Persons, the 'Autobiographical Person' and Cultural Concepts of the Person: Early Modern Self-narratives from German-speaking Areas in a Transcultural Perspective

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Autobiographical texts have long been seen, from a micro-level perspective, as evidence of the 'individuality' of the writer, and, from a macro-level perspective, as evidence of the long-term historical development of European or Western individual-oriented society. However, recent research has undertaken to deconstruct this notion, suggesting that 'Western' texts are as deeply embedded in a social world and in social-oriented perspectives as

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those from other world regions. The individualised person is now recognised as just one among many concepts of the person. This article summarises the research that has been conducted during the past two decades on early modern autobiographical writings, primarily from German-speaking areas of the world. It closely examines the interplay between individual and society in one particular autobiography, that of the Zurich professor of Old Testament Studies Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556). Using the concept of the 'autobiographical person', it shows his work to be typical of the autobiographies written by one social group—early modern scholars. By comparing this Christian male scholar with his Jewish and Muslim colleagues, the article aims to attain a transcultural, gendered perspective on autobiography. In an attempt to reach some methodological and theoretical conclusions, a set of analytical tools is proposed to distinguish between the perspectives of authors and of later scholars, and also between (a) real persons and their personhood, (b) 'autobiographical persons' and (c) cultural concepts of 'person'. In this way, the 'person' is taken into account by scholars as an analytical category, as well as being a set of real-life practices and conceptual notions used by actors in various social, cultural and historical settings.

Self-narratives have been regarded as providing paths to different kinds of truths. Some people would expect these to include philosophical truths about world history that have universal validity. Georg Misch's history of autobiography, for example, is presented as a history of self-consciousness, and culminates in Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Others read autobiographical texts as factual representations of extra-textual reality.[1] In both cases, however, scholars make use of conceptual notions about the person. Their ideas are invariably situated in their own cultural and intellectual contexts. Among such notions, the concept of the 'individual' has been especially prominent, even if not always consciously so, and also rarely spelled out in conceptual terms. However, when analysing texts from distant historical and cultural contexts, scholars' use of their own cultural concepts of the person may give rise to serious problems for understanding. Quite different notions about the person may be involved in the sources, embedded in their respective cultural and historical contexts. Those self-narratives where the persons described

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[1] For a recent overview, cf. Schmolinsky, *Sich selbst schreiben in der Welt des Mittelalters*: esp. 23–71 about Georg Misch and others.

are entangled in relations have made this especially evident. To become aware of these and other differences, the notion of a cultural 'concept of the person' is helpful, as it has been developed in anthropology and other disciplines. For studying the conceptualisations of the persons described in autobiographical texts, suitable analytical tools are necessary.

In recent research, a new and more complex picture begins to emerge: autobiographical writings include local and personal narratives dealing with persons in relation to wider fields, embedded in entangled life-worlds. These writings offer narrative constructions, often shaped against the background of normative or other existing discourses.[2] Thus, self-narratives have become regarded as rich sources for historical anthropology, especially when the role of agents in history is emphasised.[3] Autobiographical persons are the stuff of micro-history, offering perspectives of diverse agents, various kinds of insider knowledge, and thus, via their narrative constructions, conceptualisations of the world.

Having studied self-narratives in various world regions and time periods, scholars have recently developed new approaches for analysing what is being termed here the 'autobiographical person'. New questions have been asked and critical re-evaluations of existing answers have been made. Transcultural perspectives are also beginning to emerge as explicitly discussed topics, as distinguished from earlier approaches. These earlier approaches follow generalised notions of universal history or of national histories.[4] Anthropological approaches have sparked the notion used in this article, that concepts of the person may be different, and need to be examined

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[2] Heiligensetzer, *Getreue Kirchendiener—gefährdete Pfarrherren*.

[3] Ulbrich, Medick and Schaser, 'Selbstzeugnis und Person': 2. Recent approaches are referred to in this introduction; cf. also Ulbrich, von Greyerz and Heiligensetzer, 'Introduction': 1–12; Ruggiu (ed.), *The Uses of First Person Writings/Les usages des écrits du for privé*.

[4] In an encompassing way, based on material from antiquity to modernity, including autobiographical writings from various world regions, but subsuming this under a eurocentric, modernist, developmental scheme of history which he nevertheless posited to be of universal validity, such an approach was developed by Georg Misch in 1903/04 (cf. Schmolinsky, *Sich selbst schreiben in der Welt des Mittelalters*: 23–44). In some way or other, this kind of normative scheme has been highly influential in self-narrative and autobiography studies. National agendas are even now enforced upon those scholars trying to organise research cooperations funded by European Union (EU) research programmes: The basic units are national groups; these have to apply to their national funding institutions and to structure their research schemes accordingly.

more closely with respect to their historical and cultural entanglements as well as their interweaving of micro-, meso- and macro-levels.[5] The 'autobiographical person' encompasses the individual and contextual person of the writer and, at the same time, cultural concepts of the person in a more general sense. This article addresses issues that are primarily methodological and theoretical concerning the 'person', using material from German-speaking areas in early modern times, and concentrating on scholars.

By definition, autobiographical writings are texts dealing with persons. The term 'persons' is used here in a broad and conceptually open sense, and one of the tasks of this article is to clarify its meaning. The involvement of autobiographical texts with persons occurs across all autobiographical genres and for all kinds of context—historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural—where such texts are produced. 'Self-narratives', a term used here as synonymous with autobiographical texts, are concerned primarily with their author, who is in most cases the subject of the autobiography (also called 'the autobiographical person'), even if they do not in all cases focus exclusively on the author.

A wide range of other topics, apart from the author, may also be included in autobiographical writing, and these can be more or less closely related to the subject of the autobiography, or the 'autobiographical person'. They include: 'persons' (such as family guests and patrons), social institutions (such as households, political and business entities and practices of sociability related to these), objects (such as clothes, beds, tables, goblets, words and books), generalised observations on topics, such as politics, religion and history, chronological incidents and special events (concerning emotions, illnesses, weather, prices, wars and travel) and other important aspects of life (such as correspondence, education and gifts), to name just a few.

Autobiographical writings, whether or not in diary form, may take a close look at everyday objects, events and practices. They may also provide a general perspective on space (both social and geographical) and time (in various senses), offering views of society and history as well as of secular and religious practices. From a close-up perspective, persons may be described as related to their household (e.g., as a marriage partner, or as fellow nuns or monks and servants), to their kin, neighbours, friends,

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[5] Cf. Carrithers, Collins and Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person*; Carrithers, 'Person'; Carsten, *After Kinship;* Morris, *Anthropology of the Self*.

teachers, colleagues, students, patrons, co-religionists, compatriots, superiors and finally to their forebears and descendants, rivals, enemies and opponents of other sorts. They are also situated in the wider context of their society, within social, political and religious structures, and in larger historical time spans and processes. Thus, many autobiographical writings present a worldview reaching from the micro- to macro-level.

