Academic Study of Religions

in a Cognitive, Anthropological and Sociological Perspective

Tomáš Bubík, Jakub Havlíček (eds.)

Palacký
University
Olomouc

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Reviewers:
Daniel Topinka
Marek Otisk

Authors:
Tomáš Bubík, Silvie Kotherová, Jakub Havlíček, Dušan Lužný, Rudolf Havelka

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Preface

The Czech academic study of religions has experienced thirty years of renewal and development. It can be argued that the study of religions has not only firmly put down roots in the Czech academic environment, but have also become fully integrated into the global community of study in the field.

In order for a scholarly discipline to function systematically over the long-term, it is essential that a range of steps be carried out at the institutional level. These include in particular the founding of a national association; establishing contacts internationally in the field; establishing courses, modules, bachelor's and eventually post-graduate degree programs at the university level; organizing national and international conferences; participating in important European and world congresses; and publishing scholarly periodicals, monographs as well as textbooks.

Only a few introductions to the discipline in the Czech language have been published in recent decades, with both domestic authors as well as non-Czech authors in translation contributing. The most well-known and widely-read introductory works translated into Czech remain *Religionen Und Religion: Systematische Einfuhrung in Die Religionswissenschaft* (Religions And Religion: A Systematic Introduction to Religious Studies, 1986)[1] by Jacques Waardenburg as well as *Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion* (1992)[2] by William E. Paden. Notable books by Czech authors include *Nástin religionistiky* (An Outline of Religious Studies, 1988; 2004) by Jan Heller and Milan Mrázek, *Úvod do religionistiky* (Introduction to the Study of Religions, 1994) by Břetislav Horyna, and *V zápase s posvátnem: náboženství v religionistickém bádání* (In a Struggle with the Sacred: Religion in Religious Studies Scholarship; 1982; 2005) by Karel Skalický. It seems that in the Czech context only the introduction by Professor Horyna has taken a purely secular approach.

It is widely agreed upon that introduction to the field should contain not only standard material of a religious nature focused on classic theories and methods as well as the history of the discipline but should also be concerned

1 Jacques Waardenburg, *Bohové zblízka: Systematický úvod do religionistiky* (Brno: Ústav religionistiky filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, 1997).

2 William E. Paden, *Bádání o posvátnu* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2002).

with contemporary discussions and trends. With our book, entitled *Academic Study of Religions in a Cognitive, Anthropological and Sociological Perspective*[3], however, we seek to fulfill a somewhat different ambition. The focus is first and foremost on contemporary approaches in the study of religions, although obviously not to such a degree that we neglect the historical context completely. The aim of the authorial collective was to compile a book for "the advanced," these being specifically doctoral students in study of religions in our program which was launched at the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc in the year 2020.

As our main focus in this book we chose those theoretical and methodological approaches which we would like to develop as part of academic study of religions in Olomouc. Thus we devote attention to cognitive science of religion as well as other approaches which have a long tradition at our workplace, in particular sociology of religion and anthropology of religion. In choosing to concentrate on these areas, we have not attempted to compose a general introduction to the discipline. This would require placing the field within wider historical and psychological perspectives, which is beyond the scope of our work here. In other words, this work is meant to be "tailor-made" specifically for our doctoral students, although this certainly does not mean that it could not or should not become inspirational for students of other disciplines or even academics interested in research of religions. Apart from the three methodological perspectives – cognitive, sociological and anthropological – in this work we have taken a purely secular (non-theological) approach.

Finally, it must be reiterated that the authors of this book here are not attempting a complete analysis in working with these three perspectives, but "welcome the credo of the wise with the solace in knowing that any attempt at completeness will result in the scorn of the gods."[4]

[3] This is a translation of the originally Czech book titled *Religionistika v kognitivní, antropologické a sociologické perspektivě* (2021) and edited by Tomáš Bubík and Silvie Kotherová.

[4] Břetislav Horyna, Úvod do religionistiky (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1994), 7.

A Cognitive Perspective in the Study of Religions

1. Cognitive Science of Religion as a Search for a New Paradigm in the Study of Religions

Tomáš Bubík

The academic study of religions as a modern academic discipline has been in existence for 150 years.[5] Research in the field has gone through various stages, transformations and emphases, the most fundamental of which may be considered its persistent rejection of theological foundations and objectives, despite the fact that it has often been consciously or unconsciously subject to them.[6] In the search for its own identity, apart from its secular aspect, there has been a primary emphasis on the empirical nature of the research, i.e. the study of religions in the plural or understanding religion as a historical-cultural phenomenon.

In 2006, Frank Whaling, Emeritus Professor of the Study of Religion at the University of Edinburgh, summarized the benefits of the study of religions as well as its principal characteristics. He emphasized the production of an exponential growth in knowledge on religion while placing prime emphasis on historical-philological research and on copious discussions of the concept of "religion" with a focus on its function, not the essence or insider-outsider polemics regarding religion(s). Whaling also points out that the cultivation of the study of religions had for a long time been a purely male affair for a long period of time and was dominated by the West, with its tacit division of academic study of religions among different disciplines, interest in the great religious traditions, and emphasis on "understanding religion" still prevailed.[7]

5 I would like to thank Silvie Kotherová and Martin Lang for their valuable input on this chapter.

6 Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

7 Frank Whaling, "*A Brief History of the Study of Religion*," DISKUS 7 (2006). http://jbasr.com/basr/diskus/diskus7/whaling.htm

The study of religions is now far from merely a male affair, a fact which is borne out for example by the number of female researchers working in the field. This change can be seen in the regular active participation of female scholars in the conferences of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) and the congresses of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), not to mention their significant representation in the governance of these associations.[8] The substantial and welcome contributions of women in the academic study of religions has been fundamentally changing the field, especially in the past 20 years.

Other changes have occurred in the last two decades. Increasing numbers not only of female scholars but also of non-Western scholars have been entering the field. This has been due to the improving economic situation of the countries from which these scholars are drawn, the superior language skills of researchers from the younger generation as well as also modern technologies which facilitate the creation of research networks across countries, regions and continents. Finally, significantly greater interest in the study of religious minorities has increased, which may also be understood as an academic reaction to value pluralism in the field. Racial, sexual and religious minorities have begun to receive a significant amount of societal attention, which has also strengthened research interest in these issues, not only in the study of religions.[9]

Whaling is correct to describe the academic study of religions as "divided" in the sense of being made up of different academic disciplines, but the following points also need to be taken into account. Certain points of contention will always be both a consequence of the nature of the very subject in question and the definition of religion within fields of study. The study of religions is an aggregate academic discipline in which knowledge about religions is condensed and systematized. Although its methodological pluralism and interdisciplinary

8 In 2020, six of the ten members of the executive committee of EASR, including the chair, were women. Fifty percent of the twelve-member executive committee of IAHR that same year were also women.

9 Jonathan Fox, *The Unfree Exercise of Religion: A World Survey of Discrimination against Religious Minorities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Arpad Szakolczai, Agnes Horvath and Attila Z. Papp (eds.), *The Political Anthropology of Ethnic and Religious Minorities* (London, New York: Routledge, 2018); Fabienne Bretscher, *Protecting the Religious Freedom of New Minorities in International Law* (London, New York: Routledge, 2019); Bronwyn Fielder, Douglas Ezzy, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Christians* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

nature are sometimes considered methodological relativism or even anarchism, methodological heterogeneity not only allows the study of religions to examine religious phenomena more comprehensively, but also systematically, contributing to the building of the ideal of a "unified study."

It may therefore be meaningful to extend this methodological pluralism to, for example, the natural sciences, something which is already happening mainly due to cognitive science of religion (CSR). In the study of religions, (unlike sociology or psychology of religion), there has been an emphasis for many decades on "understanding" religious phenomena, while the cognitive approach places emphasis on examining beliefs, attitudes and practices in the manner of both the natural and social sciences using the appropriate choice of methodology.

It is evident that the academic paradigms of study of religions have begun to change significantly in recent years. In this paradigmatic turn it has become essential to cultivate a consilience between the approaches of the humanities and the sciences. It is possible to concur with Ingvild Gilhus that in the study of religions it is specifically the cognitive approach that is leading to "the development of a new identity."[10] It should also be added that if this effort is to be successful, it will depend in principle on the answer to one key question: How and in what ways can the approaches of the humanities and science intersect with each other, or in other words, "in what way are natural and cultural histories interconnected?"[11]

This chapter will therefore discuss the nature of cognitive science of religion, which can be considered one of the most influential approaches in contemporary study of religions. The main emphases will be presented in a broader notional perspective, one which includes not only a bit of history of the study of religions, but also the relationship between the humanities and the natural sciences as well as a number of key issues relating to the European philosophical tradition.

10 Ingvild Gilhus, "Founding Fathers, Turtles and the Elephant in the Room: The Quest for Origins in the Scientific Study of Religion," *Temenos – Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 50/2 (2015): 207.

11 Jesper Sørensen, "Dávná mysl: současná historiografie a kognitivní věda," *Religio: revue pro religionistiku* 18/1 (2010): 28.

The cognitive turn in the study of religions

As early as 1873, Friedrich Max Müller had published his celebrated "manifesto" *Introduction to the Science of Religion* in which he urged academics to establish a new scientific and secular discipline distinct from theology. The term "science of religion," his original name for this field, did not take root in the Anglo-Saxon environment, unlike the discipline itself, the various variants of which (history of religions; comparative religion; study of religions; religious studies) have become established with regard to applied methods. Müller had in mind a discipline in the humanities which differed from theology of his time, deriving its methodology primarily from philology.

Cognitive "science" of religion (CSR) may seem to signify the strict scientizing of the study of religions. Today CSR is meant to be an approach that cultivates its scientific character following the model of the natural sciences. The search for a new paradigm in the study of religions is related to the development of cognitive sciences, which emerged in the 1950s in connection with research into artificial intelligence, robotics and computer technology. The key concept in the field is cognition, which has gradually come to be understood not only as pure brain activity, but as a process that is dependent on the body as a functional whole, not just the brain.[12]

The development of cognitive science primarily anticipated a departure from a very widespread approach in psychology, namely, behaviorism. The assumption that there is no such thing as physical mind became subject to fundamental criticism, which ultimately resulted in the formulation of a new approach in cognitive science and thus a new field of research theory and practice. A key figure in the critique of behaviorism and the development of cognitive science was the linguist Noam Chomsky, who zeroed in on the behavioral approach to human language and thought. Chomsky emphasized the importance of a strict Cartesian formalism based on the assumption that language is derived from innate logical thinking in the human brain,[13] and that language acquisition and the structure of human languages in general are highly influenced by innate psy-

[12] Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson, *The Embodied Mind Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, London: MIT, 1991; 2016), xxvi.

[13] Jensine Andersen (ed.), *Religion in Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3–4.

chological abilities.[14] Thus he turned the attention of his generative linguistics research towards investigating how the brain works in the process of cognition.

As a result of this critique of behaviorism, the study of the psychological nature of religious experience, which had more or less remained on the periphery of research since the time of William James, once again came to the forefront of academic interest. Cognitive research began to concentrate on the study of the human psyche, with the key starting point being the assumption that "religion is also subject to the limitations of the general adaptation of the human mind," and that religious behavior is shaped by the "mental capacities of the human brain," as are many other human activities.[15] Most cognitive scientists involved in the research of "religion" have refused to address the issue of defining the concept of religion.[16]

In 2001, about 50 years after the first developments in cognitive science, Jensine Andersen suggested that we were witnessing the birth of a new field of research, a new approach to understanding religion through cognitive science. She defined this "scientific" and "explanatory" endeavor based on knowledge from various sciences of the mind. Andersen further asserted that more and more researchers were coming to see the cognitive approach as a new and viable direction for a new type of research into religious behaviors, attitudes and practices.[17] The idea of using cognitive science in academic study of religions had also been promoted by the experimental psychologist Justin Barret in 2000.[18]

Armin Geertz, one of the main protagonists and promoters of the cognitive paradigm in the field of the study of religions, considers this approach to be "an ever-expanding field of inquiry drawing on the methodologies of natural

14 J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Evolution of Religion," *Evolution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134.

15 Dimitris Xygalatas, "Přenos laboratoře do terénu: Využití smíšených metod během terénního studia náboženství," *Sociální studia* 2 (2013): 18.

16 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin Geertz, "Beautiful Butterfly. On the History of and Prospects for the Cognitive Science of Religion," in *Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-Five Years*, eds. Luther Martin and Donald Wiebe (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 62.

17 Jensine Andersen, *Religion in Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–44.

18 Justin Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4/1 (2000): 29–34.

and social sciences and using new methods and technologies to answer age-old questions about human consciousness, social and cultural behavior, and the origins of religion, cognition, and culture. Although the field is not without its challenges, it is without doubt essencial to the holistic ambitions of comparative religion."[19] In the age of cognitive science, the challenge has been for study of religions scholars to take seriously discoveries in neuroscience and cognitive sciences regarding the nature of human thought (cognition),[20] as the a great deal can be achieved by applying knowledge from these fields.[21] This theoretical, methodological and technical challenge can thus relate to the overall approach to research in the study of religions.

In general, the cognitive turn represents a research approach that strives to liberate study of religions from metaphysical speculation and seeks to anchor it firmly in empiricism. This does not mean, however, that study of religions has never been understood and cultivated as an empirical approach, but approaches have not always been sufficiently consistent in this respect, an issue which is quite typical of the phenomenological tradition in religious studies.[22] In the case of cognitive science of religion, the main difference is the emphasis on the fact that religious thought and behavior is not only historically, culturally and socially rooted, as has been hitherto emphasized, but also entrenched in biology. From the viewpoint of historical reflection on study of religions as a scientific field, this is a matter of connecting the historical-cultural and social perspectives with the biological and evolutionary foundations of religion.

Since the 1990s, a number of basic foundations for the cognitive turn in study of religions research have been formulated which may be summarized as follows: 1) the source of religious thought and behavior is the human mind (cognition); 2) the rejection of the existence of religion as a wholly specific *sui generis* category; 3) the contraposition between understanding and explanation; 4) the understanding of religion as a biological, social, cultural and historical

19 Armin Geertz, "Cognitive Science," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 105.

20 Edward Slingerland, "Who's Afraid of Reductionism? The Study of Religion in the Age of Cognitive Science," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76/2 (2008): 375.

21 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 35.

22 For example, Rudolf Otto, Nathan Söderblom, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Friedrich Heiler, Mircea Eliade or Ninian Smart.

category; 5) the methodological integration of the humanities with the natural sciences; 6) subscribing to an evolutionary perspective; 7) an emphasis on an experimental approach.

Leading researchers in the field such as Armin Geertz and Uffe Schjoedt view cognitive science of religion not only as an alternative to postmodern and unscientific approaches in cultural studies, but also as a certain type of protest movement, even a relatively small esoteric group.[23] It should therefore be noted that the cognitive approach in study of religions is not always accepted with enthusiasm, as it arouses not only expectations, but also fears, doubts and misunderstandings. This is evidenced by certain contemporary polemics such as that of Ivan Strenski[24] on the one hand, and Alessandro Testa and Armin Geertz on the other.[25]

Justin Barret warns that cognitive science of religion is sometimes even erroneously associated with anti-religious rhetoric. He believes, however, that this type of rhetoric is neither typical nor necessary in this area of research. The anti-religious agenda is wrongly attributed to cognitive science largely due to Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins, who in their respective books *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006) and *The God Delusion* (2006) refer to findings in cognitive science of religion, especially Pascal Boyer's work *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (2001). Barret sees this strategy as part of a quixotic attempt by those such as Dennett and Dawkins to free the world from religious thought altogether. Armin Geertz does not consider the works by Dennett and Dawkins to be scholarly literature on

23 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin Geertz, "Beautiful Butterfly. On the History of and Prospects for the Cognitive Science of Religion," in *Religion explain? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-Five Years*, ed. Luther Martin and Donald Wiebe (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 57–58.

24 Ivan Strenski, "Much Ado about Quite a Lot: A Response to Alessandro Testa's Review of Strenski, Understanding Theories of Religion," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 85/1 (2019): 365–388.

25 For example, Alessandro Testa, pointed out misunderstandings in the comprehension of cognitive science of religion: "Religion: Evolutionism, Modernism, Post-modernism; What Comes Next? A Review Essay of Understanding Theories of Religion by Ivan Strenski," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 83/3 (2019): 342–364; Armin Geertz, "How Did Ignorance Become Fact in American Religious Studies? A Reluctant Reply to Ivan Strenski," *Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni* 86/1 (2020): 365–403.

the development of religious ideas and behavior, even politely urging both authors to devote more attention to other pioneering work in cognitive science.[26]

Justin Barret is also convinced that not only does the cognitive approach not involve an anti-religious perspective, but that it also does not represent exclusively the personal stance of many prominent researchers in this field. In his view, cognitive science of religion is characterized by three essential tendencies which may contribute to its growing importance: 1) a gradual or fragmentary (piecemeal) approach; 2) explanatory non-exclusivity; and 3) methodological pluralism.[27] In this way, Barret dampens exaggerated expectations of this approach as well as the perceptions (largely of outsiders) with regard to claims to its scientific superiority.

In this context, it should be borne in mind that pioneers of cognitive research of religion such as Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley have deliberately rejected exclusivity in terms of methodology, theoretical suppositions, or in any other form.

