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Propositions accompanying the dissertation

*A Religion of Film: Experiencing Christianity and Videos Beyond Semiotics in Rural Benin*

by Johannes Merz

1. Semiotics as proposed by C. S. Peirce is not sufficient to account for the full breadth of human experience, whether this is seeing stones as shrine entities that are alive or watching films.

2. Human experience, which includes both semiotic and more experiential aspects, is better understood through a process of *presencing* that humans use to make things present and accessible in order to interact with them.

3. The notion of transmateriality goes beyond a purely semiotic understanding of materiality and allows for a *presencing* process that accords life to seemingly inanimate things, such as stones, thereby merging spirit and matter.

4. The idea of dematerialised spirits and the possibility of them possessing things or bodies is part of what I call the *semiotification* of life. It is a phenomenon that could only be observed in the Commune of Cobly in northwestern Benin in recent decades.

5. For people in the Commune of Cobly, watching films is similar to dreaming; both activities allow a kind of transvisual seeing that makes the less visible aspect of the world visually accessible.

6. Witchcraft, as understood by the people of the Commune of Cobly, is better apprehended as an ambivalent transvisual power that facilitates people's involvement with the less visible aspect of the world. This power can be also used to make television sets.

7. The study of film reception should shift from analysing film watching as a communicative act to spectators' active exploitation of films as a *presencing* resource.

8. As epistemological and cultural incongruity between those who make a film and those who watch it increases, so does the likelihood that an explicitly evangelistically intended film is not even perceived as a Christian film.

9. Christianity is increasingly shifting from a religion of the book to a religion of film.

10. The rigorous adoption of a transmaterial perspective renders stones alive.