The article speaks of the 'person' in autobiographical texts, rather than using such terms as the 'self', the 'I', the 'ego', the 'individual' or the 'author/writer' for several reasons. First, it helps to keep other persons who are mentioned in the autobiography—as well as non-person agents, objects and other topics—in view for analytical purposes. Second, it helps one see the connections between the autobiographical person and the other persons, objects, institutions, events, practices and worldviews mentioned in the work. Third, it encourages us to ask how the autobiographical person is related to or situated among these others, and whether they are prominent or marginalised among them. Fourth, it inspires us to question such categories as 'individuality', 'authenticity' and 'experience', thereby opening the possibility of research into transcultural and transepochal issues beyond modernisation theory and Eurocentrism.

Autobiographical writings are particularly rich sources because they articulate the subject's personal perspective on these interrelationships. Self-narratives, despite their narrow focus on the individual person, deal with the mutual relatedness of persons to *their* society; society is inevitably brought into view. This is done without having a homogenising way of talking about society. The persons in such texts are situated beings: defined and specified in temporal and spatial terms as well as by name and family and localised, connected, involved, acting and interacting, entangled in relationships and webs of wider networks and structural connections. In this way, persons become visible as members of groups, larger communities, their society and the world at large.

This larger world, particularly in medieval and early modern times and in the German-speaking areas, was often understood as religiously structured. The concept of the person in autobiographical writings is bound up with all-encompassing structures, such as religion, that connect the person at the micro-level to their life-worlds at the meso- and macro-levels, forming an intricately entangled web.

The term 'transcultural' has several layers of meaning. I am using it as it is understood by the Berlin Research Group in their project

'Self-narratives in Transcultural Perspective' (http://www.geschkult. fu-berlin.de/en/e/fg530/index.html), where the term suggests a certain methodological approach to autobiographies. This methodological approach combines context-specific expertise with competencies in more distant contexts and usually involves the collaboration of scholars from different disciplines working together on a particular text. Second, it means setting self-narratives from different cultural contexts beside each other and analysing and evaluating them according to similar, symmetric sets of questions. These have to be developed in order not to fall back on Eurocentric categories and concepts. Finally, 'transcultural' may refer to internal as well as to external cultural differences in any cultural entity; with respect to persons, it may mean belonging to several cultures at the same time.[6]

The remainder of this article aims to articulate this approach and substantiate it empirically. First, some observations on autobiographical writings from a particular region and a particular historical time period are presented, focusing on scholars as a particular group of writers. A specific autobiographical text, written in Latin by a sixteenth-century scholar from the German-speaking areas, is taken here as an example. The observations concern the ways in which the person who is made prominent in the autobiography as the 'autobiographical person' is described. In particular, the basic units of society, social relationships, and material and immaterial resources are the main topics. This piece is then discussed in the context of recent research on self-narratives and 'the individualised person'. In order to develop some basic analytical tools for identifying the notions of the person that writers use, the article goes on to suggest an analytical concept of the person that is suitable for examining the 'autobiographical person' in its temporal, relational, participative and performative aspects. Some remarks on how to see the 'person' as an analytical category are included, drawing on existing work on the concepts of the person. Concluding remarks focus on transcultural perspectives.

A Case Study: Konrad Pellikan's *Chronikon*

In order to make some observations on autobiographical writings in the German-speaking areas of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the example of Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), a Reformed Hebraist and

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[6] Cf. Ulbrich, Medick and Schaser, 'Selbstzeugnis und Person': 14–19.

Professor of Old Testament Studies in Zurich, is examined.[7] Pellikan
joined the Franciscan order in its observant branch, as a young man, and
made a career there, receiving appointments to several leading positions.
Among other positions, he was appointed the Guardian of the friars in
Basel. He thus started out as ultra-orthodox from the Roman Catholic point
of view. Later he supported the order's and his own convent's reforming
tendencies, and it was only after these had been completely suppressed
by his Franciscan superiors that he went to Reformed Zurich to become a
professor there, thus leaving his order. He left with another friar with whom
he started to run a household in Zurich. After a short time, he followed
the advice of his new colleagues and superiors and married, which meant
that he had to change his household arrangements. In 1544, he began to
write his autobiography, called *Chronicon*, in Latin; his son Samuel had
started his studies at university the year before.

   At the beginning of his autobiography, he not only explained why
he was writing his autobiography and provided instructions on how to
read it but also he advocated the practice of autobiographical writing for
others, classifying it as part of a comprehensive doctrine on how to live
a 'good life'. This doctrine is called 'eudaimonia' in Greek, 'shlemut' in
Hebrew or 'ars bene vivendi' in Latin; it means the cultivation of human
flourishing and perfection in a wide ethical sense, with reference to the
religious and secular traditions of antiquity.[8] According to Pellikan, by
writing autobiographical texts, each generation should create spiritual
values and transmit them to the next generation; this autobiography then
becomes part of posterity's inheritance. Pellikan writes:[9]

   Konrad Pellikan, with fatherly affection, wishes foremost the fear of God
   for his son Samuel. This is the beginning of the wisdom of salvation, which

[7] For information on Konrad Pellikan and his autobiography, cf. Jancke, 'Konrad Pellikan',
with further references. An in-depth study of this highly fascinating autobiography is missing;
cf. also Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*.
   [8] Cf. 'Eudaimonia' for more details and esp. for the difference between 'happiness' and
'eudaimonia'; cf. also Hadot, *Exercices spirituels*.
   [9] The English translation is my own after the Latin text: 'Conradus Pellicanus filio
Samueli optat paterno affectu timorem Dei, qui initium sit sapientiae salutaris [Ps. 111,10
and Prov. 9,10, without 'salutaris']; quae spiritu sancto adaugeatur ex studio Sacro verbi
Dei: cum fama odorifera virtutum et meritorum; fortunam mediocrem et posteritatem
Deo et hominibus amabilem ac gratam: ad Dei optimi Maximi gloriam et posterorum
salutem patriaeque tam tuae quam meae. Quandoquidem cupio te consequi, quod mihi

is increased by the Holy Spirit through the sacred study of God's word: also the fragrant reputation (*fama odorifera*) of virtues and merits, a mediocre fortune and descendants, dear to and valued by God and humans; and all this to the glory of the best and highest God, to the salvation of our descendants and of your and my fatherland (*patria*). Therefore, I desire you to pursue what has been kept from me, that is, the history of your ancestors, their lineage, their occupations, their places, their fates, for you and, if the Lord will grant them to us, which I wish, for our descendants—who may be pious and useful for their neighbours' salvation and for God's glory—as an instruction, admonition, and example towards everything that is good. Equally, while you are alive, you should, in the time that follows, take pains in a similar way to pay attention to, comment on, and write down for our successors sacred examples, and to admonish them to continue in the same way, for sacred and useful memory, not as fathers' boasting, but for teaching their sons (*filii*). As it was done by the learned ancestors, so should the successors do as well. Hitherto scholars have been unable to do this because they had to live as celibates. Otherwise sons would have received manifold examples of virtues from their fathers. Not only would the inheritance of material riches have been taken care of, but the holy teaching of religious and social customs (*morum institutio sancta*) to subsequent generations would also have been promoted to a greater extent.

