

[52] Cf. BIENERT, Skull, 9–23; SCHROER/KEEL, Ikonographie, 54f.62f.92–99.

of the social structure, which was caused by the death of a member of the community.[53] The wearing of the mask does not only represent the decedent, but makes them, in the process, visible and present in a physical way. Hence, it can be assumed that they created a bridge between this world and the otherworld of the dead.

Masks can be differentiated between personality-based and non-personality-based usage. In this early period, the masks belonged to a cultic context, and that is why one can suppose that they were used in a non-personality-based manner. This implies a supra-individual masking, and, therefore, there were no concrete individuals appearing but generalized aspects and powers, for instance in the manifestation of a deity or a demon.[54] With masks and mask-figures, a communication about the inconsistency of human existence as a natural and social being in space and time arises. This is an existential problem, and it is grounded in the fundamental interplay of nature and culture,[55] which are acted out in the dimensions of body, environment, and society.[56] In the event of the mask, distinctions such as this world and beyond, human and animal, living and dead, absent and present, interiority and exteriority are short-circuited but not eliminated.[57] In other words, the mask builds a bridge between the poles of life and death, this world and beyond. This is possible due to the mask's doubled affinity to the mundane and the sacred.[58] This bridge is a living one and finds its form in another being as a coalescence of the mask-wearer and the associated figure of the otherworld. By wearing the mask, a communicative space is opened, which connects the self and the other. This refers not only to the world of the living and the world of death but also to the wearer. Once again, the interplay of the self and the other is perceptible.[59] A *reality in between* is opened by this event, in which a connection arises, wherein the mask along with the mask-figure serve as a medium and a mediator and, for a single moment, create a coalescence.[60] This is also an ambiguous situation for the wearer of the mask, because their body is the place of this encounter. Of course, those *spaces in between* are always places of great danger, for the wearer and the other participants.[61]

---

[53] Cf. FERINO-PAGDEN, Maske, 57; for the development from ancestors to deities see, e.g., WUNN, Entstehung, 31–47.

[54] Cf. BAUMBACH, Maske, 105.121.

[55] Cf. BAUMBACH in GRIGULL, Larven, 12.

[56] Cf. EDSON, Masks, 7.

[57] BAUMBACH in GRIGULL, Larven, 12; see also SCHABERT, Einführung, 10f.; SPEYER, Maske, 326.

[58] Cf. EDSON, Masks, 54.

[59] Cf. WIMMER/SCHÄFER, Einleitung, 10f.20–24.

[60] Cf. WIMMER/SCHÄFER, Einleitung, 26–29.

[61] Cf. SCHÄFER, Maske, 82–84. There is a style of acting like the European *commedia all'improvviso* that is also detectable today, which knows of this power of the mask and its figure as well as the way of communicating with the other. According to Baumbach, this form of acting is called „Comödien-Stil" (cf. BAUMBACH, Schauspieler, 246–257 and others). Harlequin is an example of such an old and mythical figure. At an earlier time, he was a demon of the underworld, and when he appears on stage, he can refer to his primordial powers for skipping back and forth between the dimensions of reality and fiction, which have an effect on all participants. The actor using this figure is neither to be identified with the figure nor are they completely separated. With this figure, reversals, metamorphoses, and transformations are possible, and a *space in between* is open, in which the

The emerging connection between the worlds is named in the course of this article as the *event of the mask*. This term is understood according to the German philosopher Mersch.[62] Although he speaks about art, there are quite a few aspects that relate to religion and the phenomenon of the mask. The event is characterized by a unique presence that cannot be reproduced. Indeed, it can be planned and organised, yet the event itself is not something predictable but an experience that originates in a common occurrence for all participants, professionals as well as non-professionals. It cannot be kept under control. As a shared experience, it presents itself as the other. In its singularity, it disappears immediately; it is quite current, but only for one unique moment.[63] By wearing the mask, the communication with the other is possible, and, thereby, the participants can perceive this event as the other itself. This takes place in a unique and fleeting moment, in the *event of the mask*, which cannot be repeated. The ancient artifact of the mask remains as a memory and reminiscence of this event as well as of their myth, actions, and values, which might have taken place once thousands of years ago.[64]

As a result, there are some aspects that have to be taken into account for further research: the mask as an artifact, the mask-figure, the wearer, and the participants.[65] The event of the mask is out of sight due to the limited sources, but its possible existence should not be ignored. All of these aspects are related to each other. Thus, the wearer has grappled with the mask-figure by bearing the mask and therefore with the other as well. The mask-figure can only become physical and come alive when its mask is worn and its presence accepted. In its appearance, the figure is thus dependent on the wearer and the participants.[66] As the event of the ancient masks seems to be a happening within a community and the ancient social system is a collective one, the participants as well as the professionals are important.[67] The participants also enable the possibility of an event by accepting the mask-wearer and the mask-figure as another being, which connects them to the other. Of course, their experiences differ from those of the professionals.[68] Furthermore, the social use of masks, for example for consolidating hierarchy, is an important point. According to all aspects, one can raise the

contrast of human life can be revealed. In this way, the transitions between human and animal, mind and body, life and death, sacred and profane become fluid.

[62] Cf., e.g., MERSCH, Ereignis; MERSCH, Aura, 20–37.

[63] Cf. MERSCH, Ereignis, 27–36.