The origins of an "alien field of study"

Contemporary theorist and historian of study of religions Gregory Alles considers the development of the cognitive approach to be a "return of science" to study of religions research,[28] which, however, may be incorrectly interpreted as if religion had never before been cultivated scientifically. When Alles uses the term "science," he does not mean scientizing study of religions, but making it more like the natural sciences.

The call for "scientizing" is a fundamental starting point for science in general, as for example Thomas Kuhn[29] has pointed out. I would also argue that this is also an entirely natural, logical and necessary step, not a disproportionate or illegitimate demand. As regards study of religions as a humanities discipline, the call for scientization became very loud in the late 1980s, mainly due to changes

26 Armin Geertz, "New Atheistic Approaches in the Cognitive Science of Religion", *Contemporary Theories of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 258.

27 Justin Barret, "Cognitive Science of Religion: What is it and Why is it?," *Religion Compass* 1/6 (2007): 768–786.

28 Gregory Alles, "The Study of Religions: The Last 50 Years," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 2nd edition, ed. John Hinnells (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

29 Thomas Kuhn, *Struktura vědeckých revolucí* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 1997), 162.

in the social and economic sciences, which began promoting a reductionist approach to religious research.[30] With the influence of findings in cognitive science and neuroscience concerning the functioning of the brain, the emphasis on reductionism and the change of the scientific paradigm in study of religions was further reinforced.

Robert Segal, Luther Martin and Donald Wiebe[31] became the main proponents of the new reductionism in the study of religions. The rejection of scientific explanation in the humanities, particularly in study of religions, began to resonate primarily in North America, and was naturally related to the critique of Eliadian and theologically-cultivated study (history) of religion(s). According to Leonardo Ambasciano, it was theological discourse that had dictated the research agenda in study of religions (the history of religions) for many decades.[32] Therefore, a major emphasis on cognitive science of religion was the effort to free study of religions forever from "theological influence and anti-scientific sentiment."[33]

Donald Wiebe and Luther Martin were among the first to indicate the possibilities of linking evolutionary theory to cognitive science in combination with sociological tools of knowledge in poststructuralism.[34] Over the course of time, Donald Wiebe would even become the main proponent of the view that religion should be removed altogether from the humanities and be framed in the context of the natural sciences, and, further, that study of religions with its poly-methodical approach represents in reality only pseudoscience.[35]

In North American study of religions, Wiebe and Martin, as advocates of a very reductive approach, naturally found themselves somewhat isolated, which in 1985 led them and Thomas Lawson to found the *North American Association for the Study of Religion* (NAASR), a scientific association with different goals

30 Robert A. Segal, "In Defense of Reductionism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51/1 (1983): 97–124.

31 Alles, "The Study of Religions", (2010), 50–51.

32 Leonardo Ambasciano, *An Unnatural History of Religions. Academia, Post-truth and the Quest for Scientific Knowledge* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 20.

33 William McCorkle and Dimitris Xygalatas, "Past, Present, and Future in the Scientific Study of Religion: Introduction," *Religio: revue pro religionistiku* 2 (2012): 152.

34 Leonardo Ambasciano, *An Unnatural History*, 147–148, 162.

35 George D. Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion. An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, 2014), 63.

than the *American Academy of Religion* (AAR), where the approach of liberal Protestantism and its ecumenical endeavors was preeminent.[36] This methodological and scientific isolationism also spurred Martin, Wiebe and Lawson to work in close cooperation with study of religions in Europe, the approach of which can be considered significantly more secular than that of the United States.

The emphasis on reductionism, explanation and the testing of scientific theories in study of religions thus provided fertile ground for a gradual cognitive turn. In the first phase of this turn, which can be termed theoretical, there was a need to create the thought tools for this type of research. In other words, this pioneering period was defined by loud calls of "we don't want it this way" as well as the introduction of an alternative in the form of adopting findings from cognitive anthropology and evolutionary psychology which had to be recast into academic studies of religion. The key figures of this period were Thomas Lawson, Robert McCauley, Pascal Boyer, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, Justin Barrett and Harvey Whitehouse.

The seminal theoretical works that led to the birth of cognitive science of religion were the two works by Pascal Boyer *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (1990) and *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas* (1994), along with the monograph *Rethinking Religion* (1990) by Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley.[37] In the latter publication, the authors primarily focused on how the structure of religious ritual behavior is represented mentally. The publications of Lawson and McCauley from the 1990s concentrate mainly on the study of symbolic and cultural systems. The works provide not only detailed information on the structure of religious rituals, but also present a testable theory of religious behavior in which they applied the basic ideas of Daniel Dennett's intentional systems theory from 1971.[38]

Concerning the question of why religious ritual systems deserve special attention in the cognitive approach, Lawson and McCauley in *Rethinking Religion* (1990) answer that this is because rituals are relatively isolated and contain a

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36 Aron W. Hughes, "Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty Five Years On," in *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Twenty Five Years On* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–17.

37 Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "The Cognitive Science of Religion," *Evolution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21.

38 Matti Kamppinen, *Methodogical Issues in Religuous Studies* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 27.

formal, social, and normative dimension. At the same time, the researchers call into question the view of Dan Sperber (1975), as they contend that symbolic and particularly religious ritual systems have a greater influence than Sperber ascribes to them.[39]

Lawson and McCauley also emphasize that for the research of rituals, which they see as repositories of important cultural information, it is crucial to study their cultural and also biological and cognitive anchoring, analyze the findings by means of linguistic and other cognitive methods, and combine interpretation with explanation,[40] thereby emphasizing the complementarity of both approaches. Although Lawson and McCauley were among the first in study of religions to subscribe to the explanatory approach,[41] their conviction was not as resolute as it would later become in contemporary cognitive science of religion, although it can be considered a first step in this direction.

With regard to methodological approaches in cognitive research of religion, in 2016 Armin Geertz listed the following emphases: 1) an approach using neuroscience technologies; 2) a neuropsychological method of research and laboratory experiments; 3) a historical method in the form of cognitive historiography; 4) processing large volumes of data using mathematical models and creating computer simulations to test theories of religion; and 5) experimental research in the field. Geertz considers the last of these items to be one of the most interesting and perhaps the most promising feature.

In the three decades of development since 1990, cognitive science of religion has established itself in the academic study of religions and has been fully institutionalized with the establishment of journals, national and international associations, and even several research laboratories in Europe and the United States. In terms of specific publications, the *Journal of Cognition and Culture* (published by Brill) was founded in 2001, *Religion, Brain and Behavior* (Routledge) appeared in 2011, and the *Journal of the Cognitive Science of Religion* (Equinox) was first issued in 2013.

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39 Jensine Andersen, *Religion in Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

40 Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*: Connecting Cognition and Culture (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 170.

41 Armin Geertz, "Cognitive Science," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 98.

The establishment in 2006 of the *International Association for the Cognitive and Evolutionary Sciences of Religion* (IACESR)[42] can also be considered an important step towards institutionalization. The organization does not address issues such as dialogues between science and religion, attempts to find religion in science and science in religion as well as to validate religious or spiritual teachings through cognitive sciences. It set as its main goal a naturalistic paradigm which consists of explaining religion and which it gradually began to promote in opposition to the "understanding" approach to religion, which is widespread in both North American and European study of religions and thus those of the world. The difference between the two paradigms will be discussed below.

It took cognitive research of religion almost two decades to move from the theoretical phase to experimental research, i.e. testing hypotheses,[43] with the first studies conducted shortly after the year 2000.[44] The research centers and laboratories which have gradually been set up not only seek to define the theoretical foundations of this approach, but also secure funding for research in individual countries, i.e. the economic possibilities of the science. One important center is the *Religion, Cognition and Culture Research Unit* (RCC) at the University of Aarhus in Denmark, the initiators of which were Armin W. Geertz and Jeppe Sinding Jensen.[45]

Other research institutes include the *Institute of Cognition and Culture* at Queen's University in Belfast, the *Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology* at Oxford University, and the *Centre for Human Evolution, Cognition and Culture* (HECC) in Vancouver. The *Laboratory for the Experimental Research of Religion* (LEVYNA)[46] was founded in 2011, along with the *HUME Lab – Experimental Humanities Laboratory*, both of which operate out of Masaryk University

42 The original name was *International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion* (IACSR).

43 Thomas Lawson, "The Cognitive Science of Religion and the Growth of Knowledge," in *Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion After Twenty-five Years*, eds. Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 14.

44 Justin Barrett and Thomas Lawson, "Ritual Intuitions: Cognitive Contributions to Judgments of Ritual Efficacy," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 1/2 (2001): 183–201.

45 Tim Jensen and Armin Geertz, "From the History of Religions to the Study of Religion in Denmark: An Essay on the Subject," Organizational History and Research Themes, *Temenos* 50/1 (2014): 94–96.

46 William McCorkle and Dimitris Xygalatas, "Past, Present, and Future in the Scientific Study of Religion: Introduction," *Religio: revue pro religionistiku* 2 (2012): 152.

in Brno. More recently, a new cognitive laboratory (*CO-LAB*) has been set up in Olomouc which also deals with cognitive research of religion. These research centers have thus become a significant stimulus for the cultivation of "a new type of study of religions"[47] which can be called experimental, allowing us to refer to an "experimental turn" in religion.

The course of development of cognitive science of religion has led from the creation of cognitive theories of religion, through subsequent institutionalization, to the launching of experimental research. This development was conditioned on the one hand by impulses from cognitive anthropology and evolutionary biology, and on the other by the availability of new technologies and the ability of the younger generation of researchers to use these technologies, work in teams, and create experimental research centers and projects typical of the natural sciences.

The human mind (cognition) as a source of religion

The metaphorical statement by Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley that "Dionysus dances not in heaven but in our heads,"[48] can be seen as a stimulus for study of religions researchers to investigate "religious" cognition. The main task of cognitive science, and thus cognitive science of religion, is research into cognitive capacities, i.e. how the architecture of the human mind creates religious ideas (i.e. mental representation), how it preserves them, and how they spread through society.

Cognition is understood as a set of thought symbolizations representing objects, or in other words it can be reduced to mental representations. Many researchers consider cognition to be, however, something more, emphasizing the fact that cognition exists within somatic, emotional, social and cultural networks, i.e. it is the sum of "bottom up" and "top down" processes.[49] Lawson and McCauley, the founders of the cognitive science of religion, specifically pursued the identification of cognitive limitations of symbolic-cultural systems,

47 McCorkle and Xygalatas, "*Past*", (2012), 153.

48 Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 184.

49 Schjoedt and Geertz, "Beautiful Butterfly," 58–59.

i.e. "studying the (usually) unconscious representations of cultural and social forms (and their underlying principles) which participants share."[50]

According to Thomas Tweed, however, Dan Sperber was one of the first to point out that the interpretation of cultural trajectories such as religion cannot ignore the micromechanisms of human knowledge (cognition) and communication.[51] In his well-known book from the mid-1970s *Rethinking Symbolism* (1975) he "subjected the existing semiotic approaches to symbolism (the dominant approach in structural anthropology at that time) to criticism and came up with the idea that symbolism is better understood not as a system of abstract symbols and their meanings with their own rules, but rather as part of our normal mental processes of thinking about the world around us."[52]

In this work, Sperber argued against symbolic anthropology[53] and semiotic approaches to cultural and artistic symbolism, proposing to replace them with cognitive explanations of mental mechanisms.[54] In his view, symbolism is best understood as a cognitive mechanism that participates in the creation of knowledge and also in the functioning of memory. He believes that anthropologists should avoid the interpretation of cultural symbols and instead attempt to explain what symbolic exegesis enables.

In Sperber's 1985 book *On Anthropological Knowledge*, he is concerned with how religious concepts and beliefs spread as well as why some representations are more successful than others (the epidemiology of beliefs or representations). He argues that some types of beliefs (attractors) gain our attention more easily, because they correspond to a greater extent with universal mental structures.[55] It was therefore Sperber, with his reflections on why some ideas

50 Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking religion*, 3. "Studying the (usually) unconscious representations of cultural and social forms (and their underlying principles) which participants share".

51 Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 35.

52 Dimitris Xygalatas, "Přenos laboratoře do terénu: Využití smíšených metod během terénního studia náboženství," *Sociální studia* 2 (2013): 18.

53 Symbolic anthropology (L. Dumont, M. Douglas, D. M. Schneider, V. W. Turner and C. J. Geertz) understands culture as a symbolic system in which the meanings of individual symbols arise as a result of social interaction.

54 Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "The Cognitive Science of Religion," *Evolution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21–37.

55 Pyysiäinen , "The Cognitive Science," 21–22.

are more influential (infectious) than others, who influenced Scott Atran and Pascal Boyer in particular.

Returning to the concept of cognition, it is understood in cognitive science as an activity that is anchored not only in the brain but in the body, which at the same time is embedded in the environment. It is therefore understood in the sense that it is not an activity independent of the physiological processes of our body, but that it is determined both culturally and biologically. According to Geertz, cognition is embrained and embodied,[56] cultured, spread and distributed,[57] which means that it is not an entity that is abstract, objective and separate from the body, but intrinsically tied to the corporeality and physiology of the brain and the environment in which it is situated.[58]

This is a concept of cognition which is actually a circumscription of the "old" cognitivist approach, which located the mind only within the organ of the brain. This new conception is therefore based on the assumption that an analysis of the mind without the body and culture is futile, as emphasized by Geertz.[59] With this in mind, Geertz develops a biocultural theory of religion and defines cognition not as only concerning concrete, individual thought, i.e. the mind of the individual. Our thought (cognition) routinely makes use of structures in the natural and social environment and thereby extends "beyond the boundaries of individual organism."[60] Thought is thus spread through networks of feelings, stories and knowledge[61] and therefore it follows that "analyzing minds without bodies and culture hardly makes sense."[62] Thus the brain is not understood as

56 Silvie Kotherová and Jan Krátký address the issue of embodied cognition in the study "Teorie vtělené a rozšířené kognice a její význam pro výzkum náboženství," *Pantheon* 9, no. 1, (2014). They argue that "it is the branched out perceptional system of our whole body, and not just the brain or even the abstractly understood mind, that is able to store general concepts and knowledge through direct, multimodal perceptual reactions" (210–211).

57 Armin Geertz, "Brain, Body and Culture: A Biocultural Theory of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 304, 321.

58 Varela, Rosh and Thompson, *The Embodied Mind*.

59 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 308.

60 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 309.

61 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 313.

62 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 304–305.

an isolated organ, but is embodied in the body through a complex system of nerves.[63]

In this context, it is interesting to consider how this biologically grounded cognitive approach works for example with the concept of the sacred (*sacrum*), which is considered a problematic concept in religion due to phenomenology of religion, as will be discussed later. Connecting the cognitive approach with the ethnography of religion, Veikko Anttonen explains the sacred as anchored in our corporeality and representative of the mental capacities of man, by means of which we define territory, i.e. ritual space, and the appropriate behavior within it. Anttonen views the sacred as a place of ritual communication.[64]

The cognitive approach is therefore specific in that it considers the mind (cognition)[65] the central unit of theoretical and empirical analysis, with in the case of study of religions this being the "religious" mind. Along these lines, religion is understood as one of the most influential cultural institutions ever created by the (reasonable) mind of man.[66] The study of religious cognition has thus become an important arena for depicting the general mechanisms of human behavior and religion represents the royal road that leads to the exploration of these mechanisms.[67]

Explanation versus understanding

As early as the nineteenth century, the disagreement over method began to significantly divide scientific knowledge and science itself, creating two basic camps. The humanities emphasized that in order to understand human behavior and cultural phenomena, there is a need to apply the method of *understanding* (*verstehen*).[68] The natural sciences applied, in contrast, the method of *explana-*

63 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 306.

64 Veikko Anttonen, "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion," *Temenos* 41/2 (2005): 195–201.

65 Armin Geertz, "Cognitive Science," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 97.

66 Geertz, "Body and Culture," (2010): 317.

67 Veikko Anttonen, "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary," 195–186.

68 Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich Rickert, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Clifford Geertz and Jürgen Habermas are traditionally considered to be representatives of hermeneutics who emphasize the method of understanding.

tion (*Erklärung*). Due in particular to successes in fields such as chemistry and physics, discussions also began in the humanities as to whether this method could be applied in fields such as history, philosophy, sociology and psychology. Many researchers in the humanities, however, vigorously defended their traditional method of understanding, the interpretive approach and the autonomy of the humanities. Their main argument was that human behavior (i.e. free will and emotions) cannot be explained in the same way as natural processes that are not mental in nature. In other words, human behavior cannot be mathematized, thus it is above all necessary to understand the person, to "empathize" with the mind of the person in question, an approach which later became a relevant starting point in phenomenology of religion.[69]

In identifying the philosophical reasons for the development of the cognitive approach to religion, which advocates the method of explanation, one motive has undoubtedly grown out of the centuries-old discussion of European tradition of thought on human nature, i.e. metaphysical dualism and the dispute between dualism and monism. From the dualistic perspective, man is a being with a body and a mind, with these entities considered independent and separate substances. From the monistic standpoint, body and mind, respectively matter and spirit, are not separate ontological entities, but constitute a unity. Thus, the humanities traditionally lean on the dualistic concept, while modern science prefers the monistic concept. The effort to scientize (in the sense of using approaches of the natural sciences) the humanities, including study of religions, can therefore be understood as working through an entirely inappropriate attempt to transfer the thought models used to explain natural phenomena to explain man.