In this passage, Pellikan first mentions the most important and *basic units of society: persons*, *households* and *group cultures*. In the introduction to his autobiography, Pellikan talks about himself and announces that he intends to focus on himself throughout the text. However, in fact, apart from the individual *persons* he is focused on, that is, Pellikan himself as well as his son, nephew and ancestors, it is the *household* which has the most prominent place and serves as the organising structural element

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dolet fuisse ademptum, historiam tuorum Majorum, genus, studia, loca, fata, ad tuam et posterorum nostrorum, si dare dignabitur dominus, quod opto, pios et utiles ad proximorum salutem et Dei gloriam, institutionem, praemonitionem et ad exemplum in bonis; ut tu quoque aevo tuo victurus, similiter attendere, annotare et ad successorum sancta exempla conscribere consequenter studeas et adhorteris, ad memoriam sanctam ac utilem, non ad jactationem patrum, sed ad institutionem filiorum, hujus modi forent a doctis majoribus et successoribus tentanda. Il quod hactenus docti caelibes non potuerunt, alioqui virtutum exempla plurima filii recepissent a patribus, et non tantum divitiarum hereditas curata, sed morum magis institutio sancta fuisset promota ad posteros', Pellikan, *Chronikon*: 1.

of his autobiography.[10] The narrative that Pellikan weaves within this basic framework deals with the possibilities for transmitting one's inheritance—both material and spiritual—across generations. In addition, it is concerned with the dependence of these possibilities on the type of household to which one belongs.

Pellikan juxtaposes two types of household against each other. On the one hand, he mentions the household of clerics, that is, members of the estate of the clergy, living a life of celibacy. This may be, as in his own case, the household of a convent or monastery, which may be part of a religious order. Yet, it also could be the individual household of the secular cleric who lives outside a religious order, like his uncle Jodocus Gallus. The clergymen either have no immediate descendants to whom they can transmit their possessions, or they have only illegitimate offspring (to whom they could not legally bequeath any of their goods). He does not favour either of these household types. The type he advocates as facilitating the transmission of valuable possessions and knowledge across generations is the household constituted by marriage, with a direct and legitimate physical descendant as heir. For Pellikan, his heir was his son Samuel. His nephew (the son of his sister) could also serve as an addressee for him because he was an indirect heir. He did not see the younger generation of clerics as successors to whom older celibates might transmit spiritual and other values, including material goods.

Apart from material goods, what he wants to pass on to the next generation requires transmission in a written form: his autobiography. The aim of this work is to document a way of life that is both *real*—it has *actually been lived*—and *exemplary* at the same time. This exemplary life thus constitutes an important set of knowledge that the next generation will need. His own life as described in his autobiography, therefore, is intended as a model of an exemplary way of life. The object of this written tradition is the life of a male scholar and cleric. The author treats this life selectively, fitting into a written form those parts of his life that appear suitable for his endeavour. He exhorts the young men of the next generation—and his audience is the

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[10] On the role of households for early modern scholars, cf. Kühn, *Wissen, Arbeit, Freundschaft*, and Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*, with more references on the extensive literature. Scholars' households had some specifics in respect of their internal and external organisation and of their economies, but these and other studies show that early modern societies more generally were organised around households as basic units of society.

young men—to continue this practice by writing their autobiographies later in their lives in the same way. He hands on these spiritual values in Latin explicitly to the young male scholars of his own family. Thus, the persons appearing in this passage are not only associated with a marital household but also, at the same time, part of a scholarly group culture constituted by males. Certainly, the persons mentioned in the text are not meant to be seen solely as individuals but as integral parts of the basic social units and group cultures. They have social relationships with the members of these units and groups and have social and ethical obligations to them.

Second, *relationships* are prominent in the autobiography, particularly *dependencies*, *networks* and *agency*. Agency here means the capacity of persons to act, and their scope of action as defined in complex social processes. Pellikan situates the persons in his narrative within households and scholarly group cultures as the basic units of life, and he describes relationships with their members as constitutive of these basic units. In the case of households, the individual has a *lifelong bond* to them, either through taking religious vows or through marriage.[11] The participants commit themselves to life in a particular type of household, to a way of life and in some cases to particular persons. They also commit themselves to equal or unequal roles, establishing themselves as heads or subordinates within the hierarchies of these groups. Whereas in monastic ways of life, one can coexist, at least in principle, on the same level as most of the others, the marital household, which Pellikan favours, displays—at least on the level of normative concepts and images—a hierarchical inequality of members and roles, organised according to such criteria as gender, age, succession of siblings and generations. Marital households are invariably structured as relations of dependency and authority.

While Pellikan found himself at the top of the hierarchy in his marital realm, as the male head of household, in his autobiography he chose to

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[11] This does not mean, however, that households themselves should be considered unchanging entities. Even those social roles constituting households as social structures were not seen by the agents as simple givens, cf. Claudia Ulbrich's highly fascinating remarks on the widow Katharina Legendre and her version in court of her performative acting as head of the household, against the opposing version that her son-in-law would automatically have been the head of household, being the male in the household. But see here as well the marriage bond—even after the death of the male spouse—constituting the foundations for Katharina Legendre's claims to have been the head of the household all the time during her daughter's marriage: Ulbrich, *Shulamit and Margarete*: 78–89, 100, 105.

focus on his relationship with two young men—his son and his nephew—as their father and uncle. These two young men were dependent on him. Moreover, all three men were integrated into multiple networks, reaching far beyond any dyadic relationships and comprising various types of interconnection. Aside from their kinship networks, the scholars' group networks were of greatest importance to them, though here again they moved in a world of manifold inequalities and dependencies.

Agency here is distributed among several persons who find themselves in hierarchical relationships with each other. The transmission of teachings about an exemplary life to a succession of generations uses this type of agency, which is divided between several persons in relations of dependency and authority. In addition, agency does not seem to be concentrated on self-centred aims; however, indirectly these may be pursued via relationships of any kind.[12] As Pellikan's text shows, he certainly did not intend to be invisible on account of modesty. Instead, in displaying himself as an example for future generations of male scholars to follow, he wanted to portray himself as someone who contributed to the *common good*. These contributions concerned foremost his household, family and his group of male Christian scholars, less directly also the larger polity. He wanted to take care of the *future generations* of his family and household, providing them with knowledge of how to live a life in terms of ethical flourishing and perfection. Thus, his agency was directed at some good envisaged by him as shared with others, despite his superior position in at least some of these communities.[13]

Third, *resources* were also prominent for him. By 'resources' I mean not only tangible financial or other material resources but also intangible social and spiritual resources. Above all, *inheritance, honour* and *performative acting* have to be considered here. Pellikan defines the persons who are important to him or rather relevant for his autobiography according to their management of resources. He is primarily interested in household possessions, which have to be passed on to the next generation

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[12] For a more extensive discussion of notions of person according to systems theory (Niklas Luhmann, Cornelia Bohn), cf. Jancke, ''Individuality', Relationships, Words About Oneself". The example of Pellikan's autobiography is also presented in that article, as a concluding empirical argument after discussing the concept of 'individuality' (pp. 165–71). In this article, this example serves as a starting point for discussing concepts of person in a more general frame.