[64] Of course, one cannot say or proof that this was experienced as an event by the ancient participants. Nevertheless, one can speak of a possible breeding ground for an event.

[65] Similar GRIMES, Life, 66. Describing a life history, respectively a biography, of the masks, as Grimes suggests (GRIMES, Life, 61–77), is equivalent to this manifold phenomenon, but unfortunately is not feasible due to the difficult source situation. E.g., the process of making the Neolithic masks of the Levant are out of view.

[66] In this transformation, its appearance and behaviour can differ from that known e.g. by mythical narrations of the particular group.

[67] They must not be understand in the terms of European bourgeois theatre, which see participants as passive spectators. Grimes also emphasises the high importance of the participants, which he calls audience (cf. GRIMES, Life, 66–68).

[68] Cf. GRIMES, Life, 66.

question as to what extent there are transformations of the attendees and how the different ambiguities are treated.

Ambiguities: Life and Death, Presence and Absence, Face and Mask, Hide and Show

As already mentioned above, the phenomenon of the mask as a memorial of the event permits many ambiguities to come into view, which are interconnected and blend into each other.[69] By this, the apparent opposites are related with each other and a dialogue is opened in which all sides can coexist in the moment. Moreover, these ambiguities may merge into complementary relations.[70] In the following, some of these ambiguities and apparent opposites are briefly described.

The fundamental ambiguity of the mask according to its origin is the one of *life and death*. By taking the example of the Neolithic masks, as has been mentioned above, masks refer to the heads and faces of the dead. The skull served as a model for the mask, which is obvious, among other things, by the small size of the nose. In this case, they share commonalities with the plastered skulls, since they are both directly related to skulls, though they differ in their composition. While the plastered skulls remain skulls,[71] the masks are separated and become, on their own, a new artifact. The masks seem to be beyond the scope of the skulls. Furthermore, the only Neolithic mask found in its original, primary context, the oblong, multi-coloured mask from Naḥal Ḥemar, confirms the supposition that the mask was used in the cult. The mask seemed to belong to a depot of cultic objects of utility.[72] Therefore, it is not spurious to assume that the figure connected with the mask became present in the cultic rites.

One is confronted with the facts of death by the rigidity of the mask. There is no vivid facial expression, although it is expected by the affinity to the face of a living person. Head and face seem to be closely connected to the individual and their power; death ossifies this power.[73] Therefore, Grimes assumes that "[t]o die is not to become powerless but to become powerful in a fixed mode"[74]. The mask connects the living

[69] Of course, the ambiguities and terms belong to a modern point of view and are not, for example, an integral part of ancient thinking; they should rather help to shed light on the different facets of masks. Weihe considers that the mask connects as well as separates, e.g., the interior and the exterior (cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 46f.).

[70] Weihe prefers the term *paradox* to describe these ambiguities especially concerning the metaphorical use of mask (WEIHE, Paradoxie, 35–40). Because here, the focus is on archaeological artifacts, this reference to content based expectations is not accurate. For him, the most important aspect of the mask is what he calls "Paradoxie der Einheit des Unterschiedenen" (WEIHE, Paradoxie, 47: "paradox of the unity of the distinguished"), which means that the mask represents not only the aspect of *either – or*, but also of *as well as* at the same time.

[71] This does not mean that it refers to a concrete individual. By comparing the findings, the design of the skulls (although it differs in detail) links to a hyper-individual, idealized representation, which was not about portraying real persons (cf. KUIJT, Regeneration, 179–181). Furthermore, as time goes by, the remembering and memorializing of the collective is accompanied by forgetting the individual (cf. KUIJT, Regeneration, 185). Due to the low life expectancy, a rapid memorializing was important for creating a continuation of the community with its past.

[72] For the excavation report see BAR-YOSEF/ALON, Naḥal Ḥemar.

[73] See also EDSON, Masks, 18–20.

[74] GRIMES, Masking, 509.

and the dead by reflecting this aspect. It refers to the rigidity of death in its appearance, and it simultaneously provides the possibility of vivifying this power. In this space in between, the mask as a concretizing phenomenon "presents a static *dynamis* – at once a living-dead thing and a dead-living being"[75]. In the process, the mask and the wearer create another being in between, appearing as an embodiment of the external power of the dead. It is this "empowered exteriority" and "solidified *dynamis*"[76], appearing as the other in the world of the living, which is awe-inspiring.

This fundamental ambiguity is followed and continued by the one of *presence and absence*, which otherwise has its deepest expression in the corpse in relation to the deceased being both present and absent at the same time. However, the mask not only reminds one of this ancestor or, in other cases of demons or deities, but permits the absentee to become present in the cult. Nevertheless, there is a price for this materialization. The mask-wearer has to give parts of their body and entity for the figure, and together, they create another being, which enables the communication between the spaces. Thereby, the mask-wearer as an individual, however constituted in the particular culture, becomes in one way absent by allowing the figure to become present. In other words, the attendant is absent and the absentee is attendant. The mask as an artifact also bares this ambiguity. By its appearance as a rigid face, it reminds the observer of the presence of the mask-figure, but also of the mask-wearer, both of whom are absent.[77]

There is another aspect that seems to be absent in the wearing of the *mask*, namely the *face*, as the mask veils the face. Otherwise, when looking at an unworn face mask, it is obvious that the face, of the one wearing the mask, is missing and absent. In this way, both the worn and the unworn mask indicate the absent face. This ambiguity refers also to the one of life and death, because the face, with all its countenance and visible emotions, marks the living, while the frozen and rigid expression of the mask points to the dead. On the other hand, the fleeting expression of the living face becomes preserved and immortalized in the rigidity of death. In reference to this, face and mask seem to be antonyms to the modern way of thinking.[78] Interestingly, a look at the Greek language shows that this is no law of the Medes and Persians. The Greek word πρόσωπον[79] means both *face* and *mask* as well as *countenance* and *person*. This

[75] GRIMES, Masking, 510. He assumes that the rigidity of the (death) masks leads to the type masks in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* respectively *commedia all'improvviso* (GRIMES, Masking, 510f.).