In terms of extreme positions, natural scientists often consider scholars of humanities to be pseudo-scientists, whose knowledge has no practical use, as the fields of study produce no facts. At the other end of the scale, scholars of humanities often view scientists and natural sciences as technically ineffectual in fields related to the study of man, history, culture and society. It is also a dispute between the natural sciences, which emphasize scientific knowledge, and the humanities, for which it is essential "to be educated".

The traditional philosophical question concerning the nature of man, i.e. whether he is a purely biological being and whether his mental activities are

[69] Daniel Pals, *Osm teorií náboženství* (Prague: ExOriente, 2015), 206–207.

primarily dependent on his biological dispositions, is a standpoint which has grown in importance in study of religions thanks to cognitive science. The cognitive scientist Edward Slingerland promulgates, for example, a "vertically integrated" approach based on a post-dualistic, embodied and pragmatic perspective oriented beyond the boundaries of minds and bodies, thereby overcoming traditional metaphysical dualism. He is a proponent of the embodied approach, and in the cognitive science of religion speaks of the growing consensus that this dualism is neither philosophically nor empirically sustainable. Slingerland does not consider consciousness to be a mysterious substance distinct from matter, but a property of matter. His stance can also be described as a certain form of scientific-philosophical materialism which he uses to defend an embodied approach to human culture which in his view would help us break free from the never-ending cycle of "contingent discourses and representations of representations."[70]

Rejection of religion as a *sui generis* category

As stated earlier, one characteristic of cognitive science of religion is the naturalistic explanation of religion consisting of the conviction that this type of explanation requires neither a special method nor personal belief in the supernatural.[71] One of the fundamental impulses that led to the development of cognitive science of religion can also be considered the long-running dispute between the reductionist and anti-reductionist currents in study of religions, that is to say, between the historical and phenomenological (ahistorical) approaches which arose in the 1960s.[72]

From the very beginnings of its development in the 1920s and 1930s, phenomenology of religion sought to serve as a research alternative to the historical study of religions by deliberately rejecting the latter's attempt to answer questions regarding the origins and development of religion. Phenomenologists of religion were simultaneously trying to methodologically enrich the often

70 Edward Slingerland, "Who's Afraid of Reductionism? The Study of Religion in the Age of Cognitive Science," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76/2 (2008): 378.

71 Ikka Pyysiäinen, "The Cognitive Science of Religion," *Evolution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23.

72 Raphael Judah Zwi W*erblowsky*, "Marburg – and After?," *Numen* 7/2 (1960): 215–220.

purely descriptive character that had been traditionally cultivated in the study of the history of religions.

In the first half of the twentieth century, phenomenology of religion was largely advocated for by Rudolf Otto[73] and Gerardus van der Leeuw,[74] while in the second half of the twentieth century it was primarily Mircea Eliade and Ninian Smart. Phenomenologists defended the assumption that religion has a wholly specific character and is fundamentally different from other historical and cultural phenomena, that it is a reality of its own kind *sui generis*. The nature of this approach is epitomized by the following assertion by Eliade: "To try to grasp the essence of such a phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, art, or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it – the element of the sacred."[75]

And where religion is irreducible and as a phenomenon wholly different from other phenomena, this approach presupposes that our cognitive tools (research methods) must also be completely different (*ganz andere*) than those we use to examine ordinary human actualities. Therefore, the designation of religion and religious experience as a wholly specific category necessarily resulted in the search for an adequate scientific method that would be able to ensure the irreducibility and specificity of religious phenomena.[76]

Eliade above all insisted that the study of religions be hermeneutic, not explanatory, and that it seek to understand the human mind.[77] Thus the general basis for understanding study of religions became the conviction that the explanation of religious phenomena leads to their trivialization or completely misses their essence, which among other results led study of religions into methodological isolation.[78] Some authors such as the Christian philosophers

73 Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt & Granier, 1917).

74 Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion* (München, Reinhardt 1925); *Phänomenologie der Religion* (Tübingen, Mohr 1933).

75 Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York, London: Sheed & Ward, 1958), xi.

76 In *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (Cassell, Continuum 1999), Gavid Flood questions the view that religion is a privileged epistemic object and also emphasizes the historical conditionality not only of any understanding but also of explanation.

77 Gregory Alles, "The Study of Religions: The Last 50 Years," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 2nd edition, ed. John Hinnells (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

78 Dimitris Xygalatas, "Přenos laboratoře do terénu: Využití smíšených metod během terénního

John Hick and Don Cupitt acknowledged the theological agenda in their phenomenological approaches, while it was disguised as a study of religions for example in the work of Mircea Eliade, and as Timothy Fitzgerald pointed out, not very well at that.[79]

The method of understanding in the phenomenology of religion would become the key to understanding religious phenomena, which must be grasped not through the history of societies, but through their own and specific development. Apart from this, the method also places a very specific emphasis on researchers, as along with a thorough description of the religious phenomenon, the methodological experience of "empathizing" is necessary as one of the fundamental conditions of knowledge (understanding). The aim of the phenomenology of religion, therefore, is neither an explanation nor a comparison of religious phenomena, but an understanding of them, which in this sense can be understood as highly subjectivist. Wilfred Cantwell Smith's claim that a scientific statement on a religion is not valid if followers of the given religious tradition do not acknowledge it became an extremely emic stance.[80]

There is no doubt that it was also the anti-reductionist approach that prefigured the character of some key issues in the new form of reductionism, not only in study of religions, but also in the cognitive science of religion. In particular, reductionism emphasizes explanation and rejects the assumption that religion is an *a priori* and *sui generis* category, wholly different from other realities, a phenomenon "which cannot be linked to any other level of human behavior nor be reduced to any other level."[81] In other words, advocates of cognitive science of religion argue that religious behavior and thought are not "special kinds of human activity,"[82] and that there is no special human behavior that one can deem to be specifically religious, just as there are no wholly specific mental

studia náboženství," *Sociální studia* 2 (2013): 16.

79 Timothy Fitzgerald, "Religious Studies as Cultural Studies: A Philosophical and Anthropological Critique of the Concept of Religion," *DISKUS* 3/1 (1995): 35–47.

80 George D. Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion. An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, 2014): 58.

81 Dimitris Xygalatas, "Přenos laboratoře do terénu: Využití smíšených metod během terénního studia náboženství," *Sociální studia* 2 (2013): 16.

82 George D. Chryssides and Ron Geaves, *The Study of Religion. An Introduction to Key Ideas and Methods* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, 2014): 58.

processes of this kind. Religion in this sense is understood as not "qualitatively different from any other cultural system or social institution."[83]

It is also important to mention, however, another important criticism of phenomenology of religion. This is the assumption that there is one transcendent reality hidden behind phenomena and that each religion represents a partial or incomplete manifestation of it.[84] This assumption was advocated by Nathan Söderblom in the 1930s and by some other phenomenologists since then. This is why the term "cultural colonialism"[85] has been used to describe this approach. Therefore, in addition to the theological agenda, a further source of criticism is its colonial or Christian missionary discourse.

An apt formulation by Leonardo Ambasciano can help emphasize how cognitive research of religion differs from phenomenology of religion. The starting points of cognitive research into religion are as follows: 1) it is based on ground zero, which means that as researchers we have "no cognitive justification for *sui generis* religion," or in other words religious and non-religious thought use the same cognitive mechanisms; 2) it should devote significant attention to the essential question of the origin of man, a being understood as a social primate whose cognitive machinery and automatisms reflect the limitations of distant history; 3) it should devote attention to the significance of human storytelling, i.e. the general human inclination to tell stories, which may be the result of evolutionary pressures and which have led to the creation of a universal grammar and a universal story whose themes are rooted in social cooperation; 4) it should study the meaning of rituals, as human ritual behavior is the culturally processed endpoint of the developed, ancient universals of mankind which are primarily focused on the promotion of prosociality and cooperation in a group.[86]

The emphasis of cognitive science of religion in explaining religious phenomena as opposed to understanding them is thus considered one of its fundamental starting points, as is the assumption that religion does not constitute a special essence, but is primarily an analytical category which we arrive at

83 Armin Geertz, "Brain, Body and Culture: A Biocultural Theory of Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 305.

84 Timothy Fitzgerald, "Religious Studies…" *DISKUS* 3/1 (1995): 35–47.

85 Gregory Alles, "The Rebirth of Cultural Colonialism as Religionswissenschaft: Rudolf Otto's Import House," *Temenos* 43/1 (2007): 29–51.

86 Leonardo Ambasciano, *An Unnatural History of Religions. Academia, Post-truth and the Quest for Scientific Knowledge* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 163–164.

by aggregating the elementary parts. With its attempt to explain religion, the cognitive approach in study of religions also revitalized earlier efforts in the field to explain the origins and development of religion. From the perspective of the history of religion, it is undoubtedly evident that the endeavor for a new approach of scientism through cognitive science of religion was a child of its time and also the natural outcome of disputes over method.

Subscribing to an evolutionary perspective

Evolutionism was an extremely influential theoretical paradigm in the history of religious research, the aim of which was to explain questions regarding the origins and subsequent development of religion. This issue has been at the center of research interest for many decades.

Although cognitive science of religion does not subscribe to evolutionism, it does share an evolutionary perspective. This was not, however, originally one of its principal themes. Ilkka Pyysiäinen, for example, associates interest in the evolutionary perspective within cognitive science of religion primarily with Pascal Boyer and his research at the University of Santa Barbara, where he wrote his significant work *Religion Explained*, published in 2001. Pyysiäinen also connects the evolutionary perspective with the evolutionary biologist David S. Wilson and his work *Darwin's Cathedral* from 2002 in which he formulated his own evolutionary theory whereby religion is multi-level adaptation and a product of cultural evolution. Wilson views society as an organism and moral religious behavior as collective action, which he explains as certain biologically and culturally developed adaptations that help the organism to function. Religion is thus explained as both a biological and adaptive element of cultural evolution. It is still unclear, however, whether religion, as a by-product[87] of cognitive adaptation, spreads in the sense of biological adaptation or culturally.[88]

The significance of this theoretical concept in cognitive science of religion is reflected for example by Robert McCauley, who argues that the researchers of the first generation in cognitive science of religion were theorists of the "by-

[87] Scott Atran, for example, systematically addresses the issue of religion as a by-product of human evolution in his book *In God We Trust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), in which he argues in favor of this perspective.

[88] Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "The Cognitive Science of Religion," *Evolution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 23–25.

product" approach.[89] The concept of religion as a by-product consists in the assertion that religious ideas are a part of ordinary cognitive activities but are not functional on their own. Ilkka Pyysiainen and Marc Hauser founded their argumentation in favor of that assertion with a two-stage argument. Firstly, "religion" is a vague category without clear boundaries or essence, a view in study of religions that is also widely accepted outside the cognitive approach. Secondly, although terms such as "God" and "eternal life" are considered religious and are functional in religious behavior, no clear religious cognitive mechanisms[90] have hitherto been specified of which these ideas would be the product. Therefore, they also claim that "religious beliefs are a by-product of evolved cognitive mechanisms."[91]

It should be added, however, that the revival of the evolutionary perspective in study of religions is not a simple return, i.e. an effort to revive abandoned theories or historically criticized and rejected principles. This restoration does also not come because cognitive researchers have overlooked existing reasons for criticizing evolutionary approaches when explaining religion or have even chosen to ignore the criticism.

Contemporary evolutionary theories distinguish between the Darwinist concept, to which they subscribe, and the progressive concept, which they are critical of.[92] Contemporary cognitive research on religion does not work, for example, with the progressive concept of evolution, which generally emphasizes "value-driven progress" in development. Instead, it follows classical Darwinism, which is "synonymous with the concept of blind/mechanical evolution by natural selection."[93]

Konrad Talmont-Kaminski highlighted an important fact in connection with the revival of evolutionary perspectives in cognitive science of religion. He argued that *Theories of Primitive Religion* by the Oxford social anthropologist

89 Robert McCauley, "Twenty-Five Years In: Landmark Empirical Findings in the Cognitive Science of Religion," in *Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-five Years*, eds. Luther H. Martin and Donald Wiebe (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017): 33.

90 Ilkka Pyysiainen and Marc Hauser, "The Origins of Religion: Evolved Adaptation or By-product?" *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 14/3 (2010): 105.

91 Pyysiainen and Hauser, "The Origins of Religion" (2010): 104.

92 Radek Kundt, "Evoluční teorie a religionistika. Současné evoluční přístupy ke studiu náboženství," *Pantheon* 9/1 (2014): 45.

93 Radek Kundt, "Evoluční teorie," 45.

Edward E. Evans-Pritchard from 1965, which deals with the character of psychological and sociological theories of the origins and development of religion in their original nations, can be considered the culmination and key summary of the critique of evolutionism. Evans-Pritchard's critique went on to have a major influence on the importance of the theory of evolution in religion and the anthropology of religion. Indeed, evolutionism was abandoned.

According to Talmont-Kaminski, Evans-Pritchard's critique focused on theories that were based primarily on August Comte's positivist view of history, which presupposed the linear development of societies, in other words that there is order and progress in the history of the thought and development of society which leads from religious thought to science. Evans-Pritchard's critique was not primarily focused on Darwin's evolutionary theory, however, but on Comte's idea of progress. Kaminski emphasized that modern evolutionary approaches have little in common with traditionally criticized evolutionary theories. Their focus is based in particular on contemporary evolutionary biology, which rehabilitates Darwin's evolutionary theory.[94]

While Comte's type of evolutionism is related to cultural change, "Darwin concerned himself with biological change" and (seemingly deliberately) did not offer an explanation as to "how life (on earth) appeared."[95] Talmont-Kaminski therefore believes that Evans-Pritchard's critique of progressive evolutionism, despite leading to a general critique of evolutionism in religion, should not have an immediate impact on the concept of evolutionary perspective in cognitive science of religion.[96]

Although the initial emphasis on the concept of religion as a by-product has to a great extent faded, this concept undoubtedly has a significant place in the history of cognitive science of religion. In recent years, the emphasis on the evolutionary approach to religion has changed, with for example Joseph Henrich, Ara Norenzayan, Richard Sosis, and Joseph Bulbulia emphasizing other aspects that have become relevant for contemporary evolutionary research into religion. Bulbulia and Sosis used a theory from the field of evolutionary biology known as "signaling theory" to explain how religion motivates its followers to

94 Konrad Talmont-Kaminski, "Primitive Theories of Religion: Evolutionism after Evans-Pritchard," *e-Rhizome* 2/1 (2020): 1.

95 Talmont-Kaminski, "Primitive Theories" (2020): 4.

96 Talmont-Kaminski, "Primitive Theories" (2020): 16.

cooperate. As they emphasized, one advantage of this theory of religious cooperative behavior is that it leads to testable hypotheses, thereby placing religion in a closer relationship with the biological sciences.[97] Bulbulia and Sosis made use of this theory to study religion, for which they began to use the term "the evolution of religious cooperation." This relates to the research of evolutionary strategic behavior, which leads to the creation of balance in a group, with signaling theory employed as an approach that seeks to understand the foundations of cooperation within small and large communities. Ara Norenzayan,[98] Joseph Henrich and others have tried, for example, to explain from an evolutionary perspective whether there is a correlation between the increase in cooperation among strangers and the spread of so-called prosocial religions over the last twelve thousand years.[99] From this perspective, religion is considered a form of cultural adaptation.

An interesting contemporary theoretical study which argues in favor of an evolutionary perspective in the research of religion and culture is a program of research on religion by Martin Lang and Radek Kundt in which they propose connecting the evolutionary, cognitive and contextual strata. They promote the use of a complex adaptive systems approach which would facilitate the study of specific cultural systems within their own ecologies and take into account the innumerable factors that make up these systems, including nonlinear interactions between these factors and their evolutionary development. In this program, Lang and Kundt also advocate the development of broad interdisciplinary cooperation, i.e. a consilience of the natural sciences and the humanities.[100]

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97 Joseph Bulbulia and Richard Sosis, "Signalling Theory and the Evolution of Religious Cooperation," *Religion* 3/41 (2011): 363–388.

98 In the book *Big Gods* (2015), Ara Norenzayan deals specifically with the spread of so-called organized religions with 'big gods', which colonized most of the world at that time, influenced the development of social cooperation and became the source of many future conflicts.

99 Ara Norenzayan, Azim F. Shariff, Will M. Gervais, Aiyana K. Willard, Rita A. McNamara, Edward Slingerland and Joseph Henrich, The Cultural Evolution of Prosocial Religions, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 39 (2016): 1–86.

100 Martin Lang and Radek Kundt,. Evolutionary, Cognitive, and Contextual Approaches to the Study of Religious Systems: A Proposition of Synthesis. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion. Journal of the North American Association for the Study of Religion*. Leiden: Brill 1/ 32 (2020): 1–7, 33.

It is therefore evident that the evolutionary perspective in cognitive science of religion has emerged as a full-fledged theoretical framework to explain the nature of religious thought and behavior.

An experimental approach

Scientific experimentation should lead to the confirmation or refutation of a hypothesis. Within this framework, it is only controlled procedures that lead to the acquisition of new knowledge which is possible to empirically investigate, verify and replicate under the same input conditions. The natural sciences follow this approach in laboratory research in order to categorize and explicate the findings obtained and by doing so to demonstrate the veracity of theories and hypotheses.