[13] Thanks to Sebastian Kühn for his remarks on agency.

as inheritance. However, his autobiography also deals with the immaterial parts of the inheritance, that is, the teachings about how to live a good, ethical life. These non-tangible parts are supposed to be articulated in words by one's descendants and to be included in their autobiographies as examples of how to live. That is, one's own person is to be used as a resource. Life, experience and knowledge are thus converted into writing and handed down to one's heirs. In this way, they become manageable, like other resources.

Such teachings about life are, as he says explicitly, intangible aspects of what one passes down to one's descendants. According to Pellikan, scholars have rather few material possessions to transmit to future generations. Instead, they have the means to make important norms visible by describing certain episodes in their lives. Moreover, by putting them in writing, they can be transformed into something durable and transmittable, and thus become part of the process of cross-generational transmission of household and family *memoria*.

At the same time, this *memoria*—a tradition of memories—reaches far beyond these small core groups. The larger group of scholars in general sees themselves as responsible for determining, overseeing and exemplifying the social rules of society. Each generation has an obligation to pass on the *memoria* of their ancestors as well as their own. The agents of this process are envisaged, by the male author, as the male members of the family and, as can be seen in Pellikan's autobiography, men are also the prevailing objects codified by this kind of knowledge. The exemplary behaviour he says should be passed on mostly concerns sociability and hospitality among scholars, as well as the words given and received by them in talk.[14] This is the kind of behaviour that becomes the centre both of his autobiographical endeavour and the exemplary scholarly life.

It is telling that Pellikan sees *memoria* and the honour associated with it as 'resources', and that this is a concept that includes immaterial as well as material resources. He sees non-tangible resources, such as instructions on how to behave, as especially important, and also as a specialised domain of resources that scholars provide. The autobiographical text, in his view, offers a particularly suitable form for this kind of resource. Thus, whereas autobiographical texts have often been read solely as containers

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[14] For an extensive study on hospitality in the early modern scholars' culture, including the role of words as valuable resources, cf. Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*.

for subject matter, he sees them as a performative medium for creating and processing resources.

While Pellikan's autobiography has much to say about his own person, the work also presents a range of other important topics. Even the term 'his own person' is misleading, given that Pellikan and many others did not think their 'persons' belonged only to themselves or were even owned by themselves. Instead, they felt involved in multiple groups with multiple obligations and common concerns. They were also highly aware of the power relations that shaped their surroundings, their social positions and their very persons. Not least, they saw themselves, their lives and worlds as related to and oriented towards God. This spiritual dimension becomes manifest in their autobiographical writings both when they mention their relationship to God and when they formulate their texts as dialogues with God, as Augustine did more extensively in his *Confessions*. Normative discourses and concerns are as intense in shaping their self-narratives as their communicative involvements with other people. Their own autobiographical claims have to be negotiated with others in terms of shared values and common goods. The 'resources' negotiated in Pellikan's autobiography, then, should be seen as common possessions rather than as freely movable, individual property.[15]

Research on Self-narratives and the Individualised Person

Konrad Pellikan's autobiography is a particular case with special characteristics of form and content. At the same time, when it is read against the background of other self-narratives, patterns become evident. As noted earlier, not just the writer's own person but many others are mentioned as well. All those who appear in the text, according to the author, are *embedded* in social relationships. On account of this interwovenness,

[15] Cf. Davis, 'Boundaries': 56, with her remarks on boundaries of both person and property. The analogy with Augustine's *Confessiones* does not necessarily imply that this text was known by all those writers or, if that may have been the case for some of them, that their writing was influenced by this particular text serving as a model for their own writing. In fact, the considerable differences between Augustine's intense philosophic dialogue with God, on the one side, and the inclusion of prayers, but otherwise much more profane and pragmatic autobiographical texts by early modern writers, on the other side, seem to suggest that this was not the case. When Augustine was mentioned explicitly, it was by scholars who were referring to Augustine's catalogues of his literary works, such as Conrad Gesner.

it does not make sense to isolate them from their historical context and measure them against the concepts of the person that are familiar to us—such as the concept of 'individuality', which has become so prominent in studies of autobiography. In this text, as well as in many other early modern autobiographical writings, the cultural concept of the person is different from modern notions of an autonomous individual.

'Egodocuments', 'self-narratives', 'autobiographical writings' and 'autobiographies' have been studied as texts that focus on a single agent, the writer or author of the text. Scholars have concentrated on this person, who is both represented in the text and at the same time representing her/himself. Analytical tools and concepts have been developed for dealing with this single, self-referential person. A particularly influential one among them is the concept of the 'individual'. This is true for self-narratives from any historical epoch or society.[16] During the past 30 years, this concept has been studied closely in various historical, geographical and cultural settings, leading to the insight that, in most cases, it does not apply to autobiographical writings as they were usually produced and transmitted.[17]

One response to this situation has been to look more closely at what exactly is implied by the concept of 'individuality', to contextualise it and to circumscribe its historical, regional and social validity. When 'individuality' is particularised in this way, it becomes clear that it originates in particular regions and particular time periods, and that it is designed by some historical agents to conceptualise the problems of these societies in these historical epochs. At the same time, the concept turns out to be a subset of larger concepts of society, space and the world, which also are historically, geographically and culturally specific.[18] This web

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[16] Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen*, has given a brilliant study on humanist autobiographical writings, where he demonstrates for every single text first the results of a traditional individualism-oriented approach, in order then to contextualise these texts and their authors in their own contexts and literary system.

[17] Cf. Velten, *Das selbst geschriebene Leben*; also Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis*: 9–16. 32–74; Jancke, 'Jüdische Selbstzeugnisse und Egodokumente': 9–26, and especially Jancke, ''Individuality', Relationships, Words About Oneself', with further references.

[18] Schlotheuber, 'Norm und Innerlichkeit. Zur problematischen Suche nach den Anfängen der Individualität': 329–57; Bähr, Burschel and Jancke, 'Räume des Selbst. Eine Einleitung': 1–12, 1–5; Hartmann and Jancke, 'Roupens "Erinnerungen eines armenischen Revolutionärs" (1921/1951) im transepochalen Dialog': 31–71; Jancke, 'Patronagebeziehungen in autobiographischen Schriften des 16. Jahrhunderts – Individualisierungsweisen?': 13–31; Jancke, ''Individuality', Relationships, Words About Oneself' with further references.

of connected and highly particular concepts is mostly a kind of implicit cultural knowledge and therefore difficult to identify. Dualities, such as the 'individual versus society/community', 'interior versus exterior' or 'private versus public' as separate spheres have been deeply influential in modern theoretical thinking, but they are also embedded in the same conceptual framework as 'individuality'.