[76] GRIMES, Masking, 511. Besides this aspect of masks, which he calls concretion, Grimes names three other points: concealment, embodiment, and expression. According to him, "[c]oncretion gives substance to power, concealment is a hiding in order to maximize power, embodiment is the semblance of spontaneous power, and expression is the making transparent of power" (GRIMES, Masking, 515). While the first refers to religious rituals, the second one aims at civil enforcement, the third at interpersonal encounter and the last at drama. As a result, he gives a broad overview of many different uses of masks, albeit his distinctions of the aspects are in some cases too schematic.

[77] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 50.

[78] Herewith corresponds the negative connotation of the mask-metaphor, which associates the face with authenticity and the mask with falsehood (cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 67–72).

[79] For further Greek terms for mask see SPEYER, Maske, 329.

can be explained by etymology, since the word may derive from *προτι-ωπ-ον meaning, "what is opposite to the eyes (of the other), the sight (of the other)"[80]. Hence, being *face to face* does not only refer to the face but also to the mask. The functional definition is more important than appearance and nature,[81] and, therefore, the mask can come into sight as a "second face"[82] but charged with the power of its figure. The first and second faces have in common that they appear as the space for encountering and meeting the other: in one case in the form of a transcendent figure and its power and in the other case in the form of the fellow human.[83]

By its rigidity, the mask belongs to the realm of the dead and, as a result, it refers to the other. By looking like a face, with evidence of eyes, nose, mouth, etc., the mask raises the expectation that it will become alive and that it is powerful in the realm of the living. By extension, the appearance between rigidity and an expected liveliness places the mask once again at the border between life and death.

The last aspect, the association with hiding and pretending, has already been mentioned and, in modern language and thinking is closely connected to a moral assessment. The aspect of *visible* and *invisible* is also strongly linked to this. That a mask has something to do with hiding is not wrong, but it would be a constriction to reduce it to this aspect. Actually, in the event of the mask, the other can be seen, which is absent and invisible beyond the particular moment.[84] Therefore the mask *conceals* and *reveals*, shows and hides at the same time. In other words, it shows by hiding, and by hiding, it shows.[85] The hiding itself is not disguised but apparent by the nature of the mask, and, therefore, it cannot be claimed to be a deception. However, the question of concealing and revealing is not about the mask-wearer assuming another life or existence,[86] and furthermore, they do not play prescribed roles. What the masks hides is, at first, the wearer and their face (and body).[87] The wearer, who gives their body to the mask, comes down in favour of the mask-figure but does not disappear totally, in the same way the mask-figure does not appear in an independent form. This is clear, for example, by the aspect that a face mask with holes for eyes and mouth is permeable and does not cover the wearer completely. The wearer of the mask exposes themself to the power of the mask-figure but at the same time also takes up possession of its vigour.[88] The mask-figure can only become visible and present in this ambiguous connection of mask and wearer, and its concrete presence is determined by this.

The other of the mask-figure, ancestor, deity, demon, or spirit and their power, becomes visible and physically present in conjunction with the hidden wearer. Therefore,

---

[80] BEEKES, πρόσωπον, 1240; see further LIDDELL/SCOTT, Lexicon, 1533; LOHSE, πρόσωπον, 769–781; see also the article of VARAKIS-MARTIN in this volume.

[81] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 100.

[82] GRIMES, Masking, 509.

[83] Concerning the face as a hub of the self, the other and the world see OLSCHANSKI, Maske, 61.

[84] Furthermore, see also WEIHE, Paradoxie, 13–18.

[85] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 14.

[86] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 17.

[87] At the same moment, the wearer is the only one for whom the mask becomes in one way invisible.

[88] Cf. BAUMBACH, Maschera, 143.

what is interesting about the mask's hiding is not only the hiding of the wearer's face but that it also gives a form to the other and brings it, which is otherwise hidden, to the present and experienced world; the invisible becomes visible. Thereby, it finds an appearance and form that is temporally limited to the special moment of the mask's wearing. The wearer itself, who is visible in everyday life, becomes in one way invisible in the moment of the event. Moreover, it is not only the other becoming physical but also the possibility of communication with this other that is enabled by the mask-wearer's providing of their body.[89] This event only happens in the ambiguous hiding but not disappearance of the wearer. They are still there, but, together with the mask-figure, are connected to another being. The mask as an artifact merely recalls this dialectic and the event.