With certain exceptions (e.g. some social sciences, education methodology, branches of linguistics), in the humanities experimental research is not particularly common. Empirical data collection and analysis does not represent a widely-used approach in humanities fields such as literary and cultural studies, art, law, politics and philosophy. Work in the humanities has traditionally been viewed as a categorically different type of process than is represented by activities in the natural and technological sciences, with certain work in the humanities sometimes criticized for the lack of objectivity and precision embedded in its methodology.

On the other hand, mistrust of experimentation persists in the humanities, in spite of the fact that many disciplines originally considered as humanities such as sociology, psychology, economics and even linguistics use mathematical modeling of human behavior. In recent years, this type of modeling has begun to gain traction even in classic humanities such as historiography.[101] The use of information technologies, for example in data processing and analysis, has gradually become fully integrated into the scientific research of many humanities fields, including religion.[102]

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[101] For example, Luther H. Martin and Jesper Sørensen, Past Minds. Studies in Cognitive Historiography (London and New York: Routledge 2011); Leonardo Ambasciano, What is Cognitive Historiography, Anyway? Method, Theory, and a Cross-Disciplinary Decalogue, *Journal of Cognitive Historiography* 4/2 (2019): 136–150.

[102] In the Czech study of religion, David Zbíral and his research team from the Department for the Study of Religions of Masaryk University in Brno work with mathematical modeling in

The cognitive science of religion, however, only came to experimental work gradually, and the applicability of cognitive theories to particular research questions only began to bear fruit after many years of development.[103] The first experimental research on religion was conducted outside study of religions, a situation that would gradually change after 2000. In examining the methodology of the first research that was conducted, it is important to keep in mind that the character of experimentation from other disciplines was adopted, which soon began to prove problematic.

In this context, Uffe Schjoedt and Armin Geertz have outlined three types of experimental research on religious behavior and thought. The first, still predominantly used in research, is experimental psychological research with the aim of testing a specific research variable. The second type of experiment is by-proxy research of religion, which examines religious behavior and religious experience indirectly, i.e. by inducing illusions and hypnosis. The third type is called "authentic religion studies" and consists in the research of real-life religious behavior and religious experience directly in the laboratory or in the field.[104]

Experimental research on religion can thus be carried out in two ways, in the laboratory and in the field. The aim of both of these types of experiments is to capture the reactions of the subjects being studied. The subjects, who are not aware of the hypotheses, are typically divided randomly into experimental and control groups, which is the basis of the experimental approach. Experimental research in the field makes it possible to study religious behavior in natural conditions as part of the social and cultural context. The advantage of laboratory research is that it makes it easier to control the research process. The limitations of this approach, however, is its ecological validity, which is based on artificially created conditions. Results thus may have limited informative value due both to the absence of the natural environment and the fact that university research is most frequently conducted with samples of university students since they are easy to recruit.

connection with the study of Medieval culture and religion.

103 Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "The Cognitive Science of Religion," E*volution, Religion, and Cognitive Science*, eds. Fraser Watts and Léon P. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21–37.

104 Schjoedt and Geertz, "Beautiful Butterfly," 62–68.

Uffe Schjoedt addressed the critical reflection on experimental laboratory studies conducted up until 2009 in *The Religious Brain: A General Introduction to the Experimental Neuroscience of Religion*. Schjoedt examines six of studies, including one of his own which investigated the subjects' reactions to various forms of prayer by means of magnetic resonance imaging.[105] Schjoedt argues that in order to understand the complexity of religious practices and experiences in terms of cognitive processes and brain functions, at least two important factors must be taken into consideration. Firstly, rather than developing new controversial claims about brain processes for which religious experience is unique, cognitive neuroscience should rely on conventional theories of the functioning of the brain. Secondly, experimental neuroscience should take into account the diversity of religious thought and behavior that has been analyzed by the comparative study of religion over the course of its over 150 years of development.[106]

It is therefore apparent that Schjoedt considers it erroneous to develop any new or bold hypotheses regarding mechanisms or areas of the brain that are "exclusively responsible" for religious experience. Likewise, in his view, it is not scientifically viable to assume that a individual's religious experience can be categorized in a unitary, uniform, universal and readily definable way. Therefore, in terms of the viability of future research Schjoedt suggests focusing primarily on how culturally different traditions and practices modulate the cognitive areas of the brain which have already been mapped by neuroscientists.[107]

Experimental research has gradually become an important building block, if not the cornerstone, of contemporary research on religion, without which it would not be possible to speak of a "cognitive turn" in study of religions or of the formation of a new identity, as discussed in the introduction. The following chapter will therefore focus on the methodology of cognitive science of religion, with particular regard to the character of experimental research.

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105 Most of the experiments evaluated in this study measured blood flow in the brain using imaging technologies such as SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography), PET (Positron Emission Tomography) or fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging).

106 Uffe Schjoedt, "The Religious Brain: A General Introduction to the Experimental Neuroscience of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21 (2009): 312–313.

107 Schjoedt, "The Religious Brain," (2009): 333–335.

2. From Cognitive Theories to Experiment

Silvie Kotherová

Experimental methods hold an important place in the natural and social sciences largely due to their ability to generate confident causal conclusions. The experimental paradigm allows the researcher to move beyond mere correlative relationships, enabling the investigator to directly infer causal relationships among the phenomena studied. For the past few decades, empirical and other types of experiments have also become key tools in the cognitive science of religion,[108] despite the fact that as recently as the 1980s the use of experiments in religion research seemed to represent an "impossible dream."[109] Since that time, the emergence of cognitive science of religion (CSR) has created a link between study of religions, anthropology and the cognitive sciences. The result of this new paradigm for the study of religions has not only come in the form of new theories explaining important aspects of religion (dissemination of ideas, ritual behavior, prosocial behavior of religious groups, the role of religion in human evolution history, etc.) but also new methods for testing hypotheses and theories connected to these phenomena.

The experiment is what CSR has brought to the humanities. Research in the humanities had traditionally been focused primarily on description and interpretation, with the controlled, natural and field experimental validation of theories seen as exclusively the domain of the natural sciences and some branches of the social sciences. While the use of questionnaires, vignettes and structured interviews were not new in the humanities, linking these methods to experimental design provided CSR with innovative ways of verifying hypotheses and theories. Thus it was the cognitive science of religion that brought to

[108] Justin L. Barrett, "Experiment," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London: Routledge, 2011), 161–177: 162.

[109] Charles D. Batson, "Experimentation in Psychology of Religion: an Impossible Dream," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 16, no. 4 (1977): 413–418.

the humanities a new type of research based on the search for causalities and driven by hypotheses.[110]

It is no surprise that diverse combinations of methods will yield novel types of findings. Examples include combining ethnographic work with physiological measurements,[111] engaging in a quantitative examination of concepts of mind-body dualism in a set of historical texts,[112] using an experimental design to research ritualized behavior,[113] or applying neuroscientific tools to prayer research,[114] computer simulations to ritualized behavior research,[115] as well as biological analysis to interpret the evolution of world religions.[116] The experiment has become a key component in CSR through processes that emphasize the collaboration between the humanities and the natural sciences in ever-broadening ways.

Nevertheless, the aim of this chapter is not to overwhelm the reader with countless studies and examples of research examples, however attractive these might be. Using a few key experimental studies, the goal is instead to demonstrate the variety of individual methods and combinations of them which are made possible by employing cognitive approaches to study of religions research. The text will also not attempt to explain in detail the basics of experimental design in the field, since a number of high quality publications have already been

110 For more information about this type of research, see Joseph Bulbulia, Marc Steward Wilson, and Chris G. Sibley. "Thin and Thinner: Hypothesis-driven Research and the Study of Humans," *Numen* 61, no. 2–3 (2014): 166–181.

111 Dimitris Xygalatas, *The Burning Saints: Cognition and Culture in the Firewalking Rituals of the Anaste Naria* (London: Acumen, 2012).

112 Edward Slingerland, and Maciej Chudek, "The Prevalence of Folk Dualism in Early China," *Cognitive Science* 35, (2011): 997–1007.

113 Martin Lang, Jan Krátký, John H Shaver, Danijela Jerotijević, Dimitris Xygalatas, "Effects of Anxiety on Spontaneous Ritualized Behavior," *Current Biology* 25, no. 14 (July 2015): 1892–1897.

114 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma: Perceived Charisma Inhibits the Frontal Executive Network of Believers in Intercessory Prayer," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 6, (2011): 119–127.

115 Kristoffer L. Nielbo, and Jesper Sørensen. "Prediction Error During Functional and Non-functional Action Sequences: A Computational Exploration of Ritual and Ritualized Event Processing," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 13, no. 3–4 (2012): 347–365.

116 Anastasia Ejova et al., "Evolution of Global Religions," Paper Presented at the 17th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), University of Tartu (25-19 June 2019).

published on this subject.[117] I will instead outline the various methodological approaches and tools in the study of religions along with advantages and possible drawbacks to their usage. Descriptions of a number of interesting experiments from the field as well as the laboratory will supplement the information.

Beginnings: From Theory to Experiment

The first generation of scholars of cognitive science of religion took a rather theoretical approach which laid the solid foundations needed for later, more experimental approaches.[118] From the beginning, CSR was met with criticism from scientists in various fields,[119] with the main focus of the negative assessments concerning excessive reductionism in the burgeoning field.[120] Authors making these criticisms held the view that religion could not be divided into individual basic elements to be examined separately. This anti-reductionist stance was based on the perspective of understanding religion as a category sui generis, a phenomenon that can only be understood in its non-reducible form using special methods[121] which are often seen as prohibitively difficult to reconcile with the expectations and requirements of scientific discourse.[122]

This first generation of CSR researchers remains closely associated with the so-called Standard Model of Understanding of Religious Thought and

117 See, for example: Justin L Barrett, "Experiments," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2011), 161–177.

118 For more information on this topic, see Thomas Lawson, and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Religion and Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

119 Emma Cohen et al., "Common Criticism of the Cognitive Science of Religion – Answered," *CSSR Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (November 2008): 112–115.

120 Edward Slingerland, "Who's Afraid of Reductionism? The Study of Religion in the Age of Cognitive Science," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 375–411.

121 Robert N. McCauley, "Explanatory Pluralism and the Cognitive Science of Religion: Why Scholars in Religious Studies Should Stop Worrying about Reductionism," in *Mental Culture: Classical Social Theory and the Cognitive Science of Religion*, ed. Dimitris Xylagatas and William W. McCorkle, Jr. (Durham: Acumen, 2013), 11–32.

122 For more information, see the previous chapter. Tomáš Bubík: *"Cognitive Science of Religion as a Search for a New Paradigm in the Study of Religions"*.

Behavior,[123,124] which focused primarily on research of religious ideas as a search for stabilizing mechanisms of transfer stemming from the universal foundations of the human psyche. While the primary interest of the psychology of religion at this time was research and analysis at the level of an individual, CSR was mainly devoted to "studying (usually) unconscious representations of cultural and social forms and their fundamental principles..."[125] Another major theory being formulated at this time was Pascal Boyer's minimally counterintuitive (MCI) ideas,[126] a model which sought to explain why certain forms of ideas spread more easily than others. The French cognitive anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Boyer was among the first to attempt to test his own theory experimentally. In 2001 Pascal Boyer and Charles Ramble conducted a series of experiments to test the MCI concept.[127] The premise of the theory was that minimally counterintuitive (MCI) ideas, which do not correspond with our usual expectations for specific ontological domains, would be more readily remembered than intuitive (INT) ideas[128] and maximally counterintuitive (MXCI) ideas. Minimally counterintuitive ideas disrupt our ontological expectations only minimally, that is, at one to two levels (a crying sculpture); whereas a maximally counterintuitive idea encompasses three or more of these disturbances (a cat living underwater, experiencing time backwards and speaking Russian). Most religious ideas fall exactly into the category of MCI ideas, which seem to be attractive for humans and may therefore be easier to remember, whereas

123 The so-called standard model of social science ignored the role of individual cognitive mechanisms of humans in creating and embracing cultural content.

124 Introduced by Pascal Boyer in 2005, the term "standard model" involves a certain group of authors and their theories, which at this time represented the mainstream among cognitive religious scholars. In addition to Boyer's approach, there were theories by Harvey Whitehouse, Thomas Lawson, Robert McCauley, and others researchers related to them in terms of publishing and opinions.

125 Lawson, and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion,* 3.

126 The work of Pascal Boyer thus showed the possibility of looking at texts and historical sources from the point of view of intuitive biology, which led to the emergence of one of the greatest theories at the beginning of CSR. Pascal Boyer, "Explaining Religious Ideas: Outline of a Cognitive Approach," *Numen* 39, (1992): 27–57.

127 Pascal Boyer, and Charles Ramble, "Cognitive Templates for Religious Concepts: Cross-cultural Evidence for Recall of Counter-intuitive Representations," *Cognitive Science* 25, (2001): 535–564.

128 Boyer, and Ramble, "Cognitive Templates," 536.

MXCI ideas contain too many disrupted expectations and thus become cognitively "exhausting" and consequently have less potential to be remembered.[129] Boyer's anthropological background led him to conduct his testing within diverse cultural settings (France, Gabon and Nepal). This heterogeneity among research settings demonstrated that the tendency for better memorization and subsequent recalling of minimally counter-intuitive ideas than intuitive ideas is invariable across these cultures.[130,131] The main method of these experiments was to stimulate participants using word phrases and vignettes.

Stimulation of Participants

In their first study in France, Boyer and Ramble chose to stimulate participants using a two-page long story and a vignette which included counterintuitive ideas. The story was as follows: a diplomat is sent to a distant galaxy as an ambassador. To obtain a better idea of what awaits him there, he visits a museum, where he is presented with 24 short descriptions of exhibits, 12 of which dedicated to objects and 12 to different categories of people. These categories are also divided in half, with 6 of the items described representing our intuitive expectations and the remaining 6 the disruption of our expectations of the categories presented.[132] Based on the stimulus the participant was then prompted to recall the 24 items of ideas mentioned in the story.[133] The results of remembering or recalling these categories supported the hypothesis that sentences which involve a disruption of expectations, that is, counterintuitive ideas, will be better remembered by participants than intuitive ideas.[134]

These early experiments were so encouraging that a number of similar experiments were undertaken which were also based on similar types of stimulation. Debates were initiated about the differences, e.g. between Mickey

[129] For more on religious ideas and their spread, see Benjamin Grant Purzycki and Aiyana K. Willard, "MCI Theory: a Critical Discussion," *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, (Apr 2015): 1–68.

[130] Boyer, and Ramble, "Cognitive Templates," 557.

[131] This theory has played a central role in shaping the first research in cognitive science of religion, but is currently no longer up-to-date, see comments below.

[132] Boyer, and Ramble, "Cognitive Templates," 540.

[133] Boyer, and Ramble, "Cognitive Templates," 540.

[134] Boyer, and Ramble, "Cognitive Templates," 543.

Mouse,[135] Santa Claus,[136] the Greek god Zeus, which few believe in anymore, and "real gods."[137] These studies have shown, however, that the transfer process of minimally counterintuitive images is not as simple as it might have seemed at first. Or more precisely, counterintuitiveness is only one of several components that play a role in the process of remembering an idea and its subsequent spread. The category of the MCI concept and its isolation within the religion complex were also subjected to criticism.

While the first generation of CSR researchers largely ignored the role of man's individual cognitive mechanisms in the creation and adoption of cultural content, the research of subsequent generations began to take into account the influence of environment and related contexts on the function of human cognition. The psychologist Ara Norenzayan of the University of British Columbia in Canada and colleagues demonstrated in 2006[138] that ideas with more than one disruption of an ontological category can also be successfully spread. The fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm can serve as an example. The anthropologist Benjamin Purzycki[139] pointed out that the characteristics of individual ideas are an essential part of how well our memory works. Purzycki's studies showed that minimally counterintuitive ideas which were funny were more memorable than those that were not.

In 2007,[140] the cognitive scientist Afzal Upal pointed out how much expected context plays a role in remembering ideas. He used a vignette about Kentucky farmer Edwin Smith as his stimulus: "I had just woken up and went to the kitchen to prepare some coffee to drink, That's when *I saw the cow flying above the*

135 Scott Atran, *In Gods We Trust: the Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

136 Justin L. Barrett, "Why Santa Claus Is not a God," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 8, no. 1–2 (2008): 149–161.

137 Will M. Gervais and Joseph Henrich. "The Zeus Problem: Why Representation Content Biases Cannot Explain Faith in Gods," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 10, (2010): 383–389.

138 Ara Norenzayan et al., "Memory and Mystery: The Cultural Selection of Minimally Counterintuitive Narratives," *Cognitive Science* 30, (2006): 531–553.

139 Benjamin G. Purzycki, "Cognitive Architecture, Humor and Counterintuitiveness: Retention and Recall of MCIs," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 10, (2010): 189–204.

140 Afzal M. Upal, "What Is More Memorable Counterintuitive Concepts Interpreted Metaphorically or Literally?," *Proceedings of the 29th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* 29, no. 29 (2007): 1581–1586.

trees."[141] A flying cow is a typical minimally counterintuitive idea, thus it might be assumed to be more readily remembered than, for example, a cow grazing in a field. If context is added to Edwin Smith's story, however, the idea changes completely: "That's when *I saw the cow flying above the trees*. The twister had lifted the 500 pound creature well over 50 feet above the ground and was rotating it around like a doll. That was a scary experience."[142] Upal thus formulates the memorability hypothesis, in which it is assumed that concepts and contexts which maximize value (backward explanation, predictability) will be better remembered by the person, who creates a predictive model of the environment by adding new unexpected information that cannot be predicted.[143] Minimally counterintuitive concepts are easier to remember, because they are difficult to predict, that is, they disrupt our expectations, but at the same time are easy to explain in retrospect (postdictability) after they have been seen (example with the flying cow). In other words, they have high postdictability, but low predictability. Intuitive concepts are harder to remember, in contrast, precisely because they have high predictability, but also high postdictability.[144] As a result, they yield no new information and can thus be repetitive or boring, therefore more difficult to remember. In contrast, maximally counterintuitive ideas and concepts are less memorable because they have low predictability and also are very difficult to explain in retrospect (low postdictability), e.g. the example of a cat living underwater. In the case of low postdictability, too much new information is revealed which the individual is no longer able to process efficiently.