Being part of this larger framework applies also to the very notion of autobiographical writing itself. In modern scholarship, autobiographical discourses are defined in a way that is supposedly timeless and transepochal; they simply provide a faithful portrait of a person's life, including her/his feelings and experiences. 'Autobiography' is seen as a distinct literary genre, specified as the paradigm of 'individuality'. In consequence, notions of 'experience'[19] and 'individuality' have become key concepts for both historians and literary critics working on autobiography, assuming a seemingly direct and undisguised access to reality. However, this line of thinking takes us back to the late eighteenth century and to enterprises, such as the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, published by Karl Philipp Moritz from 1783 to 1793. This notion of 'autobiography', closely connected to the notion of the 'individual', generalises the product of a particular historical, geographical and cultural context, suggesting that it should be valid cross-culturally and transepochally.

Studies of self-narratives in both European and non-European contexts, and in both modern and premodern societies, repeatedly draw on this paradigm, correlating individuality with autobiographical writing, and taking this paradigm as a standard against which to evaluate autobiographical writing in the culture being studied.[20] This approach regards some notions developed in the eighteenth-century European regions as the highest stage of historical and cultural progress. It suggests that there is only one possible path of development, and also that there is a hierarchy of cultures, in which some corresponding forms of autobiographical writing and concepts of the person are seen as superior

[19] More could and should be said on 'experience'. For reasons of space, the following concentrates on the 'individual', but cf. Hartmann and Jancke, 'Roupens "Erinnerungen eines armenischen Revolutionärs" (1921/1951) im transepochalen Dialog': 31–71, 33–35, 46–50, 68f.; cf. Gusdorf, 'Conditions et limites de l'autobiographie': 105–23.

[20] For an extensive discussion of the influence of these concepts, for development of more open and context-adequate categories, and for a re-evaluation of autobiographical texts and traditions, cf. the important study by Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self*.

to others. An exclusive, ethnocentric perspective is thus established, which prevents people from having an inclusive, non-hierarchical view of developments in different cultural contexts. Instead, it directs discussion towards the supposed deficits and delays of some world regions and populations. This model of the 'individual' and of 'autobiography' takes Western modernity as its basis, presuming its validity as a normative standard. Moreover, it takes only one type of Western modernity as the standard for all Western as well as non-European societies. This particular hierarchical version of a transcultural perspective ascribes 'individuality' to Western societies and 'collectivity' to non-Western societies.[21]

An advance on this occidentalist worldview is the realisation that there are important gender and social differences with respect to individualism in contemporary Western societies,[22] and that various modernities have developed in diverse non-European contexts.[23] In addition, there are historical differences: premodern European or 'Western' societies were no more individualistic in their structures, practices and values than others; they were much closer to other premodern societies than to their own modern developments and value systems.[24]

For late medieval and early modern autobiographical writings, the latest research established the concept of *doing person*, oriented towards group cultures, social relationships and practices. In this concept, stability is not envisaged as something to be taken for granted.[25] As Caroline Walker Bynum and Natalie Zemon Davis have shown for medieval and early modern autobiographical writings, stable *boundaries* were assumed to exist rather for social units, such as the family or religious communities, than just for individual persons. Boundaries of the person were seen as

[21] Critically discussed by Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs': 523–81, who draws particular attention to the unequal distribution of agency that is at stake and to the class-specific character underlying such distinctions.

[22] Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*; cf. also Shweder and Bourne, 'Does the concept of the person vary cross-culturally?': 158–99, even if both Gilligan and Shweder/Bourne stick to the 'individual versus collective' dichotomy as basic pattern.

[23] Cf. Eisenstadt, Schluchter and Wittrock (eds), *Public Spheres and Collective Identities*, and Eisenstadt (ed.), *Multiple Modernities*.

[24] For a critical evaluation of 'individualisation' as a macro-historical interpretament, cf. von Greyerz (ed.), *Selbstzeugnisse in der Frühen Neuzeit*.

[25] For a more detailed argument concerning stability, see Jancke, 'Selbstzeugnisse von Gelehrten und soziale Praktiken des Wortes – personale Identität?'.

osmotic or 'porous'.[26] The 'person' counted as a separate unit of society with its own boundaries only in a very limited way. Thus, the 'person' was not conceptualised without social integration, without belonging to some social group(s) as a core category. In fact, this usually meant having multiple affiliations, as can be seen in Pellikan's autobiography and in many others. Pellikan belonged to a scholars' group culture in addition to his household, his kinship group and his neighbourhood; he also belonged to a political and religious community (Zurich and, in larger extensions, the Swiss Federation, the Reformed Churches and the Christian religion). In addition, he maintained his relationships with former fellow-friars and may have aspired to belong to other groups in the future. Each person was characterised by her/his multiple affiliations with a variety of groups. Gender and other differences were made manifest not least in respect of such affiliations and the positions held in these groups. To theorise such late medieval and early modern notions of the 'person', it is best to use an approach that takes into account multiple belonging(s), relationships and practices, instead of devaluing them as simply 'exterior' and excluding them on a conceptual level.

After broadening the range of sources under the umbrella term of 'self-narratives' (*Selbstzeugnisse*), or 'egodocuments', and studying the sources for a wide spectrum of topics, scholars have addressed the described 'self', and begun to discard the focus on 'individuality'. In early modern autobiographical texts, writers defined themselves primarily through *other persons*, or some supernatural *Other* (with God often seen as a person, at least in Christian contexts). Rarely were persons defined in relation to themselves or as a self-centred exercise. In order to find a conceptual language for this insight from recent research, the term 'heterology' has been suggested.[27] In the context of this internationally expanding field of research, it becomes apparent that 'individuality' is simply one concept of the person, existing alongside other such concepts that have yet to be thoroughly studied. To continue this approach, it has been suggested that we suspend terms, such as 'individuality' and the 'self', on account of the assumptions usually implied and replace them with the term 'person' which seems much less burdened by implicit notions, at least within the discipline of history.

[26] Cf. Bynum, 'Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?': 1–17, improved version in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*: 82–109; Davis, 'Boundaries', and the contribution of Dwight Reynolds in this issue.

[27] Kormann, *Ich, Welt und Gott*.

An Analytical Concept: The 'Autobiographical Person'

It is through the 'self' or person writing about him/herself from his/her own perspective that autobiographical writings in their manifold sub-genres, including insertions into almost any kind of genre, are connected.[28] The relevance of self-narratives is not tied to a history of individualisation and the related master narratives of modernisation, following teleological and presentist concepts of development in history. These sources are crucial, however, for a history of sociality[29] in whose framework the social spaces available for individuals are provided or denied, negotiated, shaped and integrated.

