

MF CASR Annual Lecture 2026 and seminar - Stefan Huber

Abstract

Both lectures and the workshop will focus on “Experiences of Transcendence”. Throughout the lectures and the workshop, we will repeatedly return to two cases drawn from narrative interviews in which profound experiences of transcendence are recounted. In the “BEER” case, a secular experience of transcendence is described by a person who is decidedly non-religious and anti-church; in the “ROOF” case, a religious experience of transcendence is described by a person who is deeply religious and identifies as a committed Christian.

In the **first lecture** (*Research on Experiences of Transcendence - Theory, Methods, and New Findings*, 10:30–12:00 a.m.), Stefan Huber will address the following points:

- 1) Experiences of transcendence in Helmut Plessner’s philosophical anthropology and Thomas Luckmann’s sociology of religion.
- 2) Operationalization of “great” experiences of transcendence in Representative Quantitative Surveys (EVS, RM, ALLBUS) – measurement and findings
- 3) The “Two-Source Theory” of religion as an attempt to reconcile the secularization thesis (e.g., Pollack, Stolz) and the individualization thesis (e.g., Luckmann, Knoblauch)
- 4) Secular and religious experiences of transcendence based on two case studies (BEER, ROOF)

In the **second lecture** (*Human Flourishing and Experiences of Transcendence: secular and Christian perspectives*; 1:00–1:45 p.m.), Brittany Ehemann will address the following points

- 1) Introduction to the Harvard Global Flourishing Study, Human Flourishing and a brand-new supplementary study from Harvard on Christian flourishing
- 2) Two cases: BEER as an example of a “secular” experience of transcendence that fosters Human flourishing; ROOF as an example of a “religious” experience of transcendence that fosters Christian flourishing.

In the **workshop** (2:00–3:45 p.m.), we will examine the opening narratives of BEER and ROOF and analyze them together. Copies of the opening narratives will be distributed in English.