Despite the efforts to place the testing of MCI concepts in context, research into folk tales or advertisements has not brought much new understanding of how, when and why people actually transfer and generate religious ideas, and how they associate them with a ritual in a given context.[145] The very concept of minimally counterintuitive ideas has also been subjected to detailed criticism,[146] which gradually led to an end to the debate about their role within religion.

141 Upal, "What Is More," 1582.

142 Upal, "What Is More," 1582.

143 Upal, "What Is More," 1581.

144 Upal, "What Is More," 1582.

145 Benjamin Grant Purzycki and Aiyana K. Willard, "MCI Theory," 29.

146 The criticism was aimed at the need to redefine the central features of modules or the core domains of MCI theory. Purzycki and Willard propose redefining and expanding this model

Divided Religion

Just as in contemporary study of religions in general, the cognitive science of religion deals with the issue of a general definition of religion. How should we approach and explore religion if no definition is agreed upon? It is important to realize right from the start that if religion is considered as one essential category, examining it will prove extremely difficult. Therefore before any meaningful research can be undertaken, religion must be broken down into basic units (ritualized behavior, religious ideas, etc.), which will then allow us to approach each unit more thoroughly and subject each to closer examination. Then, as religion is broken down into these individual elements, a clearer picture of how these elements can be integrated into one or more categories can help clarify some basic assumptions about what religion and religious behavior are.[147]

Dualism in China

This division of religion into individual cognitive mechanisms was used by the sinologist and religious scholar Edward Slingerland and the psychologist Maciej Chudek (2011),[148] who sought to define elements of intuitive mind-body dualism in religious texts from periods before the Qin Dynasty.[149] According to the Canadian-American developmental psychologist Paul Bloom,[150] we are born as so-called intuitive dualists. As such, we divide the world into two categories,

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to include so-called contra-schematic ideas that may be culturally and individually specific. An example of this would be "purple cow Milka," which can certainly not be regarded as counterintuitive, but on the contrary represents a disruption only on the schematic level. For more information, see Benjamin Grant Purzycki and Aiyana K. Willard, "MCI Theory."

147 Armin W Geertz, "Conceptions of Religion in the Cognitive Science of Religion," in *Contemporary Views on Comparative Religion in Celebration of Tim Jensen's 65th Birthday,* 22 eds. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Mikael Rothstein (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd. 2016), 127–139.

148 Edward, Slingerland, and Maciej Chudek, "The Prevalence of Folk Dualism in Early China," *Cognitive Science* 35, (2011): 997–1007. Or also Edward Slingerland, "Body and Mind in Early China: An Integrated Humanities-Science Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 1 (2013): 6–55.

149 A period of early China dating back to 221 BC. This period included the dynasties Xia (2100–1600 BC), Shang (1600–1100 BC) and Zhou (1100–221 BC).

150 Paul Bloom, *Descartes' Baby: How the Science of Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

things of the tangible and intangible soul. In considering the self, it can be difficult to imagine or consider ourselves as machines made of flesh and bone. Such a notion is unintuitive and unnatural. We feel, however, much more like the inhabitants of our bodies. This intuitive dualism of the body, detached from the mind, allows us to understand without difficulty the principle of reincarnation, or for example why the Golem is able to come alive after the insertion of the Shem. According to Bloom, we carry this intuitive dualism, which can be first seen in toddlers,[151] with us into adulthood.

Following Bloom, Slingerland and Chudek attempted to prove that this intuitive dualism is universal and thus would be present in Chinese texts despite the fact that according to the commonly accepted consensus the mind-body dichotomy[152] is generally alien to China and so-called Eastern cultures. This claim is espoused by supporters of mind-body holism who argue that dualism of mind and body in any form is only characteristic for cultures with European roots.[153] Contrary to this belief, Slingerland and Chudek decided to extract passages containing the word *xin*[154] from both the pre-Qin corpus and the Guodian archaeological texts. These texts were subsequently coded by the hypothesis-blind coders, their aim being to identify in the texts the contrasting connection between the word *xin* (heart-mind) and words indicating body or body parts such as organs.

151 This intuitive dualism can be seen already in young children, who have trouble understanding the brain independently as an organ involved in their thinking. Preschool children are then more likely to talk about the brain as a helper, helping them make decisions and take action, or allowing them to see and hear. They certainly do not, however, understand the brain as what creates their selves. For more, see Paul Bloom, *Descartes' Baby*.

152 For a scientific critique of intuitive dualism, see Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

153 Anna Wierzbicka argues against, for example, the existence of exact equivalents of the English word "mind" in different cultures and languages. See Anna Wierzbicka, "On Folk Conceptions of Mind, Agency and Morality," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 6, no. 1–2 (2006): 165–179.

154 The term *xin* (pinyin: *xīn*, Chinese 心) refers literally to the physical heart, although it is sometimes translated as "mind," as the ancient Chinese believed the heart was the center of human cognition. Xin was depicted in the experiment as primarily a physical organ, a place of emotion or the site of "higher" knowledge, regardless of whether there were any patterns in such references that changed over time. See Edward Slingerland, "Were Early Chinese Thinkers Folk Dualist?" in *The Cognitive Science of Religion: A Methodological Introduction to Key Empirical Studies*, eds. D. Jason Slone, and William W. McCorkle Jr. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 63–75, 67.

The results confirmed the significant occurrence of dualistic mind-body connections, which according to the authors were mainly encouraged by the greater use of classical Chinese as a means of communication among the wider population.[155] The authors' conclusion is not surprising, given that for many years psychological researchers had been attempting to prove the existence of intuitive dualism. Still, this investigation remains important precisely for its demonstration of the potential benefits of linking the cognitive approach to the humanities.

The Laboratory

As has been indicated, most cognitive religionists have come to assume that religion is not a unattainable sui generis category, i.e. the cognitive processes associated with it involve no special mechanisms specific for religious belief and practice.[156] Once it has been established that individuals and communities apply the same "cognitive toolkits" to religion as are used in other mental, psychological and emotional processes, we are not far from realizing the possibility of investigating religious phenomena under laboratory conditions.

A Standard Paradigm

Many studies[157] were initially based on the standard paradigm of cognitive science, one characterized by a tendency to explain social and cultural phenomena through cognitive processes and mechanisms, i.e., "from the inside out" or how cognitive mechanisms and characteristics of the individual mind produce social and cultural realities. "In this sense, the 'bottom-up' explaining technique is also typical, where cognitive mechanisms and processes at 'lower levels' give rise to phenomena at 'higher levels.'"[158] These researchers ask questions such as:

155 Edward Slingerland, "Were Early Chinese Thinkers," 68.

156 Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained*.

157 For example Michael Inzlicht, and Alexa M. Tullett, "Reflecting on God Religious Primes Can Reduce Neurophysiological Response to Errors," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 8 (2010): 1184–1190. Or Michiel Van Elk, "Paranormal Believers Are More Prone to Illusory Agency Detection than Skeptics," *Consciousness & Cognition* 22, no. 3 (2013): 1041–1046.

158 Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Religion as the Unintended Product of Brain Functions in the 'Standard Cognitive Science of Religion Model': on Pascal Boyer, Religion Explained (2001) and Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "How Religion Works" (2003), in *Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion*, ed. Michael Stausberg (London: Routledge, 2009), 129–155, 136.

How does religion affect behavior and human attitudes? Does religion make people more social?

Central to these types of research is the controlled environment typical of experimental psychology. The aim of such research is to isolate undesirable variables and subsequently determine the true effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable. Traditional social science tools such as questionnaires, interviews and other qualitative research methods provide a range of interesting data on religious behavior and thought, but are also subject to conscious participant control and often also to learned shared schemas.[159] Thus, the data a researcher receives from a respondent is fully reflected upon and often includes statements in which the participant always says only what they want the researcher to hear. A confound variable may then be an attempt by a participant to discover what is expected during the research or what the reaction should be to a given social environment (social desirability).[160] In order to prevent these undesirable effects from the side of the participant, scientists can observe levels which are beyond the conscious control of the participants.

Research techniques which allow for dealing with mechanisms that are beyond the reach of conscious control or consciously formed religious identity is therefore a great asset and open up new fields of knowledge. These techniques include, for example, measurements of various physiological responses, measurements of reaction time or behavioral measurements. These tools, including priming and the implicit association test (IAT), attempt to capture the functions and results of non-reflective religious thought and ritual behavior.[161]

IAT

The implicit association test is a social psychology measurement tool which by measuring reaction time aims to determine the strength of subconscious (implicit) associations between individual mental representations of objects

159 Tom Stafford, "The Perspectival Shift: how Experiments on Unconscious Processing Don't Justify the Claims Made for Them," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. 1067 (2014): 1–4.

160 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly: On the History and Prospects of the Cognitive Science of Religion," in *Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-five Years*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Donald Wiebe and William W. McCorkle Jr. (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 57–69, 63.

161 Schjoedt and Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 63.

in the human memory to which the subject participant has no conscious access.

Measuring reaction time represents the basic assumption that differences in reaction times indicate differences in mental processes. Such research often aims to detect, for example, implicit biases or stereotypes of individuals.[162] The IAT itself is a computer-based test containing several sets of inter-polarized stimuli which the participant is to react to with the push of a button. Individual stimuli are assigned in the form of words or images (related to God, the Devil, etc.) to predetermined categories, e.g. positive or negative.

As an example, a study conducted by the German theologian and psychologist Constantine Klein et al. which asked whether people are explicitly aware of the difference between "spirituality" and "religion" as well as whether they are able to see this difference even on an implicit level.[163] The researchers' main argument is that existing studies have always presented religion and spirituality as synonyms rather than attempting to differentiate them. In their study, both terms were evaluated using the same stimuli compared to "atheism" as a third concept. The intercultural study conducted in Germany and the USA demonstrated that explicit self-assessment as "spiritual" or "religious" correlates significantly with implicit levels of "spirituality" and "religiosity." A comparison between groups, however, revealed that explicit self-assessment and implicit attitudes towards spirituality differ significantly between those who understand religion and spirituality differently on an explicit level.[164]

It is essential to realize what such results can tell us about the phenomenon. One problem of these investigations may be the duality and polarization of an explicit and implicit level, required by the method itself and the associated theory. This dichotomy may be far from corresponding how the psyche functions. The recurrent correlation between the explicit and implicit measurements of one construct suggests that they refer to different but also connected mental

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162 Recent 2017 IAT research by Tom Stafford and Gittu George has shown that Czechs are the most intolerant and racist nation in Europe. See Tom Stafford, and Gittu George, "European Map of Implicit Racial Bias," accessed 19 September 2020, https://figshare.com/articles/European_map_of_Implicit_Racial_Bias/4750588?file=7790077.

163 Constantin Klein et al., "Is 'Spirituality' Nothing but 'Religion'? An Indirect Measurement Approach," *Semantics and Psychology of Spirituality* (2015): 71–85.

164 Constantin Klein et al., "Is 'Spirituality'," 71–85.

dispositions.[165] "Relationship and interactivity between the two cognitive levels does not make a given situation simpler, neither in terms of measurement nor in terms of the characteristics of the implicit dispositions as such."[166] Certain authors also point out that even the permanence and stability of implicit attitudes as personality traits acquired by prior experience seems ambiguous, and thus they would require the adjustment of theoretical interpretations accordingly.[167] Despite the fact that the IAT method seems to be easy to formulate, applications can often yield divergent results precisely because the cognitive processes between implicit and explicit levels remain unclear.[168] In other words, for most measurements, we unfortunately still do not understand the complexity of the association between the measured presentation and the observed behavior. [169]

If religion is to be explored, however, terms or concepts must be studied in the complexity of the relationships in which they manifest themselves. It is therefore vital to approach investigations using a variety of methods which can provide insight into the essential elements that lie at the border of or even beyond our conscious experience. These experimental methods thus become a necessary addition to the neglected behavioral dimension of religious belief alongside traditional methods from non-experimental historical and social sciences.

165 Brian A. Nosek, "Implicit–Explicit Relations," Current Directions in *Psychological Science* 16, no. 2 (2007): 65–69.

166 The quote is translated from the original study entitled: Tomáš Hampejs, "Náboženství v laboratoři sociální implicitní kognice: víra v automatických reakcích jako implicitní postoj a dovednost," *Sociální studia* 2 (2013): 85–114, 106.

167 Bertram Gawronski, Etienne P. Lebel and Kurt R. Peters, "What Do Implicit Measures Tell Us? Scrutinizing the Validity of Three Common Assumptions," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2, no. 2, (2007): 181–193.

168 Jonathan Jong, "Implicit Measures in the Experimental Psychology of Religion," in *A New Science of Religion*, ed. Dawes, Gregory W. and James Maclaurin (New York: Routledge, 2013), 65–78.

169 Agnes Moors, Adriaan Spruyt, and Jan De Houwer, "In Search of a Measure that Qualifies as Implicit: Recommendations Based on a Decompositional View of Automaticity," in *Handbook of Implicit Social Cognition: Measurement, Theory, and Applications*, eds. Bertram Gawronski, and Keith B. Payne (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), 19–37.

Priming

Priming[170] can be characterized as a cognitive process in which a prior stimulus can influence an individual's subsequent behavior and thinking, including later processing of the same or a very similar stimulus. It thus interferes with all parts of the information-receiving-process, including attention, understanding, memory, forming conclusions, feelings as well as feedback.[171] A crucial feature of priming is that it remains unconscious and unobservable to the subject under examination, i.e. it is an unconscious cognitive activity which requires no intention or motivation.[172] If the stimulated individual were (made) aware of the presence of this process, it is highly likely that an attempt would be made to correct the actions, in which case the priming would lose its effect.

The Dictator Game

Despite the fact that most experimental paradigm methods used in CSR come from the field of psychology, scientists in the cognitive science of religion do not hesitate to make use of very practical methods from, for example, the field of economics (e.g. game theory). What is important to realize, however, is that these new methods also allow us to expand the field of research questions such as: Are people who believe in God more moral?[173] Does ritual behavior increase social cohesion?[174] Does religion promote cooperation?[175]

The social psychologist Azim F. Shariff and the psychologist Ara Norenzayan investigated whether belief in God and keeping the presence of a supreme be-

170 For more information, see Chris Janiszewski, and Robert S. Wyer, "Content and Process Priming: A Review," *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 24, no. 1 (2014): 96–118.

171 Chris Janiszewski, and Robert S. Wyer, "Content and Process Priming: A Review," 97.

172 Tanya L., Chatrand, and Valerie E. Jefferis, "Priming," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* eds. Michael S., Lewis-Beck, Alan E. Bryman, and Tim Futing Liao (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 854.

173 Azim F. Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan, "God Is Watching You Priming God Concepts Increases Prosocial Behavior in an Anonymous Economic Game," *Psychological Science* 18, no. 9, (2007): 803–809.

174 Dimitris Xygalatas, "Do Rituals Promote Social Cohesion?," in *The Cognitive Science of Religion: A Methodological Introduction to Key Empirical Studies*, eds. D. Jason Slone, and William W. McCorkle Jr. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 163–172.

175 Richard Sosis, "Do Religions Promote Cooperation? Testing Signaling Theories of Religion," in *The Cognitive Science of Religion: A Methodological Introduction to Key Empirical Studies*, eds. D. Jason Slone, and William W. McCorkle Jr. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 154–162.

ing in mind made people more ethical and prosocial.[176] The researchers used a priming study combined with an economics research tool called The Dictator Game.[177] Keeping in mind that self-reports are often viewed as highly problematic,[178] and thus someone's proclamation that they are a religious person is extremely unreliable, the authors decided to manipulate not the individual person's religiosity, but the situation which the participants would find themselves in. To induce the thought of God, the authors used priming in the form of a scrambled sentence task. Participants thus received sentences in a mixed word order[179] and given the task to grammatically correct the sentence structure. Words such as *spirit*, *divine*, *God*, *sacred* and *prophet* appeared randomly in these sentences. This task was thus intended to guarantee religious priming, but at the same time prevent recognition of the hypothesis. A control group with secular priming received words with neutral content such as: *civil*, *jury, court, police* and *contract*.

The primed groups, as a second condition, underwent an economic game to measure their prosociality. In this game, the player termed "the dictator," received a sum of $10. His task was then to divide this monetary reward between himself and another anonymous player. The decision as to what amount of money to bestow on the other player (or whether any at all) is thus entirely in the hands of the "dictator," with the beneficiary having no influence on the amount received. Money thus became a very practical tool for measuring prosocial behavior.

The results of the study confirmed that priming with "divine concepts" increased prosocial behavior (measured by the amount of money left by a participant to an anonymous person), among both believers and atheists. Implicit religious priming thus proved, according to the authors, to be far more effective at reducing selfish behavior than explicit religious belief.[180]

176 Azim F. Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan, "Does God Make You Good," in *The Cognitive Science of Religion: A Methodological Introduction to Key Empirical Studies*, eds. D. Jason Slone, and William W. McCorkle Jr. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 133–143.