An important issue in studying autobiographical writings is whether some sort of analytical tool can be used as an aid to help us understand the person(s) described in these texts. As a textual and constructed 'persona', this person has to be distinguished from the real person and her/his social role as author. The real person—including her/his role as author—manifests her/himself in extra-textual reality with all the relevant bodily, material, psychic and spatio-temporal dimensions in various ways, whereas the 'autobiographical person' appears only by means of words in writing.

Three points are especially important here. First, it is not the persons themselves who we observe in autobiographical writings—neither the writers in their respective lives nor in their special social role as author. Rather, it is a construction, which we are calling here the 'autobiographical person'. He/she is not made of the same material as a real person, but is instead created by language written in a literary form or genre, situated in constructed discourses and communicative contexts, raised as a topic to be discussed and possibly transformed into a textual resource, a source of essential knowledge to be transmitted to future generations. Autobiographical persons, therefore, are decipherable not so much as real persons (or authors) but rather as *concepts* of persons (or authors), shaped

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[28] Insertions as a particularly important way of writing autobiographical texts in medieval contexts have been treated by Schmolinsky in detail; this kind of autobiographical writing was still highly relevant in early modern times, cf. Jancke, *Selbstzeugnisse im deutschsprachigen Raum*. Usually, however, this kind of texts is not included in inventories of autobiographical writings. Therefore, almost no analytical and theoretical reflections on these autobiographical types exist.

[29] Cf. Schmolinsky, *Sich selbst schreiben in der Welt des Mittelalters*: 68f.; Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis*.

and communicated in written form intentionally, often used as part of an argument.[30] As has been suggested by Dwight Reynolds and others, this 'autobiographical person' is translated from the medium of physical and emotional life and material–psychic experiences into another medium, that of language and diverse textual forms, discourses and contexts. This is an important aspect of autobiography that has to be considered in analysing and theorising these texts.[31]

In addition, the 'autobiographical person' is shaped by literary practices. Reading experiences, exemplary narrative forms, genre-specific patterns and traditions, discourses, aesthetic design and intertextual relations have to be taken into consideration. Patterns in which one lives one's life—the structured ways of behaviour as well as models of interpretation—are not clearly reflected directly through autobiographical writing. Rather, they are brought into the patterns of writing to which the authors are accustomed. On account of these considerations, the term '*concepts* of the person' should be used with caution, as autobiographical writings are by no means explicit theoretical tracts about concepts. These texts describe and narrate events and actions. Writers only deal with concepts of the person as they are practiced in life situations. These concepts are related to the normative discourses that are deemed important by the writers. The 'autobiographical person' is a particular conceptualisation, drawing on patterns of behaviour and of interpretation, on patterns of writing and on basic cultural 'concepts of the person' as they are addressed in anthropology. Such concepts of the person are cultural constructs of what a 'person' may mean in a particular society. These constructs shape the social fabric as a whole and become manifest in all kinds of social rules and practices. Mostly, they are known for agents by implicit knowledge.[32] Cultural concepts of the person are situated between unconscious and intentional actions, between structures and constraints, on the one hand, and the search for options and choices, on the other hand. In autobiographical texts, this kind of social knowledge for the most part remains implicit. This branch of cultural knowledge provides the

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[30] As to intentional shaping of autobiographical texts, cf. Heiligensetzer, *Getreue Kirchendiener – gefährdete Pfarrherren,* and Enenkel*, Die Erfindung des Menschen*.

[31] Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self. Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*: 2f. 42.

[32] For implicit knowledge, cf. Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister*; Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts*; Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*.

background against which the 'autobiographical person' takes shape as a particular version in a particular context; it needs extensive contextualisation in order to become accessible to modern readers and scholars.

Second, the autobiographical person is not only portrayed in the actions and experiences of her/his past, but he/she is articulated as an agent in the present situation. He/she has a voice, which shapes and organises the autobiographical material, addresses an audience, finds a textual form, follows intentions and strategies and is moved by motives primarily situated in his/her present situation. In early modern autobiographical texts, the voice of the person writing the text, and thus his/her agency in a present situation, is often quite prominent. To make this voice heard was an important concern for writers of early modern autobiographical texts, as in Pellikan's autobiography, where he is giving explanations of and instructions on how to read and make use of this text. Through this voice of the autobiographical person, the person writing the autobiography becomes involved in dialogues, debates, conflicts and power relations. Her/his autobiographical writing has a place in social and dialogic situations and can be understood as part of a continued communication or as communicative input into social situations. Such situations were made up of communicative, literary, rhetorical and intertextual components.

Autobiographical writing was a kind of communicative act. This agency, however, was not necessarily concentrated solely on the writer in early modern times. Authors did not always write their texts themselves; they sometimes dictated or ordered someone else to compose them according to their wishes, as did Götz von Berlichingen (1480–1562) and the emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519). Moreover, they did not always authorise what had been written. This function could be delegated to some male or female patron in early modern times.[33] The tasks of writing and the control of writing did not necessarily have to be combined in a single person; it could be divided among several persons. In many cases, as also in Pellikan's text, there were distributed roles, shared responsibilities, like common goods and possessions to be managed in social relationships. All this has to be contextualised within the different

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[33] For dialogic communication, cf. Davis, 'Fame and Secrecy': 50–70, and Jancke, 'Die זכרונות (*sichronot*, Memoiren) der jüdischen Kauffrau Glückel von Hameln zwischen Autobiographie, Geschichtsschreibung und religiösem Lehrtext': 93–134; for delegating responsibilities in patronage relationships, cf. Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis*, esp. ch. 2: 75–165.

literary systems and, such as patronage or households, in the respective social structures.[34]

Third, early modern autobiographical texts primarily present persons as members of groups with their specific social relations and hierarchies. Sociality entails spaces for acting, but by no means is the person of early modern autobiographical writings merged into the group or deprived of his/her own will or options for acting independently. Concepts of the person, as they are found in practices and as they are translated from life into autobiographical texts, are at least partly specific for such social groups, as Pellikan's case demonstrates. As has been pointed out by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Brian Morris and others more generally, these social structures and their entanglements with particular social and historical contexts are more complex than simple binary oppositions, such as 'egocentric' versus 'sociocentric', concepts of the person would allow.[35] Therefore, more sophisticated theoretical tools are necessary to analyse the autobiographical person.

In particular, the 'person' is a term that needs to be handled in a reflective and contextualised way. It has to be seen as analytical category, as suggested first by Marcel Mauss in 1938.[36] In order to understand more clearly how the term 'person' can help us grasp the essential dimensions of autobiographical writing, some remarks are necessary on the debate about concepts of the person in anthropology.