Excursus: Masks and the Grotesque

These ambiguities show once again that masks are border crossers.[90] They create a physical bridge between the fundamental poles of human life. In this context, they connect the greatest contrast, the one of life and death. As the alleged contrasts have shown, in masks, a form of ambiguity is manifested. It is not about either A or B, either life or death, but A as well as B, life and death at the same moment.[91] Another example of a different ambiguity can be seen in masks with theriomorphic elements, it is not human or animal, but human as well as animal. In this way, the masks draw near to the phenomenon of the grotesque. That Cypriot or Phoenician masks are often characterized as grotesque is, perhaps, no coincidence.[92] The grotesque as a category has some difficulties, because it is always a product of a virtual anamorphosis relating to the symbolic structural order of that culture in which it appears as grotesque.[93] To put it another way, the grotesque infiltrates the norm of its own cultural system and thus appears as the other, but, at the same time, it is rooted in that system that it tries to reverse. Bachtin has shown this phenomenon for the European culture of the middle of the 2nd millennium CE by looking at the body. The so-called *grotesque body* is open and not bound to the limits of human anatomy. That is why it allows border crossings between the kingdoms of animals and demons.[94] The dealing with the body normed by

[89] Cf. WEIHE, Paradoxie, 22.

[90] Macho assumes that the existence of borders depends on the possibility to cross them. If they are impassable, they are not borders anymore and the formerly separated areas become one. Therefore, the dead need to visit the world of the living (in a controlled manner) in order to not endanger both separated areas and to not become citizens of this world (MACHO, Skandal, 423f.).

[91] This corresponds to the paradigm of the grotesque (FUß, Groteske, 19f.).

[92] E.g., CARTER, Masks, 355–366. She mainly refers to the Spartan masks of the sanctuary of Artemis Ortheia and postulate two categories for the 603 masks, namely the grotesque masks and the hero masks. The problem with this is her non-reflective use of the term *grotesque*. For the Phoenician masks see the articles of ORSINGHER and STERN in this volume; the Cypriot artifacts are described by AVERETT. Furthermore, the masks of Greek comedy are referred to as grotesque.

[93] Cf. FUß, Groteske, 13.

[94] For Bachtin, the following aspects are relevant: "The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed

the church and authority is thus infiltrated, caricatured, and reversed.[95] To understand the grotesque, it must be remembered that it depends on the authorized culture. While such cultural systems can be found, for example, in the early high cultures of antiquity, it is difficult to do this with the Neolithic cultures, and that is why in this context there is hardly clear evidence.[96] However, the Phoenician-Punic masks show a stressed deviation from the symmetry of human faces,[97] and, here, there are also the masks with the so-called sardonic laughter. Perhaps, in consideration of all historical reservations and of the danger of anachronism, the reflective idea of the grotesque can help to find another perspective on the masks of the ancient Mediterranean and their concrete cultural functions. In doing so, one must always be aware of the relation of the grotesque to its underlying culture. Therefore, as far as there is no complete picture of a mask's culture, the term *heteromorphic*, which focuses on the otherness of a mask, is preferable to grotesque for the description of an ancient object that is not anthropomorphic or zoomorphic.

---

by the world […]. This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus. These two areas play the leading role in the grotesque image, and it is precisely for this reason that they are predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization […]. Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up. And next is the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. That is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body–all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven. […] Actually, if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body" (BACHTIN, Rabelais, 318f.). Moreover: "Finally, let us point out that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, island, and continents. It can fill the entire universe" (BACHTIN, Rabelais, 318). In contrast, he describes a new bodily canon of the modern era, which he derives from literature: "The new bodily canon, in all its historic variations and different genres, presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits and a new one begins) is eliminated, hidden, or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface and the body's 'valleys' acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world" (BACHTIN, Rabelais, 320).

[95] Referring to Bachtin does not mean that one must follow his idealization of the grotesque. Even the social function of a critique of the ruling class has to be modified in favor of a broader idea of the grotesque as a catalyst of cultural transformations. The grotesque is equipped with the potential to transform a rigid and frozen cultural order when it is integrated. Without the grotesque, a cultural system can lose its flexibility and, with this, its survival capability (cf. FUß, Groteske, 14f.).

[96] Furthermore, the Neolithic masks of the Levant have symmetrical and harmonious structures without any striking deviations, which seems to go back directly to the form of human skulls.

[97] Cf. MORSTADT, Masken, 203–205.

2. Ancient Masks of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East

To understand masks, the above named aspects: mask, mask-wearer, mask-figure, and participants, are helpful, but to transfer them to ancient masks is a particular challenge and of course, it will not always succeed. Aside from the fact that there are some heuristic differentiations, which were not part of the ancient cultures in all cases, this is founded in the following reasons.

At first, there is, as usual, the problem with the ancient sources. The knowledge of the Ancient Near East and of ancient Egypt, in particular, depends on excavations, their documentation, and, of course, the archaeological findings. Beside the artifacts, there is naturally the possibility to use the texts, but in this specific context, there is the problem that there is no clearly identified term for mask in the Ancient Near East. This is no surprise and is similar to the fact that not every language, especially those of antiquity, has a term for what is called religion. By recalling the above mentioned names for masks, *persona* and *larva*, one can assume that the phenomenon can be named after the mask-figure. Among artifacts and texts, there are also iconographical sources such as seals or reliefs, which show that masks were worn, for example the Assyrian lion- or fishmasks. Concerning Egypt, the situation is different. There are many attestations of mummy masks, but here the question is whether there have been masks beyond funeral contexts. However, all this information is established in the existing findings, and, therefore, all theories are always temporary.