177 Azim F. Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan, "God Is Watching You," 803–809.

178 Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs and David C. Funder, "Psychology as the Science of Self-Reports and Finger Movements. Whatever Happened to Actual Behavior?," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2, no. 4 (2007): 396–403.

179 For example: "spirit the felt that exorcised she".

180 Azim F. Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan, "God Is Watching You," 804–805.

The intriguing title of this study "God Is Watching You" may certainly attract a range of researchers interested in investigations into religious experience. It would soon become apparent, however, that this is not a study which examines the sensation of God's presence, nor are the research stimuli themselves recognized as religious by the participants. Many would certainly also criticize the study for not being conducted in a natural environment, but in laboratory conditions where participants are undertaking a task very much unlike everyday situations in our lives.[181] This type of social psychology study is highly abstract and rather artificial in nature, which leads to the lower ecological validity of the experiment. Although this may seem frustrating, methodologies like these do provide a high degree of control over the stimuli as well as the environment. This can provide us with knowledge difficult to acquire in a natural environment full of unwanted and confusing variables. In other words, this type of research is certainly not a dead end, but a necessary part of the puzzle mosaic. For the research to be applicable or trustworthy, however, the results must be repeatedly replicable in different cultural contexts.

As with experimental psychology over past 25 years or so, the priming method has yielded quite interesting insights. Unfortunately, the results of many important priming studies and research have repeatedly failed to be replicated in recent decades,[182] culminating in the so-called replication crisis, i.e. This crisis brought about the bitter realization that if scientific results cannot be replicated to a sufficient degree, science loses one of its most important components, verification. The repeated verification of identical, similar or comparable results from procedures and processes followed precisely is indeed one of the essential characteristics of experimental science.[183]

The replication crisis was triggered by a study conducted by the respected psychologist Daryl J. Bem[184] in 2011 in which he putatively demonstrated the existence of extrasensory perception. Given that the study was published in the

181 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 63.

182 Fiona Fidler, and John Wilcox, "Reproducibility of Scientific Results," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, eds. Edward N. Zalta, (Winter 2018), accessed 15 December 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/scientific-reproducibility/.

183 Rolf A. Zwaan et al., "Making Replication Mainstream," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 41, no. E120 (2018).

184 Daryl J. Bem, "Feeling the Future: Experimental Evidence for Anomalous Retroactive Influences on Cognition and Affect," *J Pers Soc Psychol* 100, no. 3 (Mar 2011): 407–425.

highly influential *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, it caused a wave of excitement in the scientific and private spheres, leading to great interest in replicating the results. Three replications were carried out by independent teams, none of which were able to confirm the findings of the original study. These replication studies were, however, subsequently rejected by expert periodicals, including the journal which published the original study. This situation was subsequently used as an example of how publication bias[185] affects scientific knowledge.[186]

The replication crisis can be summarized in several typical features: a) the absence of replication studies in the literature, b) the general inability to replicate the results yielded by previous studies, c) the presence of publication bias, d) the high prevalence of "questionable scientific practices"[187] which increase the false percentage of positive research,[188] and e) a demonstrable lack of transparency regarding the publication of methods, data and analyses in scientific publications.[189]

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185 Publication bias lies in the fact that scientific journals have intentionally published only studies with statistically significant findings. Studies that fell short of these criteria were refused for publication. This has resulted in a ratio of statistically significant to statistically insignificant results of 90 per cent to 10 per cent. See also Daniele Fanelli, "Do Pressures to Publish Increase Scientists' Bias? An Empirical Support from US States Data." *PLoS ONE* 5, no. 4 (2010): e10271.

186 Fiona Fidler and John Wilcox, "Reproducibility of Scientific Results".

187 Among these questionable practices are: *HARKing* (Hypothesizing After Results are Known), i.e. the creation of research hypotheses after data collection and its analysis. Researchers thus present unexpected findings as if they were anticipated throughout the whole research. Another such practice is so-called *Cherry Picking*, which involves not disclosing all the variables that may have had an impact on the result findings, or by publishing only very significant results from a range of results obtained and a large number of analyses performed. In other words, they do not report the whole reality, but only significant data. Last but not least, we can also include *p-hacking*, which is an effort to modify experimental conditions in such a way as to produce statistically significant results. Researchers may decide to include, for example, more data after calculating the p-value if they have not reached a significant result, or by stopping data collection if they have already achieved the desired effect, despite the fact that they had originally intended to use a larger sample of data. We can also include the tendency to round the p-value towards the significant value of p = 0.05 (e.g. p 0.053 as less than 0.05).

188 See original study: Silvie Kotherová, "Problematika experimentálního výzkumu buddhistických meditací." *Sociální studia* 4, (2015): 73–93.

189 Fiona Fidler and John Wilcox, "Reproducibility of Scientific Results".

The replication crisis in the social sciences obviously does not mean that scientific results are now being rejected en masse. The situation does demonstrate, however, that experimental scientific research must be carried out with great precision and must adhere to clearly defined rules. It has also shown that even scientists are fallible individuals who may knowingly or not engage in "questionable scientific practices" as a result of publication bias. Although particular cases are sometimes not so cut and dry, carrying out multiple replications (even better by completely different teams of researchers) seems the most suitable mechanism to obtain scientific knowledge while avoiding the pitfalls mentioned in the previous paragraph. Still, the replication crisis itself has thus shown that science possesses auto-correction mechanisms in the form of criticality, verification, and replication that make it capable of self-regulation and self-healing.

The Out of Body Experience and the Cover Story

Governing, monitoring and controlling for the respondent's unconscious processes was also attempted by the study of religions team of Silvie Kotherová, which studied the disruption of body image during Buddhist meditation practice.[190]Research into meditation practice has become quite popular, thus numerous studies can be found based on physiological measurements of factors such as heart activity and blood pressure[191] as well as electrical activity in the brain (EEG) and neuronal activity (fMRI).[192] In meditation research, we also encounter questionnaire survey and interview techniques which may be subject to the conscious control of the respondent and thus often result in unintended distortion, e.g. by confound bias. This distortion may stem not only from religious indoctrination, but also the cultural presumption of what meditation is and what its effects are.[193] One example is a study conducted by the team of psychologist Barbara L. Fredrickson[194] who sought to demonstrate that loving-

190 Silvie Kotherová, "Problematika experimentálního výzkumu," 73–93.

191 Ratree Sudsuang, Vilai Chentanez and Kongdej Veluvan, "Effect of Buddhist Meditation on Serum Cortisol and Total Protein Levels, Blood Pressure, Pulse Rate, Lung Volume and Reaction Time," *Physiology & Behavior* 50, no. 3 (1991): 543–548.

192 Rael B. Cahn, and John Polich, "Meditation States and Traits: EEG, ERP, and Neuroimaging Studies," *Psychological Bulletin* 132, no. 2 (2006): 180–211.

193 Silvie Kotherová, "Problematika experimentálního výzkumu," 73–93.

194 Barbara L Frederickson et al., "Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through

kindness meditation leads to an increase of positive emotions in everyday life, resulting in an improvement in an individual's health. Prior to the study itself, however, the authors of this study gave participants extensive information regarding how meditation has a positive effect on health and their well-being.[195] Thus, the effect found by the researchers may have been caused by the inadvertent priming of respondents rather than by the meditation technique itself.

Kotherová et al. attempted to eliminate these undesirable distortions of possible indoctrination by choosing an appropriate sample of participants (without Buddhists) as well as by using a "cover story." For the most accurate observation of the manipulated element, there was a need not only to isolate individual elements during the experiment itself, but also to isolate other longer-term influences that might affect the distortion of body image. Respondents were thus selected from among people who had no prior experience with meditation, nor was the word "meditation" used at all with the subjects at any time. It was thus hoped that throughout the research the participants did not realize that they were practicing meditation exercises, thus their religious or secular knowledge of this phenomenon would have no possibility to influence the resulting data. It is important to note, however, that the use of misrepresentation, or a "cover story" is a very sensitive issue related to the ethical aspects of the experiment and the specific study. For this reason, the complete truth regarding the goals of the study must be revealed to the participant after the experiment is over, following which the participant is free to decide whether to give their permission for the data to be analyzed.[196]

The standardized rubber hand illusion method[197] was used to measure body image distortion. To induce the illusion, one of the researchers stroked the middle finger of the participant's real hand with a paintbrush while simultaneously stroking the same finger on the rubber hand. During this stimulation, the participant feels the touch of the brush on his hand, but sees it on the artificial one. This gradually creates an illusion that makes the participant feel like they

Loving-kindness Meditation. Build Consequential Personal Resources," *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology* 95, no. 5 (2008): 1045–1062.

195 Barbara L Frederickson et al., "Open Hearts Build Lives," 1051.

196 Silvie Kotherová, "Problematika experimentálního výzkumu," 88.

197 Katharine N. Thakkar et al., "Disturbances in Body Ownership in Schizophrenia: Evidence from the Rubber Hand Illusion and Case Study of a Spontaneous Out-of-body Experience," *Plos One* 6, no. 10 (2011): e27089.

can feel the touch of the brush on the artificial hand and they gradually begin to perceive the artificial hand as their own. Not only were questionnaires used to capture the illusion, but also physiological measurements in the form of proprioceptive drift[198] and body temperature,[199] over which the participants had no conscious control, thus these measurements provided objective data. A comparison of experimental conditions, namely the meditation and control conditions, then demonstrated that the meditation technique caused no more of a disturbance of the body image than did the control condition.

It could be argued that by isolating selected elements of meditation, it is no longer meditation as such, but instead it was the reduction and isolation of individual elements of meditation that made it possible to observe the narrower causal processes on which the experiment was aimed. The result of the study itself showed that research into non-reflective processes may open a way of understanding the complexity of the phenomena studied. In other words, the oft-reported out-of-body experiences and the disruption of the body image during meditation practices may not be the result of meditation techniques, but of Buddhist indoctrination, for example.

Indirect Studies (By Proxy)

Another type of research study explores religious behavior and thought using indirect observation. The main idea is to observe religious behavior in an indirect way by studying psychological phenomena similar to those found in religious

198 Proprioceptive drift is measured on a numerical scale in which the participant estimates the position of their index finger on their own hand (*index finger measure*). When estimating the position of one's own index finger, the entire box is covered with non-transparent glass, so the participant sees neither their own hand nor the artificial one. The position of the actual index finger is estimated by the participant three times before and three times after the stimulation. The difference between a pre- and post-stimulation estimate indicates the intensity of the rubber hand illusion. For more information, see Katharine N. Thakkar et al., "Disturbances in Body Ownership in Schizophrenia".

199 Measuring the surface temperature of the stimulated and non-stimulated participant hand also serves to capture the illusion, with the stimulated hand experiencing significant cooling, i.e. a drop in the surface temperature during stimulation compared to the non-stimulated hand. See also G. Lorimer Moseley et al., "Psychologically Induced Cooling of a Specific Body Part Caused by the Illusory Ownership of an Artificial Counterpart," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105, no. 35 (2008): 13169–13173.

systems, e.g. phenomena such as trance, out-of-body experiences, revelations, possession, anthropomorphism, mind reading, etc.[200]

As a result, with these studies religious-related phenomena can be experimentally investigated in well-controlled conditions without having to take into account the low ecological validity of the research. Examples of research questions in this type of work include: What is the perceptual basis of out-of-body experiences? What cognitive processes induce trance states? Under what conditions does a revelation appear to humans?[201] What mechanisms lie behind ritual behavior?

Processual Basics of Ritualized Behavior

The eminent anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport researched ritualized behavior. Rappaport theoretically postulated possible mechanisms by which this behavior differs from non-ritualized behavior.[202] Boyer and Liénard later argued that some recurring features of cultural rituals developed through an evolutionary system which aided in delineating potential threats derived from specific stimuli in our environment. The function of this system is to guarantee a certain level of awareness to and avoidance of danger (Hazard Precaution System).[203]

According to this theory, ritualized behavior induced by potential hazards in the surrounding environment can reduce the level of anxiety associated with these threats by the exhaustion of working memory resources. As a result, characteristic manifestations of ritualized behavior are triggered, such as activities lacking a causal link between the action itself and its goal (goal demotion), redundancy, rigidity, repetition, or a sense of detail.

These characteristics of ritualized behavior were also explored by the researchers Kristoffer L. Nielbo and Jesper Sørensen[204] from Århus, Denmark.

200 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 63–64.

201 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 64.

202 Roy A Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

203 Pascal Boyer, and Pierre Liénard, "Why Ritualized Behavior? Precaution Systems and Action Parsing in Developmental, Pathological and Cultural Rituals," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 29, no. 6 (2006): 595–660.

204 Kristoffer L. Nielbo, and Jesper Sørensen, "Spontaneous Processing of Functional and Non-functional Action Sequences," *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 1, no.1 (2011): 18–30.

These investigators prepared a set of 16 functional[205] and non-functional action sequences (verbal phrases). The participants were thus divided into these two conditions: 1) functional and 2) non-functional action type. To create non-functional action sequences, the authors increased redundancy (e.g. spinning a cup twice instead of once), rigidity (e.g. slow movement of the cup following an upright vertical trajectory) in verbal phrases, but also reduced causality between the action performed and its goal (goal demotion).[206] These action sequences were randomized (randomly shuffled) within the conditions to avoid unwanted biases that may be created by the condition setting itself. The participants were subsequently instructed to press a button to mark those sequences (verbal phrases) they considered natural and meaningful as they were being exposed to both functional and non-functional sequences.

The experiment participants also received information that they can push the button as many times as they want during the observed sequence and that there was no right or wrong way of doing it. The study demonstrated that the participants in the research pressed the button significantly more for non-functional sequences than for functional ones. The authors explain that such behavior was caused by an increase in predictive error during the perception of non-functional verbal phrases, as elements such as redundancy, rigidity and goal demotion make it difficult to integrate these verbal phrases into a coherent event model.[207]

What to Remain Aware Of

A number of diverse methods used in laboratory conditions has been described above. Laboratory experiments can obviously shed light on many of our research questions and hypotheses, providing new insights into the phenomenon of religion. What is also important to take into account, however, are the pitfalls

[205] For example: brush your teeth; use hand cream; eat chocolate sweets; create a paper plane; water a plant; tie a shoelace; make coffee, etc.

[206] Goal demotion was which was operationalized as two sub-features: 1) disturbance of the goal structure by reshuffling the conditional relations between sub-actions (e.g., putting coffee grinds in the cup after having lifted the cup to the mouth) and 2) removal of the goal (e.g., not drinking from the cup). Kristoffer L. Nielbo, and Jesper Sørensen, "Spontaneous Processing," 23.

[207] Kristoffer L. Nielbo, and Jesper Sørensen, "Spontaneous Processing," 25.

and disadvantages, which need not be understood as problematic, but rather as a characteristic of a given setting.

While the advantage of laboratory experiments is their strong control over well-defined conditions and the progress of procedures, the action takes place in an unnatural environment for the participants. This means that the participants themselves reflect their position onto the experiment and can consciously or unconsciously influence its course. This can result in a social desirability bias, by which a participant in an experiment adjusts the data by their tendency to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed positively by their surroundings (researchers). Another unwanted bias is the Hawthorne effect, which means that the participants respond more to the fact that they are being watched than to the change in conditions. This may cause significant bias in the interpretations of the research findings.[208]

In order to avoid these biases and unwanted variables, researchers can employ the so-called blinded experiments. During a single blind experiment, participants receive no information about which conditions in the experiment they are assigned to. Shashwath A. Meda et al., for example, tested participants in a driving simulator under three different sets of conditions: a high alcohol, moderate alcohol and alcohol-free placebo state. The participants, however, were not aware of what treatment they had received.[209] Another blinding possibility is the cover story mentioned above which is presented to a participant instead of the actual research intentions. As indicated, this may be considered unethical treatment and deception of the participants. Still, the researcher knows that if the participant is told that the research entails body image distortions, no relevant data would be obtained, i.e. the researcher would only be provided with the subjective feelings of the participant instead of objectively measured data. The same would be true if the participant were to be told that they were going to "meditate" during the experiment. Each person has some idea of what meditation is, and while these ideas may vary significantly, the participant may be influenced this preconception. Thus a participant with this conscious information may react completely differently after being told, for

208 Hugh Coolican, *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology* (London: Psychology Press, 2014), 105.

209 Shashwath A. Meda et al., "Alcohol Dose Effects on Brain Circuits During Simulated Driving: An fMRI Study," *Human Brain Mapping* 30, no. 4 (2009): 1257–1270.

example, to count inhalations and exhalations. The role of the cover story and blinding is therefore absolutely crucial.

Should the researchers wish to further minimize the subjective influence of intervening variables, they can choose a double-blind experiment. This blindness is then directed not only at the participants, but also at the researchers themselves. In this case, neither the participant nor researcher is aware of the setting of the conditions of the experiment.[210] A key role in this case is played by research assistants, who remain blind to the hypotheses of the main researcher.

The Weirdest People in the World?