Not all human beings, Mauss noted, are counted as persons in all contexts. For example, slaves are sometimes not considered as persons, nor are members of other such groups, whether external or internal to a society. Moreover, as Brian Morris remarks, not all 'persons' are also human beings; gods, demons, devils, spirits, animals, the dead

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[34] This has been demonstrated extensively by Schmolinsky, *Sich schreiben in der Welt des Mittelalters*, as well as by Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen*. Cf. also Enenkel, *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (ca. 1350–1650)*, and Schwermann and Steineck (eds), *That Wonderful Composite Called Author*.

[35] Spivak, 'Righting Wrongs': 523–81; Morris, *Anthropology of the Self*.

[36] Mauss, 'Une Catégorie de l'Esprit Humain: La Notion de Personne, Celle de 'Moi'': 263–81 (Engl. tr.: 'A Category of the Human Mind: the Notion of Person; the Notion of Self', in Carrithers, Collins and Lukes (eds), The Category of the Person: 1–25); for a more extensive discussion of Mauss' essay, cf. also Jancke, ''Individuality', Relationships, Words About Oneself'. In contrast to his work on the gift, Mauss's equally important essay on the person as a category besides other categories has not yet received the attention it deserves.

and animated or non-animated objects of any kind also may be seen as persons.[37] 'Persons' are obviously subject to cultural construction and to social perspectives that are embedded in wider world views, whether religious or non-religious. They are also embedded in specific social relationships and pragmatic contexts.

Notions of the 'person' are dealt with explicitly in philosophy and religion and explicated in rich intellectual traditions. They are also essential for practical matters, such as legal and religious rituals, practices which are central to enacting and debating personhood and concepts of the 'person' in ordinary life—for example, in citizen rights and in Christian contexts, such as baptism and Holy Communion.[38] Only very few social groups articulate their ideas of the 'person' in writing, or otherwise explicitly. These are usually situated in literate and often elite strands of society, frequently comprising members of educated male elite populations, particularly in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Notions of the 'person' are not simply neutral and objective but also enmeshed in the social fabric, closely intertwined with concepts of society, history, and the world as a whole, and to questions of meaning, of a 'good life' and of the appropriate ways of living.[39] Those autobiographical writings describing persons in terms of belonging, relationships and practices are in fact articulating concepts of the 'person' in this encompassing sense.

As Mauss suggests, the 'person' needs to be discussed as analytical category, as an object that can be studied and described in a reflective manner and in context. The concepts of 'person' in the minds of historical agents (writers of autobiographies) need to be distinguished from those of the scholars who study them. In consequence, autobiographical writings can be rich sources for many questions concerning the 'person' in a much

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[37] Morris, *Anthropology of the Self*: 11f.; on Mauss, *Anthropology of the Self*: 2–4. – For animals treated as persons, cf. also Reynolds (in this issue). In particular, also the dead might be seen and treated as persons by the living.

[38] For philosophical and religious thinking, cf. Morris, *Anthropology of the Self*; Morris, *Western Conceptions of the Individual*; Chakkarath, 'Wie selbstlos sind Asiaten wirklich?': 93–119; Chakkarath, 'The Indian Self and the Others': 1–24; Chakkarath, 'The Role of Indigenous Psychologies in the Building of Basic Cultural Psychology': 71–95. For practices of Holy Communion as a main site of enacting conflicts about concepts of person and therefore the relevance of other kinds of sources, cf. Sabean, 'Production of the Self during the Age of Confessionalism': 1–18.

[39] Cf. the works cited in note 38; see further Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* ('practical reason'), and Gudeman, *Anthropology of Economy*: 77 ('situated reason').

broader cultural sense, not just with respect to the individual writer. On a general level, our theoretical tools should encompass at least three ways of conceptualising the 'person': *participative* (in the sense of belonging to social groups), *relational* (referring to social relationships) and *performative* (in the sense of practices, the concept of *doing person*).

There is a consensus that cultural concepts of the person are constructed in relation to social categories, such as status/estate, class, gender and religion.[40] Yet, there are many questions as to exactly how this is done. In addition, the concept of 'person' is subject to change historically and culturally.[41] Speaking of the Middle Ages and early modern times, Charles Taylor compares it to an unknown language.[42] Therefore, the 'person' should be seen as a basic category, one of the basic units of society, which has a rich historical and cultural diversity. As Marcel Mauss said, it would be far too narrow to conceptualise 'person' as a culturally, historically and socially invariant category; it is not everywhere and always the same for everyone.

New perspectives open up for studying autobiographical texts. It has become clear that the 'person' in autobiographical texts includes more than just 'the' particular person that the text is about. An important question that autobiographical writings may help to answer is how some people are portrayed as persons while others are portrayed as non-persons (and sometimes the same person can be portrayed as each, in different contexts). What exactly is it that makes somebody a 'person'? How are 'persons' made through practices? Who is seen and presented as a 'person'? For example, are servants, children or wives seen as 'persons'? How are those individuals who are seen as 'persons' distinguished from others? What part do autobiographical writings play in the social processes of 'making persons'? There are strategies of making persons visible and invisible, by ascribing agency to them or not, by placing them in a network of relationships or not and by positioning them within a network in a certain way. To explore these strategies is one of the tasks ahead.

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[40] Cf. note 38.

[41] This notion of societies changing in the course of historical processes—therefore to be conceptualised as different types of society—while a single concept of person is seen as a constant, would be the case according to systems theory (Niklas Luhmann, Cornelia Bohn); for a more detailed discussion, cf. Jancke, ''Individuality', Relationships, Words About Oneself'.

[42] Taylor, 'The person': 257–81: 270, cf. also 280.

Conclusion: Particularity and Transcultural Perspectives

In sum, the concept of the person that appears in Konrad Pellikan's autobiography, becoming visible through his 'autobiographical person', implies a range of elements: (1) connectedness to the larger world, particularly via social relations and by participating in groups; (2) positioning of persons in hierarchical structures and in extended networks, in which they are differentiated by their positions and spaces; (3) the performative realisation of the person in spatial aspects through practices, organised around relations, obligations and trans-generational links; and (4) a differentiated, divided agency, involving others by transferring responsibility to those deemed more worthy, more powerful or in superior positions, explicitly acknowledging their role and taking responsibility for those deemed less worthy, less powerful, in inferior positions, thus implicitly discounting their roles. In early modern autobiographical writings, this is situated foremost in households and usually done by a male writer as head of household in regard of his wife, children, servants and other dependants under him.

Against the normative strands of Pellikan's self-narrative, as well as those of many other early modern writers, the question arises as to what extent personhood is distributed in such a text simply by mentioning or not mentioning someone, by giving them prominence or marginalising them. Personhood, then, can be seen as performative: It is achieved effectively through ascription and adequate practices. Rather than being an innate, permanent quality of a human being and independent of discourse and other social practices of 'doing and ascribing personhood', personhood therefore is variable.