Besides this difficult situation concerning the archaeological findings in general, there is another aspect, which complicates the involvement with Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian masks. There are only few masks or references to masks.[98] Although there are some findings, altogether the number is rather small. This evidence leads, of course, to a small amount of research literature on the masks as well as on the mask-figure standing behind the artifact. This raises questions of the reasons for this small number of findings, because a negative result must also be seen as a significant statement, especially concerning an often so-called universal phenomenon such as masks. Have there been any other concepts of the presence of the other and of an encounter with this other? For example, concerning Mesopotamia, a look at the theology of cult images or at the idea of kingship might be fruitful.[99]

Furthermore, there might be other reasons for the minor interest in Ancient Near Eastern masks. On the one hand, the exploration of the phenomenon seems to have suffered from the negative, metaphorical understanding of the mask as a synonym for insincerity and deception. On the other hand, apparently, there are difficulties in distinguishing between masks and cultic clothing. For example, for Edzard, the clothing of the fish-priests, among others on the Lamaštu plaque, is a fish-like headgear but not a mask.[100] While sociology busies itself with the structure of social roles and masks

[98] Except Egyptian mummy masks.

[99] Cf. the article of OSHIMA in this volume, as well as the one of BEUGER.

[100] Cf. EDZARD/RITTIG, Maske, 448; in contrast to this SPEYER, Maske, 327. The same can be said of the so-called Humbaba masks. They are not even mentioned in the article of the Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie (cf. EDZARD/RITTIG, Maske, 449; see also SPEYER,

and performance studies primarily care for masks outside cultic contexts, classical studies have not been very interested in ancient masks. Of course, there are some important and famous exceptions, including the Egyptian mummy masks[101] as well as the Greek[102] and the Roman masks. This may have different reasons, as, for example, there is a relative good and extensive stock of references. However, concerning Greek and Roman artifacts, it also depends on what is understood by the term *theatre*. It is often said that the beginning of 'the European theatre'[103] is connected to Greek antiquity and this way of playing, although it is also just one way in Greek culture, is chosen as the one and only origin and point of comparison. Scenic practices or other forms of acting and playing beyond this 'normal' type are often not worth mentioning and even not worth doing research. Although one can name masks for faces or for the whole body in the area of the Ancient Near East, they are not mentioned as objects with scenic dimensions; the fish-priests should have worn headgears but not masks. Instead, they have been assigned to cultic practices, and while this is not wrong, it is not taken into account that cult and theatre share a common border crossing. This is equally true of theological research, especially concerning the studies of the Old Testament. First, it is very uncertain, if the Old Testament is aware of masks. Secondly, it is known that there have been masks in the ancient Levant because of archaeological evidence. Further, it is clear that Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic theology condemn cultic practices, which enable contacting the dead and the underworld (Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28) as well as reversals of sex and gender (Deut 22:5). Not surprisingly then, masks are naturally a delicate topic from the perspective within the Old Testament.[104]

For analyzing masks of the ancient Mediterranean, the particular context has to be taken into account. Because there is no general or overlapping culture in Antiquity, despite the many similarities, it is necessary to keep in mind the specific characteristics of the mask's cultural context, be it Egyptian, Syrian, Babylonian, or any other culture. This involves not only knowledge about religious and cultic traditions but also about the culture's idea of personality, individuality, and society, or, in other words, there is the question of whether there is a concept of personality with categories of

Maske, 327f.). That the so-called fish-*apkallu* can be understood as a whole body mask is evident when looking at the Aramaean stele of Tell Ašara from the Iron Age. While there is a smiting storm-god with a snake on the left and a person with ears of wheat in his hand on the right side, there is a smaller male figure in the centre, which has clothing designed as a fish, covering his body. It is clear, that this is neither only headgear nor a hybrid creature, but a man wearing a fish-mask. For this stela see BONATZ, Art, 229–231; pl. XII. For a different interpretation of the fish-*apkallu* see BEUGER in this volume.

[101] Cf. the article of MÜLLER in this volume; see also FRIEDMAN's description of the masks of Hierakonpolis.

[102] Cf. the article of VARAKIS-MARTIN in this volume.

[103] Of course, this depends on European theatre, but because overviews about theatre are often Euroentric (and colonial), there is no distinction between European phenomena and those that are equivalent in non-European areas. Unsurprisingly, the beginning of European theatre then coincides with the beginning of theatre in general.

[104] Cf. the article of BERLEJUNG in this volume.

interior and exterior, open and closed, etc.[105] In some cases, for example the Neolithic masks of the Judean Valley, it will not be possible to answer this question, but there might be ideas in the Egyptian or Mesopotamian understanding of what the Western world calls *personhood*.

3. The Encounter with the Other: Past and Present

Based on the functional characterization of masks as a means of encounter with the other and coming from a historical point of view, there might be broader questions. Although the culture of the Western world seems to be out of practice in handling material masks and, therefore, the mask has lost its function, one may ask, if someone or something else has undertaken its task. What is the other in modern society? What or who is different to that which is called *our self*? How does society deal with the fundamental contrasts of human life? Obviously, there are many and different answers. For example, one can find the other in their own existence. In opposition to thought, mind, and reason, the other may lie in the corporeality, avidities, and agitations.[106] Likewise, the shadow, which belongs to the psychology of Jung, may be a part of the other within the "I." Besides the inner version of the other, there are, of course, external versions, which can become foreign very quickly. The European migrant crisis also reflects the question of dealing with the other and the foreign in European societies.