Despite the fact that it is possible to obtain extremely interesting data from laboratory conditions, it is important to point out another issue regarding contemporary science. In 2010, the American evolutionary biologist and anthropologist Joseph Henrich and his colleagues the psychologists Steven Heine and Ara Norenzayan[211] raised concerns about the problem of the generalization of psychological behavioral research to the common population. Supported by evolutionary thought, theoretical grounds support researchers in their understanding of many concepts from human psychology as universal. These authors point out, however, that the current empirical evidence of this universality is relatively weak, as the database of comparative studies, which would also include so-called traditional (small-scale) societies, is limited. This is the case despite the fact that these small societies may be of considerable importance for understanding the evolutionary history of our species as well as for understanding the influence of diverse environments on human psychology.[212] In contrast, most current behavioral studies do not include small communities in their research, and they generally only work with a monolithic population. Henrich et al. refer to this most frequently researched sample of the population by the acronym WEIRD, i.e. **w**estern, **e**ducated, **i**ndustrialized, **r**ich, and **d**emocratic. The issue of the generalization of research results is thus complicated by the widespread practice of using university students as typical participants in social science research.

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210 Hugh Coolican, *Research Methods*, 109.

211 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People in the World?," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, no. 2–3 (2010): 61–83.

212 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People," 64.

Henrich et al. argue further that studies have shown how the influence of the environment and the type of population from which a participant originates can have an effect on fundamental psychological domains, such as visual perception.[213] It is for this reason that researchers should expand their platform of research samples to different types of populations. The rule should be that if a researcher wants to generalize their findings to a majority population, the way or ways of going about this generalization should be considered very carefully. Thanks to its natural interdisciplinary, the cognitive science of religion can easily face this "weird problem." According to the cognitive anthropologist Martha Newson et al., CSR may be able to "offer psychological methodological and epistemological tools which include diversifying sample populations, increasing ecological validity, capturing the causes and consequences of cultural variation, and developing new methodologies."[214]

Authentic Study of Religions

Given the problematic nature of knowledge based on research on the WEIRD population, researchers are now increasingly turning to so-called authentic studies,[215] which examine religious believers under laboratory conditions (e.g. Marc Andersen et al. 2014,[216] Uffe Schjoedt et al. 2008,[217] 2009,[218] 2011[219]) or in the field (e.g. Ivana Konvalinka et al. 2011,[220] Dimitris Xygalatas et al. 2013a,[221] 2013b[222]).

213 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People," 64–65.

214 Martha Newson, Michael Buhrmester, Dimitris Xygalatas, and Harvey Whitehouse, "Go WILD, Not WEIRD," *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* 5, no. 2 (September 2020): 1–27, 1.

215 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 65.

216 Mark Andersen et al., "Mystical Experience in the Lab," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 3 (2014): 217–245.

217 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "Rewarding Prayers," *Neuroscience Letters* 443, no. 3 (2008): 165–168.

218 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "Highly Religious Participants Recruit Areas of Social Cognition in Personal Prayer," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 4, no. 2 (2009): 199–207.

219 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma," 119–127.

220 Ivana Konvalinka et al., "Synchronized Arousal between Performers and Related Spectators in a Fire-walking Ritual," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, no. 20 (2011): 8514–8519.

221 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Autobiographical Memory in a Fire-walking Ritual," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 13, no. 1–2 (2013a): 1–16.

222 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Extreme Rituals Promote Prosociality," *Psychological Science* 24,

Many researchers may wonder why we should continue conducting laboratory experiments when religious participants can be examined directly in their environment. The laboratory does provide investigators with a level of control which is difficult to achieve under natural conditions, and it also allows us a large number of sophisticated measuring tools to be employed. Lab studies are primarily used when it would be overly problematic to conduct the research in the field, mainly due to the impossibility of using immobile measurement tools, e.g. fMRI and other technologically intensive methods.

There are, however, a number of mobile technologies that allow the researcher to examine religious phenomena directly in the field, by which the study is seen to gain a higher degree of ecological validity. Nevertheless, despite their reputation as an ideal tool, a number of problems are associated with field experiments, the most salient of which is the impossibility of closely controlling experimental conditions as well as the potential for variable confusion (confounding bias), which occur often under field conditions. Conducting studies in which participants are projected to undergo authentic experiences is extremely difficult and requires extensive anthropological work that often goes beyond the setting of the experiment itself. The recruitment of religious groups, to name one example, requires demanding field work, forming relationships with participants, often quite close ones, as well as conducting extensive interviews and otherwise working with informants. The study preparation itself can take several years to insure proper field conditions. Another potential obstacle in field experiments lies in the creation of a precise context that allows a participant to go through authentic experiences.[223] An interdisciplinary team is then required to overcome these difficulties; this group is composed not only of psychologists and religious scholars, but also of anthropologists, whose work is vital in this respect.

It is important to realize that the decision to conduct research in a laboratory or in the field is often not simply a free and arbitrary choice. The research questions and postulated hypotheses formulated by the experts in the various disciplines determine both the method and form of research, including whether the study will take place under laboratory or field conditions.

no. 8 (2013b): 1602–1605.

223 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 65.

The Power of Charisma

A relatively recent addition to the methodological toolkit of those who conduct experimental research on religion is the use of neuroscience technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which measures blood flow to different areas of the brain as the area is in use. The tool has been used in CSR since the late 2000s by the team of the Danish study of religions scholar Uffe Schjoedt.[224] One study published in 2011 focused on research into charisma as the essential characteristic of some religious leaders. The team generally focused on the influence of the putatively charismatic person on the neural response of believers and non-believers as well as the effect on subsequent interpersonal interaction.[225] Subjects with such charismatic authority have often been projected to possess healing abilities and powers as well. The experiment itself involved 18 strongly religious Christians and 18 secular participants, all of them university students. The strength of their faith was measured using a self-report questionnaire in which the researchers queried the respondents' regarding their belief in the existence of God as well as their frequency of praying, belief in healing through prayer, and belief that some people possess healing powers. These questionnaires were received by the participants prior to the research conducted through fMRI. The word "charisma" itself was deliberately not mentioned during the entire experimental condition, as the term has various meanings in secular and Christian contexts. The word appeared in the questionnaires only after the fMRI condition to avoid inadvertent priming by this term.

During the research condition itself, the participants were placed in an fMRI scanner in which they listened to 18 recordings of various prayers delivered by three male voices. Before each individual prayer, the participants were told through headphones which of three categories the speaker belonged to: non-Christian, Christian, or Christian known for having healing powers.

In the post-questionnaire phase, the participants were asked which of the three speakers they considered the most charismatic. The Christian respondents rated the highest the speaker who they believed to possess healing powers, while the lowest score was given to the non-Christian speaker. A similar but weaker tendency was observed with the non-believer group. Similarly, the Christian participants reported feeling God's presence in all the prayers, but to a significantly

224 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma," 119–127.

225 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma," 119.

lesser extent in the prayers performed by non-Christians. The non-believer participants indicated that they did not feel the presence of God in any of the prayers.

The research results indicated significant differences in the executive[226] and social cognitive networks[227], with the executive functions including basic cognitive processes such as attentional control, cognitive inhibition, inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility.

While no significant activation was found among the non-believer participants, the Christian group measurements yielded significant differences between various speakers. With regard to the Christian group, the results confirmed a significant linear relationship between neuronal deactivation and higher evaluation of the charisma of speakers in all areas except the cerebellum. The analysis thus revealed in this group a significant increase in activity in response to a non-Christian speaker (compared to baseline) in contrast to a massive frontal deactivation in response to a Christian speaker known for his healing powers. On the level of interpersonal interaction, this deactivation may become manifest as a "handover" of the executive functions to a perceived charismatic leader. In other words, it seems as if Christian participants are less critical of a putatively charismatic Christian person than of a non-Christian, which may in turn encourage confidence in such a person. According to the authors, this significant difference is, however, not only based on knowledge about individual speakers, but also depends on the cultural framework and individual experience of an individual.

Other types of authentic studies will take us to another research paradigm, the field experiment, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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226 The critical role of executive functions is planning, creating goals, behavior regulation, and, in part, regulating social behavior and personality. See Claire Hughes, "Executive Functions," in *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Child Development*, eds. Brian Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 313–316. It should be recalled, however, that this concept comes from research in neurology and neuropsychology, and even within this research there is no consensus on the theoretical definition of the term. Another group of experts even regard the executive function as merely a neuropsychological construct. Yana Suchy, "Executive functioning: overview, assessment, and research issues for non-neuropsychologists," *Ann Behav Med*. 37 Apr, no. 2 (2009): 106–116.

227 *Social cognition* is a cognitive construct broadly referring to the cognitive processes involved in how individuals perceive, interpret, and process social information. In other words, it is a *complex network* that includes distinct components. Exploring how Social cognition components work together leads to a better understanding of how their interactions promote adequate social functioning. See Ralph Adolphs, "The neurobiology of social cognition," *Curr Opin Neurobiol*. 11, no. 2 (2001): 231–239.

3. From the Laboratory to the Field

Silvie Kotherová

Field Experiment

Another type of authentic research is represented by studies conducted directly in field conditions, mainly aimed at collecting data from participants in their "natural environment."

Festival of Lights

A primary prerequisite for research in field conditions is a good anthropological grasp of a given location, group or cultural phenomenon, such as a religious ritual. This often involves not only a close relationship as well as hours of interviews with participants, but also wide cooperation with the informants. Ongoing questionnaire surveys and interviews often significantly contribute to the research. Recent research by the Indian psychologist Purnima Singh et al.,[228] whose team attempted to test costly signaling theory (CST) in various religious communities during the Hindu festival of lights Diwali, can serve as an example of field research. In terms of CSR, this broad theory seeks to answer the following questions. Why do people engage in religious activities? Why do they carry out activities that seem pointless, which are often demanding with regard to time and resources, and also are psychologically and physically arduous? Examples of this type of behavior include initiation and extreme rituals. CST deals with cooperation and coordination within a group, in which the intentions of the members can be assumed by their commitment and willingness

[228] Purnima Singh et al., "Time Investments in Rituals Are Associated with Social Bonding, Affect and Subjective Health: a Longitudinal Study of Diwali in Two Indian Communities," *Phil. Trans. R. Soc*. B 375, no. 20190430 (June 2020): 1–10.

to sacrifice for the group.[229] This type of costly behavior is a mechanism that has evolved to protect the group from possible frauds who might enjoy group benefits without investing in the group.[230]

The team of Purnima Singh et al. chose to define the costly signal as the participant's time investment not only in the main ritual itself, but also in the preparations that precede it. They assumed that greater time investment could be a variable by which to measure greater companionship of the participant with the group performing the ritual. The researchers also analyzed whether the level of positive emotion and subjective reporting of one's own health would improve and increase on days when the community performed the main ritual. If the level of emotion depended on the time investment, then according to the authors this would represent an adaptation mechanism on the individual level. The authors assumed that the effect of the ritual would be visible not only on the level of the individual but also on a group and environmental level.

The authors chose two completely different Indian cities for their research. The first, Prayagraj, is known as a sacred city which lies near the confluences of the three sacred rivers of Hinduism (Triveni Sangam) and is the main site of Kumbha Mela, one of the largest religious pilgrimages in India. The second city chosen, Delhi, is the metropolitan and administrative center of India. These cities were chosen for their different economic and social ecologies, thus because of the different dynamics with regard to the individual and group as well as the state of the environment, the resultant effect of the ritual could be conditioned.

The study itself concerned 486 participants who were interviewed and completed questionnaires. On a five-point scale, the researchers measured mental and physical health, which was to reflect the continuous well-being of the participants. They also monitored positive and negative emotional responses using the ritual-relevant emotional experience scale. Additionally, the degree of social connectedness within the relationships with family and the Hindu community was measured, making it possible to distinguish between proximal and distant social relationships of individuals. A key role was played by encoding the time investment (in minutes) into the ritual itself and its preparations. Participants reported how much time they spent each day, e.g. cleaning their residence and

229 Richard Sosis. "Why Aren't We All Hutterites? Costly Signalling Theory and Religious Behavior." *Human Nature* 14, no. 2 (2003): 91–127.

230 William Irons, "Religion as a Hard-to-Fake Sign of Commitment," in *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment*, eds. Randolph M. Nesse (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), 292–309.

decorating it, preparing meals, buying things needed to perform the ritual Puja, buying gifts for friends and family, and spending time with them. As a control category, the researchers used the typical daily general religious activities of prayer at home, going to a temple and preparation of the ritual Puja.

The results demonstrated the positive effects of the ritual on social ties as well as perceived health and mood, with these factors proving highest on the main day of the festival. The effects of ritual engagement on the moods of the participants were also observed before the main day of the festival. The patterns of the social relationships were similar in the two conditions examined in the two dissimilar cities. This, according to the authors, suggests that the Diwali festival promotes social cohesion across different social and economic environments. The individual emotional experience of those in the cosmopolitan environment of the city of Delhi showed to be less powerful, however, than that of the study participants in the traditional city of Prayagraj.

Self-presentation

While this research on the festival of Diwali is certainly interesting in terms of adaptive-cultural theories, the study weaknesses, which lie in the methodology itself, should also be mentioned. The main limit of the study, as the authors themselves mention, is that it is based almost entirely on the self-reports of the participants. The research did not track the interaction between the individual participants of the ritual and their interactions, nor did it include other behavioral or physiological measurements that could verify the validity of the discovered behavioral and social dynamics.

If a study relies only on the answers of participants in questionnaires and on interviews, it is crucial to keep in mind that these data do not necessarily correspond to the actual behavior of the sample examined. As some research shows, religious people, like study populations in general, are often more likely to present themselves in a better light.[231] This is a natural manifestation of our tendency to see ourselves better in our own eyes as well as to present ourselves more positively to others (self-enhancement). This is connected with attempts to fulfill the positive expectations of our surroundings in relation to our person

[231] Ara Norenzayan, and Azim F. Shariff, "The Origin and Evolution of Religious Prosociality," Science 322, no. 5898 (2008): 58–62; Dimitris Xygalatas, "Effects of Religious Setting on Cooperative Behavior: A Case Study from Mauritius," *Religion, Brain and Behavior* 3, no. 2 (2013): 91–102.

(*social desirability bias*). These tendencies also show themselves in the answers of survey respondents and informants, i.e. researchers are more likely to learn how respondents perceive themselves and want to be perceived rather than to obtain reliable information regarding their everyday attitudes and behaviors.[232] For this reason, when conducting all research depending on self-reporting, especially research on religion,[233] it is desirable to involve physiological or behavioral measurements which are not as subject to these tendencies.

Fire Walking

As mentioned above, while field research is limited by the mobility of measuring instruments, this does not mean that field research can be conducted only with the help of questionnaires and interviews. This can be illustrated by research conducted in 2011 by the neuroscientist Ivana Konvalinka and her team,[234] who examining the effects of the Spanish fire walking ritual using portable heart-rate monitors. The aim of this study was to quantify at a physiological level the effect of this collective ritual on the social cohesion of the group. The research involved 38 participants, 28 of whom walked over a red-hot "carpet" of embers with a surface temperature of 677 °C. Continuous heart rate data was recorded from three groups of participants: 1) 12 participants walking on embers; 2) 9 spectators who were either relatives or friends of at least one of the "firewalkers"; and 3) 17 spectators who had no relation to the participants of the ritual. Each participant wore a mobile chest band that recorded the average heart rate at 5 second intervals. Each walk on the hot embers took about 4 to 5 seconds, which corresponded to one data point.[235]

A qualitative look at the data showed that the heart rate of the participants who walked on the hot embers had a typical "signature," with a high peak

232 Robert J. Fisher, "Social Desirability Bias and the Validity of Indirect Questioning," *Journal of Consumer Research* 20, no. 2 (September 1993): 303–315.

233 Will M Gervais, and Ara Norenzayan, "Like a Camera in the Sky?: Thinking about God Increases Public Self Awareness and Socially Desirable Responding," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, no. 1 (2012): 298–302; Douglas E. Trimble, "The Religious Orientation Scale: Review and Meta-Analysis of Social Desirability Effects," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 57, no. 6 (1997): 970–986.

234 Ivana Konvalinka et al., "Synchronized Arousal," 8514–8519.

235 Ivana Konvalinka et al., "Synchronized Arousal," 8515.

distributed around walking on embers itself.[236] This signature, however, was not only noticeable with the firewalkers, but also with their relatives among the spectators, whose heart rates peaked at the moment when their relatives and friends were walking over the hot embers. The scientists thus discovered a spontaneous synchronization of the heart rate of the related spectators, not only during the actual walking over the embers, but also during other ceremonies. This synchronization was not confirmed with the spectators unconnected with the members of the community who participated in the ritual.

This research demonstrated how valuable physiological measurements are either used separately or in unison with questionnaire surveys. Physiological data are able to provide us with not only subjectively unbiased information, but also with potentially new discoveries. It is essential to keep in mind, however, that conducting studies like these that measure religious practices and experiences under natural conditions requires extensive preparation which extends well beyond the experiment itself.

The difficulties which researchers face in field conditions are perhaps even more considerable than in laboratory conditions. One of these potential complications concerns finding a way to measure theoretically interesting aspects of religious behavior at the physiological level. Once a researcher chooses instrument measurement in field conditions, the investigator often faces the challenge of skewed data caused by the natural environment itself. Eliminating the interference of various influences and noise that can distort the data is extremely challenging outside the laboratory. Another compromise the researcher must often account for is the lower quality of the data measured caused by the lower resolving power of mobile devices.[237] This does not mean, however, that the measured data is of no value at all, but the use of specific instruments and advanced equipment necessarily requires the accompanying skills to use them.