Konrad Pellikan's autobiography refers to a particular spatial, temporal and social context. He makes especially prominent the notions, relationships, practices and values of scholars who are situated in marital households. In most cases, they are the husband and head of household, who belongs to a scholarly group with a culture based on personal relationships and male bonding. He takes pains to explain autobiography as a means for transmitting 'resources', including ethical values, to future generations of male scholars by giving them models for them to follow concerning how to live their lives as scholars.

In this regard, he is oriented towards a particular group of Christian scholars, resident in a European region and integrated into his local and

regional, religious and political community. At the same time, however, this kind of 'ethical will' is comparable to similar texts written by Jewish heads of household in early modern societies.[43] Thus, surprisingly, Pellikan's Latin autobiography displays the practices and values held by societies that are not only of a different religion but also of a despised and excluded minority in Christian and Muslim dominated societies. With regard to the practices of sociability and hospitality among scholars in everyday life, Pellikan's descriptions, as well as those of other early modern Christian scholars, are comparable to what is depicted by the Ottoman Jewish scholar Ha'im Yoseph David Azulai (1724–1806) in his eighteenth-century Hebrew travelogue. Azulai's encounters with other Jewish (and some Christian) scholars during his travels from Palestine to Tunis, Italy, across the Alps and through the German-speaking Ashkenazic regions (with a Yiddish-speaking Jewish population), through France and England and back to the Ottoman Empire, followed the same social rules practiced among early modern Christian scholars in German-speaking areas. Azulai's text thus suggests that the understandings of the roles and tasks of scholars in their respective societies resembled each other.[44] These autobiographical texts written by scholars reveal an astonishing similarity across political and religious boundaries with regard to social norms and practices, especially as they pertain to the cultural practices of scholarly circles.

Pellikan's autobiography also exhibits other, more general patterns that are characteristics of early modern European household societies. One of these is the tendency for the writer of the autobiography to be a person with the crucial hierarchical position of the male head of household.[45] This is true not only in scholarly circles but also in other social spheres, well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Autobiographical writing as ethical will, for transmitting a collective memory, which is often carried out by someone with a dominant position in society via the household

[43] For Jewish ethical wills in early modern times, cf. Bar-Levav, '"When I was alive": Jewish Ethical Wills as Egodocuments': 45–59; for Pellikan, cf. Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*: 71f., with further references.

[44] Azulai, *Sefer Magal tov*; Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*: 414–40.

[45] Cf. Pomata, 'Partikulargeschichte und Universalgeschichte – Bemerkungen zu einigen Handbüchern der Frauengeschichte': 22f.; Jancke, *Autobiographie als soziale Praxis*: 198; Jancke, *Gastfreundschaft*: 212–14. 438–40; Jancke, 'Gastfreundschaft in frühneuzeitlichen Haushaltsgesellschaften: Ökonomie und soziale Beziehungen'.

or other social configuration, is also undertaken by Glikl bas Judah Leib (1646/47–1724), an early modern Jewish businesswoman, and by Roupen (1882–1951), an early twentieth-century Armenian fighter for freedom, in their respective self-narratives.[46]

Some elements of Pellikan's autobiography, on the other hand, are highly particular to the social group of scholars to which he belonged, in its social and historical context, for example, the production of important immaterial resources in the form of his autobiography, and the claims to be reaching far beyond a specific social group by demonstrating exemplary behaviour. Much of what Pellikan describes and promotes as exemplary behaviour was obviously also relevant in different and distant cultural contexts.

This extra-contextual relevance raises the question of whether these patterns and concepts may be transferable across transcultural and transepochal divides. Comparative work is necessary to establish where and how such configurations with boundary-crossing patterns have existed (or do still exist).[47] Studying Jewish, Muslim and Christian scholarly circles may be a promising starting point. Aristocratic elites and other social groups may also provide rewarding subjects for studying this type of transcultural and transepochal perspective. The structures of household societies seem to be particularly important in early modern times as social foundations for such similarities.

For research on early modern societies, the insights gained by examining autobiographies and self-narratives are relevant for societies in general. How persons understand themselves, act accordingly, understand and treat others are important issues far beyond their relevance for autobiographical writing. Moreover, self-narratives, seen here as sources for reconstructing cultural concepts of the person, are just *one* possible type of source. In probing the nature of the person in self-narratives, the aim is to use relatively open categories that can apply to different cultures, time periods, genres and literary systems, providing transcultural and transepochal insights in a reciprocal way.

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[46] Cf. Jancke, 'Die זכרונות (*sichronot*, Memoiren) der jüdischen Kauffrau Glückel von Hameln': 93–134; Hartmann and Jancke, 'Roupens "Erinnerungen eines armenischen Revolutionärs" (1921/1951) im transepochalen Dialog': 31–71.

[47] For a more extensive discussion of this point, cf. Hartmann and Jancke, 'Roupens "Erinnerungen eines armenischen Revolutionärs" (1921/1951) im transepochalen Dialog': 31–71: 65–71.

This brief sketch of Pellikan's autobiography and the transcultural perspectives it displays suggests three approaches to autobiography that scholars today may take. First, one needs to disentangle the person who is the subject of the autobiography (the 'autobiographical person') from his or her particular life-world and particular autobiographical conceptualisation. This should be done for analytical purposes, without losing sight of the complex web of relations connecting the person with micro-, meso- and macro-levels at the same time. In the case of Pellikan, this approach inspires us to determine what in Pellikan's autobiography is specific to this individual text and person, as well as what is specific for the scholarly and other groups he belongs to, for his society and historical epoch and what may be of further-reaching relevance. Second, one needs to learn about *concepts in contexts* (also called 'situated reason' or 'practical reason' by anthropologists[48]), especially about the concepts of historical agents and their use of embedded conceptualisations, such as they become visible in autobiographical writings. This methodological approach can offer tools for comparing and connecting different and distant contexts, thus opening transcultural and transepochal perspectives on a micro-level. Finally, one needs to ask precisely how personhood is affirmed, ascribed, negated or withheld according to gender, status, household position or religion in the particular historical, cultural and social context being examined. This is as yet a largely unexplored subject. Especially important among the questions arising here is the issue of determining what distinguishes persons from non-persons in the context being examined, in both real life and autobiographical writing. Some paths of inquiry that would be relevant in this regard are the ascription or non-ascription in an autobiographical text of (a) agency, (b) a name, (c) opinions, thoughts and judgments, (d) legitimate influence on others, (e) spheres of activity that are held in high regard and (f) other connections with spheres of value, such as politics, education, rational thinking and self-disciplined modes of living and acting.

Micro-historical studies by Giovanni Levi, Natalie Zemon Davis and others have provided important insights into historical agents' ways of acting and thinking and thus *doing society*. Similarly, to analyse various cultural concepts of the person as they become apparent in autobiographical texts may provide crucial insights into historical agents' ways of structuring

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[48] Cf. note 39 (Gudeman and Bourdieu).

people's spaces or agency. It is especially important to study how historical agents conceptualise persons—or non-persons—in their autobiographical writings, and to assess the role of such conceptualisations in their respective societies.

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