In addition to psychology and social studies, religion likewise has a unique approach to this. Barth, one of the most famous (reformed) protestant theologians of the 20th century, shall serve as an example for the idea of the other in Christian theology. At the beginning of his own theological thinking, he named God as the wholly other to the human ("der ganz Andere"[107]). God is the one, who creates the distance and preserves it. The meaning of human faith can only be to approach God with reverence. Only if this wholly other enables an encounter, does it become possible, and, ultimately, this takes place in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.[108] The resurrection of Christ manifests the unknown level of the Father, which cuts the level of this world vertically. The known and unknown worlds do not merge, but the unknown touches the known tangentially. That is why it does not adhere to an unknown and foreign god, but to a God who wants to be known by humans.[109] Yet, the difference between human and God, between self and the fundamental other remains, but it is not lost in absolute foreignness.

---

[105] E.g., it is awkward to speak of masks as soul when speaking about ritual masks of different cultures and putting in a European, modern understanding of soul which is not appropriate to the subject (e.g., WEIHE, Paradoxie, 279–282).

[106] The distinction of mind and matter is a result of Descartes' philosophy (cf. BAUMBACH, Schauspieler, 170–175).

[107] BARTH, Römerbrief, 214 and more (emphasis in original).

[108] Cf. among others BARTH, Römerbrief, 108–110.

[109] Cf. BARTH, Römerbrief, 102.

If God is the wholly other, who enables the encounter, there is another, pragmatic question. How, and mainly where, should this happen? In the Christian tradition, the focus is on the worship service. If, in an ideal case, the service and its interplay of liturgy and sermon are actually one kind of interruption and mystery,[110] there might be the possibility of an encounter with the other or, to use Barth's word, to be tangent with the other.

However, apart from concrete religious practices, people search for contact with the other. The digital revolution enables many other possibilities for this idea. For example, there are social media profiles of deceased people or holograms of deceased U.S. soldiers or popular persons. Albeit, these modern approaches are different from the power of the masks, they are still controlled while they are at least an algorithm. If an event can occur by technical control is questionable.

Although people live in a modern and enlightened world, they are still vulnerable and mortal humans who have to find a way to handle the fundamental contrasts of human life such as the one of life and death or nature and culture. Although hyper-individual masks are no longer used in the Western world for this, people look for other opportunities of dealing with these existential questions. Perhaps, future innovations will find new answers and possibilities for dealing with the existential issues and thus for an encounter with the other.

List of Figures

fig. 1: Wall painting from Tarquinia: Dancing (?) Phersu with birds (photo by H. Schwanke, Neg. D-DAI-ROM F82.91; © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom).

fig. 2: Wall painting from Tarquinia: Phersu, a dog and a man (photo by H. Schwanke, Neg. D-DAI-ROM F82.89; © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rom).

Bibliography

AVRAMIDOU, A., The Phersu Games Revisited, Etruscan Studies 12 (2009) 73–87.

BACHTIN, M., Rabelais and His World: Translated by Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington 1984.

BAR-YOSEF, O./ALON, D., Naḥal Ḥemar Cave (Atiqot 18), Jerusalem 1988.

BARASCH, M., Tiermasken, in: T. SCHABERT (ed.), Die Sprache der Masken (Eranos: Neue Folge 9), Würzburg 2002, 123–147.

BARTH, K., Der Römerbrief (Zweite Fassung), Zürich 2010.

[110] Cf. DEEG, Fundierendes, 126. He comes to this, following the considerations of Han, who speaks of a society of transparency (Transparenzgesellschaft) that he also characterizes as a society without negativity (Positivgesellschaft). By transparency, he understands that negativity is cast off and things are smoothed, flattened, and included into the streams of capital, communication, and information (cf. HAN, Transparenzgesellschaft, 5). In a society like this, to which the Western world belongs according to Han, there is no space for the negativity of otherness or foreignness or for the resistance to the other (cf. HAN, Transparenzgesellschaft, 7). Everything disturbing the smoothness and homogeneity of transparency such as othernesses or ambiguities must be discarded.

BAUMBACH, G., Maschera, ve saludo! – Maske, seid gegrüßt! Anmerkungen zu Maske, Theater-Maske und Masken-Theater in der europäischen Neuzeit, in: A. SCHÄFER/M. WIMMER (eds.), Masken und Maskierungen (Grenzüberschreitungen 3), Opladen 2000, 137–160.

–, »Seid gegrüsst, Maske!« Zur Maskenproblematik in der Neuzeit, in: U. BIRBAUMER et al. (eds.), Corps du Théâtre: Organicité, contemporanéité, interculturalité/Il corpo del Teatro: Organicità, contemporaneità, interculturalità (Specula spectacula 1), Wien 2010, 105–137.

–, Schauspieler: Historische Anthropologie des Akteurs I: Schauspielstile, Leipzig 2012.

BEEKES, R., Etymological Dictionary of Greek II (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series 10/2), Leiden/Boston 2010.

BELTING, H., Persona: Die Masken des Selbst und das Gesicht, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 29–37.

–, Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für die Bildwissenschaft, München 2011.

BEVAGNA, G., Etruscan Sport, in: P. CHRISTESEN (ed.), A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World), Chicester 2014, 395–411.

BIENERT, H.-D., Skull Cult in the Prehistoric Near East, Journal of Prehistoric Religion 5 (1991) 9–23.

BODEL, J., Cicero's Minerva, *Penates*, and the Mother of the *Lares*: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion, in: J. BODEL/S.M. OLYAN (eds.), Household and Family Religion in Antiquity (The Ancient World: Comparative Histories), Oxford 2008, 248–275.

BOETHIUS, A.M.S., Die theologischen Traktate: Übersetzt, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Michael Elsässer (Philosophische Bibliothek Band 397), Hamburg 1988.

BONATZ, D., Art, in: H. NIEHR (ed.), The Aramaeans in Ancient Syria (Handbook of Oriental Studies 106), Leiden/Boston 2014, 205–243.

BRASSER, M., In der Rolle des Individuums: Die Bedeutung von ‚Person' und die Etymologie von ‚persona', in: K. GLOY (ed.), Kollektiv- und Individualbewußtsein, Würzburg 2008, 53–60.

CARDAUNS, B., Lar (Lararium), Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum XXII, Stuttgart 2008, 978–989.

CARTER, J.B., The Masks of Ortheia, American Journal of Archaeology 91 (1987) 355–383.

DEEG, A., Fundierendes und Fundamentales im Wechselspiel von Theologie und Liturgie, in: A. DEEG et al. (eds.), Gottesdienst und Predigt – evangelisch und katholisch (Evangelisch-katholische Studien zu Gottesdienst und Predigt 1), Neukirchen-Vluyn/Würzburg 2014, 99–138.

DEGER, P., Masken der Normalität, in: A. SCHÄFER/M. WIMMER (eds.), Masken und Maskierungen (Grenzüberschreitungen 3), Opladen 2000, 187–209.

DELUMEAU, J., The Development of the Concept of Personhood: A Brief Sketch, in: D.C. THOMASMA/D.N. WEISSTUB/C. HERVÉ (eds.), Personhood and Health Car, Dordrecht 2001, 13–18.

DOST, D., Die Strukturfigur Phersu, in: G. BAUMBACH (ed.), Auf dem Weg nach Pomperlörel – Kritik »des« Theaters (Leipziger Beiträge zur Theatergeschichtsforschung 2), Leipzig 2010, 161–186.

DRECOLL, V.H., Entwicklungen und Positionen in der Geschichte des Christentums, in: V.H. DRECOLL (ed.), Trinität (Themen der Theologie 2), Tübingen 2011, 81–162.

EDSON, G., Masks and Masking: Faces of Tradition and Belief Worldwide, Jefferson 2005.

EDZARD, D.-O./RITTIG, D., Maske, Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 7, Berlin/New York 1987–1990, 448f.

FERINO-PAGDEN, S., Zum Geleit: Die vielen Gesichter der Maske, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 11–17.

–, Die Maske der Erinnerung, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 57–63.

FUß, P., Das Groteske: Ein Medium des kulturellen Wandels, Köln/Weimar 2001.

GELB, I. et al. (eds.), The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago I–XXI, Chicago/Glückstadt 1956–2010. (= CAD)

GELLIUS, A., Noctes Atticae: Recensuit C: Hosius I, Stuttgart 1981.

GEORGE, A.R., The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian, London 1999.
GOFFMAN, E., The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, New York 1959.
GRIGULL, T., Japanische Larven und Masken: Eine Leipziger Sammlung, die Tokugawa und die Dainenbutsu-Sarugaku in Kyōto, München 2011.
GRIMES, R.L., Masking: Toward a Phenomenology of Exteriorization, Journal of the American Academy of Religion 43 (1975) 508–516.
–, The Life History of a Mask, The Drama Review 36 (1992) 61–77.
GRIMM, J./GRIMM, W., Deutsches Wörterbuch 12, München 1991.
GROSMAN, L./OVADIA, A./BOGDANOVSKY, A., Neolithic Masks in a Digital World, in: D. HERSHMAN (ed.), Face to Face: The Oldest Masks in the World, Jerusalem 2014, 54–59.
GRUBE, A., Person III: Law, Religion Past & Present 9, Leiden/Boston 2011, 731f.
HAN, B.-C., Transparenzgesellschaft, Berlin 2012.
HARK, H. (ed.), Lexikon Jungscher Grundbegriffe: Mit Originaltexten von C. G. Jung, Solothurn/Düsseldorf 1994.
HAUDEL, M., Gotteslehre: Die Bedeutung der Trinitätslehre für Theologie, Kirche und Welt, Göttingen 2015.
HERSHMAN, D., In Our Own Image, in: D. HERSHMAN (ed.), Face to Face: The Oldest Masks in the World, Jerusalem 2014, 8–42.
JUNG, C.G., Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Ich und dem Unbewussten, in: C.G. JUNG, Zwei Schriften über analytische Psychologie (C.G. Jung Gesammelte Werke 7), Olten/Freiburg im Breisgau 1989, 127–320.
KAUFMANN-HEINIMANN, A., Religion in the House, in: J. RÜPKE (ed.), A Companion to Roman Religion, Malden/Oxford/Carlton 2007, 188–201.
KELLER, H.E., mask-, in: H.E. KELLER (ed.), Französisch etymologisches Wörterbuch: Eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes VI/1, Basel 1969, 429–441.
KLUGE, F./SEEBOLD, E., Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache, Berlin/Boston 2011.
KUIJT, I., The Regeneration of Life: Neolithic Structures of Symbolic Remembering and Forgetting, Current Anthropology 49 (2008) 171–197.
LEOPOLD, D., Zo-onna – zum psychologischen Differential der Masken, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 45–49.
LÉVI-STRAUSS, C., The Way of the Masks: Translated from the French by Sylvia Modelski, Seattle 1990.
LIDDELL, H.G./SCOTT, R., A Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 1996.
LOHSE, E., πρόσωπον, in: G. KITTEL/G. FRIEDRICH (eds.), Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament 6, Stuttgart 1959, 769–781.
MACHO, T.H., Vom Skandal der Abwesenheit: Überlegungen zur Raumordnung des Todes, in: D. KAMPER/C. WULF (eds.), Anthropologie nach dem Tode des Menschen: Vervollkommnung und Unverbesserlichkeit, Frankfurt (Main) 1994, 417–436.
MASTROCINQUE, A., Laren (Lar, Lares), Der Neue Pauly 6, Stuttgart/Weimar 1999, 1147–1150.
MERSCH, D., Ereignis und Aura: Zur Dialektik von ästhetischem Augenblick und kulturellem Gedächtnis, Musik & Ästhetik 3 (1997) 20–37. (= Aura)
–, Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen, Frankfurt (Main) 2002. (= Ereignis)
MEULI, K., Gesammelte Schriften I, Basel/Stuttgart 1975.
MORSTADT, B., Phönizische Masken – zwischen Abbild und Abschreckung, in: H. MELLER/R. MARASZEK (eds.), Masken der Vorzeit in Europa I: Internationale Tagung vom 20. bis 22. November 2009 in Halle (Saale), Halle (Saale) 2010, 203–211.
MÜNZ, R., Aldilà teatrale: Konzeptionsentwurf für Studien zu Theatralitätsgefügen, in: R. MÜNZ, Theatralität und Theater: Zur Historiographie von Theatralitätsgefügen, Berlin 1998, 273–287.
OLSCHANKSI, R., Maske und Person: Zur Wirklichkeit des Darstellens und Verhüllens, Göttingen 2001.

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, Mask n.[3], url: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114608?rskey=zAMlNb&result=3#eid (accessed 10 October 2015).

–, Mask v.[4], url: http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114612 (accessed 10 October 2015).

PFEIFER, W. (ed.), Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen II, Berlin 1993.

SCHABERT, T., Einführung: Über die Notwendigkeit und den Nutzen einer Sprache der Maske, in: T. SCHABERT (ed.), Die Sprache der Masken (Eranos: Neue Folge 9), Würzburg 2002, 9–15.

SCHÄFER, A., Die Maske und ihr Träger im Egungun-Geheimbund: Bildungsethnologische Annäherungen, in: A. SCHÄFER/M. WIMMER (eds.), Masken und Maskierungen (Grenzüberschreitungen 3), Opladen 2000, 75–91.

SCHLAPKOHL, C., Persona est naturae rationabilis individua substantia: Boethius und die Debatte über den Personbegriff (MThSt 56), Marburg 1999.

SCHROER, S./KEEL, O., Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern I: Vom ausgehenden Mesolithikum bis zur Frühbronzezeit, Fribourg 2005.

SPEYER, W., Maske, Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum XXIV, Stuttgart 2012, 325–346.

STEINGRÄBER, S., Tarquinia: Topography, History, and Art, in: S. STEINGRÄBER (ed.), Etruscan Painting: Catalogue Raisonné of Etruscan Wall Paintings, New York 1986, 23–28.

TERTULLIAN, Q.S.F., Adversus Praxean: Gegen Praxeas: Übersetzt und eingeleitet von Hermann-Josef Sieben (Fontes Christinani 34), Freiburg im Breisgau 2001.

WALDENFELS, B., Topographie des Fremden: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden I, Frankfurt (Main) 2013.

WEBER-LEHMANN, C., Die Etrusker: Bilder vom Diesseits – Bilder vom Tod, in: B. ANDREAE et al. (eds.), Die Etrusker: Luxus für das Jenseits, Bilder vom Diesseits – Bilder vom Tod: Eine Doppelausstellung des Bucerius Kunst Forums und des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 13. Februar bis 16. Mai 2004 (Bucerius Kunst Forum 5), München 2004, 122–153.

WEIHE, R., Die Paradoxie der Maske: Geschichte einer Form, München 2004.

WEISS, G., Universum „Maske" – Ein kultur- und sozialanthropologischer Streifzug im Rahmen einer Ausstellung, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 39–43.

–, Masken begleiten, erinnern, ehren und erneuern, in: S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), Wir sind Maske, Cinisello Balsamo/Wien 2009, 66f.

WIMMER, M./SCHÄFER, A., Einleitung: Zwischen Maskierung und Obszönität: Bemerkungen zur Spur der Masken in der Moderne, in: A. SCHÄFER/M. WIMMER (eds.), Masken und Maskierungen (Grenzüberschreitungen 3), Opladen 2000, 10–31.

WUNN, I., Die Entstehung der Götter, in: A. WAGNER (ed.), Göttliche Körper – Göttliche Gefühle: Was leisten anthropomorphe und anthropopathische Götterkonzepte im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament? (OBO 270), Fribourg/Göttingen 2014, 31–47.