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236 This synchronization was quantified using cross-recurrence quantification analysis (CRQA) on the paired data of the participants. This is a non-linear method which allows for the quantification of dynamic systems and their trajectories. With this method, the researchers were able to capture many of the properties of heart rate dynamics which would otherwise be lost with more traditional correlation analysis due to the averaging usually involved. See Ivana Konvalinka et al., "Synchronized Arousal," 8515–8516.

237 For example portable EEG as compared to stationary EEG.

Big Gods and Cheating

As mentioned above, the existing research in CRS has mostly been conducted in a laboratory using a student sample from the WEIRD population. Despite many interesting and valuable findings from research relying solely on respondents acculturated in the Western Judeo-Christian cultural and religious context, it is still impossible to generalize these results across other cultures and societies. Additionally, these samples represent historically the least typical sample of human culture[238] and are thus particularly unsuitable for testing generally valid evolutionary hypotheses.[239] This is the very reason why in recent years cognitive and evolutionary approaches to religion have shifted to more ecological and more methodologically robust forms of experimentation, often by transferring laboratory methods to the field.[240]

One such research project is that of the team of the Greek anthropologist Dimitris Xygalatas which was conducted on the island of Mauritius.[241] This locale was chosen precisely because it is one of the most diverse societies in the world, with a population composed of many linguistic, ethnic and religious groups.[242] One could argue that it is the exact opposite of the monolithic society of the WEIRD population. The conditions on Mauritius thus offered an ideal environment for testing evolutionary models of prosociality and the relationship between religion and morality. In order to test their hypotheses, the researchers chose the most widespread religion on the island, Hinduism (49 %), which is practiced in various ways by diverse Indo-Mauritian groups of the population. The study itself was preceded by two years of anthropological work by the lead author which enabled the creation of a network of informants and key collaborators and assistants from the community researched. This allowed for meeting the extraordinary requirements of the study, such as gaining access to both private and public places.

238 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People".

239 Ara Norenzayan et al., "The Cultural Evolution of Prosocial Religions." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, (2016), 1–65, 2.

240 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Big Gods in Small Places: The Random Allocation Game in Mauritius." *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, (2017): 1–19, 2.

241 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Big Gods in Small Places".

242 Tade O. Okediji, "The Dynamics of Ethnic Fragmentation. A Proposal for an Expanded Measurement Index," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64, no. 2 (2005): 637–662.

The main hypothesis of the research was supported precisely by the cultural-evolutionary theory as to whether religion can play an adaptive role and lead to prosocial behavior, with the authors assuming that prosocial behavior would be positively influenced by the presence of faith in moralizing and punitive big gods.[243] Practices associated with costly signaling, wider socio-economic factors (e.g. material welfare) and the influence of the immediate religious environment were also monitored.[244] The experiment itself involved 100 Hindus who were recruited on the street by trained local assistants. A behavioral economics tool called the Random Allocation Game (RAG) was used to investigate the supposed relationship between religion and anti-social behavior, in this case cheating in the game. The RAG was accompanied by a questionnaire survey investigating the degree of belief, frequency of ritual participation, nature of different deities and types of ritual, socioeconomic status of the participant as well as contextual and environmental influences.

The Random Allocation Game was played in two versions, with the game working the same way in both, beginning with two cups placed in front of the participant. In one version, one cup is labeled "Me" and the other is labeled "Co-religionist [from a distant village]." In the second version, one cup is labeled "Fellow-believer [from a distant village]" and the other "Co-religionist [from the same village]." The participant then receives a six-sided die with three white sides and three black sides as well as an amount of money to divide and place into both cups. The amount is divided according to the following method. Before the die roll, the player determines in his mind which container they would like to put the money into, then the die roll follows. If the black color comes up, the player puts the money into the container they determined before the roll. If white comes up, the player puts the money into the other container than the one they determined before the roll. The participant continues in the same way until the entire amount at their disposal is distributed. The original decision as to where to place the money is known only to the participant themselves, which enables the option of cheating.[245] At least according to the authors, the belief in moralizing gods who are omniscient and control the moral behavior

243 Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

244 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Big Gods in Small Places," 2.

245 Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Big Gods in Small Places," 7.

of an individual should have the effect of reducing the level of cheating and should instead encourage honest behavior. Priming by environment was used to recall the presence of the "big god." Participants played the game described above in experimental- religious conditions and in control-secular conditions. The religious environment was a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Kali and the secular place was a restaurant. After playing the game in those two conditions, the participant was taken to a third location to fill out questionnaires. The results then showed that people believing in the big moralizing gods cheated significantly less and thus exhibited more prosocial behavior.[246]

Not All Fields Are the Same

Field experiment thus seems to be the ideal approach for examining religious manifestations. It is important, however, to mention something about the problems associated directly with experiments in natural conditions. Field experiments often entail insufficient randomization of the sample of the population studied. The researcher is thus often confronted with the fact that only a specific group of people in a certain place at a certain time is recruited to the experimental conditions. This may mean that if we recruit participants in the morning hours, the population studied is predominantly mothers on maternity leave and unemployed respondents, certainly not a representative sample of the population. Researchers are thus forced to recruit participants throughout the day so that the broadest and most diverse population possible has the opportunity to participate in the study. Snowballing, a method which involves the approached participant recruiting other subjects interested in participation into the experiment, is also not a completely appropriate way of obtaining participants. This method generally results in recruiting only the friends of the participant, who often have a very similar way of thinking and the same socioeconomic background. While this form of participant recruiting is not entirely ideal, it occurs frequently and is often necessary in field conditions. In other words, the problems of selecting a representative sample of the population are not only linked to the WEIRD population, but also to the possibility of recruiting an ideal sample, or at least a representative one.

Every researcher who chooses to conduct their research study in a natural environment should also prepare for the fact that, unlike under laboratory

[246] Dimitris Xygalatas et al., "Big Gods in Small Places," 14.

conditions, there will be very *low control over the environment* in the field, i.e. control over variables which enter the experimental procedure and influence the outcome of the study. This often complicates the course and continuity of the experiment. The team of Dimitris Xygalatas on Mauritius faced the same problem when they discovered that the Hindu population there has a different perception of space and distance. What the researchers considered to be a short distance, the local population considered a distance difficult to travel. This had an impact on the organization and logistics of the study linked to moving participants into the various conditions. The researchers were thus forced to transport a substantial part of the population to the conditions by cars, which led to an increase in the time and logistics requirements of the study.

Another problem associated with field research is the *control over information* which is shared among participants about their own behavior and decisions in the study. When conducting a laboratory experiment, we can afford to isolate individual participants so that no information about the research is spread among them. This situation is very difficult to achieve, however, in a natural environment. If an experiment is conducted in a specific location, e.g. a town or a village, it is very probable that word of the experiment and its course will spread very quickly. The risk lies in the possibility of a collective strategy being developed which would lead to a reduction of individual variability in behavior and decision-making. Preventing the formation of such groups is, however, very difficult, especially in societies which are strongly community-based and intertwined in personal ties. The only remaining possibility for the research team in a situation like this is to therefore attempt to conduct the experiment as quickly as possible and conduct the study before the local population is completely contaminated with shared information about the ongoing study.

The limited possibility to generalize the obtained results is another phenomenon related to research on a culturally specific population. If the research was done on the Hindu population in Mauritius, we cannot infer the results of that research to other ethnicities, cultures or societies. This fact puts the project in a similar situation as if the research was conducted on the WEIRD population. In other words, the solution is not always to do research on a small specific group which is too distinctive to be representative of the entire population of a given society. Thus, at the very beginning of the research plan, the investigators must consider carefully what their research sample-population will consist of. The only possibility of generalizing such data is to take part in the work of an

international team of researchers who conduct similar studies in diverse field conditions around the world. This was also the case for the Mauritian study, which was part of a larger project with a total of 591 participants conducted in a variety of locations around the world such as Vanuatu, Fiji; Brazil, Mauritius, Russia and Tanzania.[247,248]

And What Now?

The aim of this study was to begin to demonstrate the complexity of cognitive research on religion, along with its main paradigm in the form of an experiment. Clearly, cognitive science can provide contemporary study of religions with many innovative and interesting tools for exploring the phenomenon of religion. The contribution does not lie only in individual methods and measuring instruments but also in a sea change in the view of the traditional study of religious phenomena, e.g. religion as a sui generis category, into the view of religion as consisting of individual quantifiable phenomena which occur every day and can be explored experimentally in the same way as other attitudes, beliefs and practices can be studied. Along with the use of new methodologies, this change in perspective is a key prerequisite for religionistic exploration to advance to the empirical level that is presumed in the scientific method. The cognitive science of religion has taken this major step, reaching a point where it grew from the research practices of a small group of "enthusiastic scientists" into a full-fledged discipline.

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247 Benjamin G. Purzycki et al., "Moralistic Gods, Supernatural Punishment and the Expansion of Human Sociality," *Nature* 530, (2016): 327–330.

248 A more recent version of this experiment was a study conducted by Martin Lang et al, who examined 15 diverse populations using the Random Allocation Game and the Dictator Game. The researchers tested the hypothesis of whether the belief in punishing intervening gods (Moralizing God) facilitated the spread of cooperative behavior toward geographically distant co-religionists. Another hypothesis concerned whether this expansion of cooperation would come at the expense of one's own religious group. The results confirmed that the more participants rated their deities as punishing and intervening, the more they tended to reduce resources (finances) for the local group, and in turn they increased resources to the benefit of distant co-religionists. The effects of punishing and intervening gods on group allocation, however, revealed variability among localities. The authors interpret this variability as indicating that in the absence of animosity among religious groups moralizing gods can implicate cooperative behavior even toward outgroups. For more information, see Martin Lang et al., "Moralizing Gods, Impartiality and Religious Parochialism Across 15 Societies," *Proc. R. Soc. B*, (2019): 286: 20190202. http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.0202

How do practitioners of CSR communicate, however, with its surroundings from this new position? Should CSR researchers seek greater integration into other broader areas of religion research, as has been proposed by Uffe Schjoedt and Armin Geertz?[249] If we take the example of historical research, it might seem at that experimental methodologies of the cognitive sciences would be very difficult to employ in this area. The work of Edward Slingerland and Maciej Chudek,[250] however, has demonstrated that contemporary cognitive science insights can be not only useful in exploring and interpreting historical religious texts, but even crucial. Uffe Schjoedt's research on the power of charisma associated with healing abilities[251] may also uncover the mechanisms behind Christian witness accounts of healing, a traditional genre in religious literature.[252] This is only one example of how integrating cognitive approaches into broader areas of research might prove beneficial.

Should CSR investigators then continue to attempt to "persuade the broader community of its applicability"?[253] This effort seems more typical of a small, even insecure, group of "enthusiastic scientists" trying somehow to convince practitioners of older and more established sciences such as history or psychology. Through its research, by establishing new institutions and laboratories, as well as through impacted journals, CSR has shown that this position is no longer appropriate. The current CSR can be free of the uncertainties associated with the inadequacy of its research tools, closely linked to religionistic research development. The CSR has found its research tool; the experiment became the cornerstone of its applicability, which even the broader scientific community may use.

Is the future of CSR therefore in multidisciplinarity?[254] Terms such as interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity are still based on the old model of dividing scientific disciplines into separate and specific fields of

249 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 66.

250 Edward Slingerland and Maciej Chudek, "The Prevalence of Folk Dualism".

251 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma".

252 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 67.

253 "CSR Needs to Persuade the Broader Community of its Applicability," Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 68.

254 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 68. Multidisciplinarity is the combination or involvement of several academic disciplines or expert specialties in an approach to a topic or problem.

knowledge. It is essential to keep in mind, however, that no area of research exists in its own vacuum. Moreover, separating areas of knowledge into disciplines often brings considerable rivalry, isolation and limitation. The mosaic complex of disciplines has diverse languages of individual disciplines at its disposal as well as different levels of focus. This fact frequently causes researchers in seemingly divergent fields to fail to recognize that they are in fact often looking at the same problem.[255] CSR itself, with its ethos of intertwining different approaches in its research, has in some ways outgrown "disciplinarity." It seems that rather than towards multidisciplinarity, CSR aim towards a kind of anti-disciplinarity, a tendency also visible in the very development of CSR, through which it has absorbed an increasing number of areas of research interests and methodologies. One can also see this tendency in the current name change of the most important institution bringing together researchers in CSR, the International Association for the Cognitive Sciences in Religion, which reflects this expansion to evolutionary approaches CSR has thus gradually transformed into the Cognitive and Evolutionary Science of Religion, implicitly encompassing a variety of disciplines (anthropology, history, study of religions, psychology, neuroscience, biology, sociology, economics, and other fields.[256]

255 Joichi Ito, "Design and Science," *Journal of Design and Science*, (2016). https://doi.org/10.21428/f4c68887

256 This tendency is not unique, however, and we see it in other fields as well. Digital humanities, for example.

An Anthropological Perspective in the Study of Religions

4. Religion as the Subject of Cultural-anthropological Studies and Their Historical Context

Jakub Havlíček

The aim of this chapter is to present the study of religions from the point of view of cultural and social anthropology. The primary aim is to explain in what ways the anthropological study of religion is specific and how it is distinguished from the related social sciences focused on non-theological study of religion, study of religions or sociology of religion. My intention is not to provide a comprehensive, exhaustive overview of the history of the cultural-anthropological study of religion, but to present anthropology of religion as a self-contained discipline of cultural and social anthropology.

From this perspective, anthropology of religion has its specific characteristics. It encompasses a significantly defined subject or field of study, these being socio-cultural phenomena that are classified as religious. Anthropology of religion also has a research tradition, a history of the cultural-anthropological exploration of religion. Within this research tradition, anthropology of religion is also characterized by those theoretical concepts and methodological approaches on which the culturally anthropological exploration of religion is based. Anthropology of religion is also characterized by a distinct institutional and organizational background.

Anthropology of religion is concerned with the scholarly study of religion, or more precisely of religiously interpreted phenomena. Anthropology of religion treats these as socio-cultural constructs, i.e. always in relation to the particular socio-cultural contexts in which the examined religiously interpreted phenomena occur. Cultural anthropology shares this basic approach to the study of religion with other scholarly disciplines, particularly study of religions as well as sociology of religion. Anthropology of religion shares with these specializations not only the field of study itself, but also several theoretical-methodological tools. Despite the close interconnectedness of the social sciences which study religion, certain

features concerning the epistemological, theoretical and methodological level can be associated particularly with the anthropology of religion.

The interconnectedness of anthropology of religion with related scholarly disciplines is simple to spot if concrete examples of researchers and their work are explored. The work of Mary Douglas, which will be more closely explored below, can be cited as an example of the interconnectedness of scientific disciplines studying religious-related phenomena. The results of her research are mentioned primarily in relation to anthropology, but are also relevant to the sociology of religion, study of religions as well as biblical studies. Douglas herself focused on the current situations in both religiously interpreted phenomena and their historical forms.

Social sciences, including anthropology of religion, view religiously interpreted phenomena, i.e. facts, experiences and norms,[257] as socio-cultural constructs, and the very concept of religion is abstract from a scientific point of view. Religion, religious phenomena, or, more precisely, their conceptualization, have been explored by social sciences in the words of Immanuel Kant, as "composite concepts" ("gedichtete Begriffe," literally "poetic concepts," or "invented concepts").[258] In *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant comments on these terms: "(...) cannot acquire the character of their possibility *a priori*, (...) but *a posteriori*, as ones given through experience itself, and their possibility must either be cognized *a posteriori* and empirically or not cognized at all."[259]

Thus, from a social science perspective, none of the phenomena examined is "religious" in and of itself. If we were to speak of religion as a research abstraction, one might recall an apt summary by the religious historian Jonathan Z. Smith: "(...) while there is a staggering amount of data, of phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religious – *there is no data for religion*. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization."[260]

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257 Jacques Waardenburg, *Bohové zblízka. Systematický úvod do religionistiky* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Georgetown, 1997), 10–15 (originally published as id., *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986]).

258 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 323–324, A222–223/B269–270.

259 Ibid.: 324, A222/B269 (italics in the original text).

260 Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining religion. From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of

The phenomenon examined can be interpreted as "religious" on the basis of an emic[261] perspective, from the point of view of the participants examined in the relevant socio-cultural context, or from the etic point of view of the researcher and his or her theoretical-methodological tools. In the end, the definition as well as the study of specific socio-cultural phenomena as religious always depends on the researcher. Such a point of view, however, may be far from being universally accepted among experts. In contrast, as a result of the reflexive turn linked to epistemological criticism in cultural anthropology in particular, and in the social sciences in general, this point of view is often strongly rejected.[262] It is precisely an emic perspective which is fundamental and under all circumstances decisive for an anthropologist.[263] Nevertheless, it will become apparent that within the environment of anthropology of religion itself there are also views that attempt to overcome the discrepancy between the emphasis on the emic and the etic perspectives.[264]

The distinctions among the various disciplines of social science studying religion are often very subtle. They may, for example, depend on the way in which questions are asked in particular research, or on the use of certain theoretical concepts contextually linked to a particular area of social science. For instance, if a researcher is exploring the subject of secularization, his or her work may be classified within the field of sociology of religion, but this does not necessarily mean that the same researcher cannot use methods more frequently associated with cultural anthropology such as field research based on participant observation. It is not infrequent to encounter works on the subject of religion

Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

261 Emic concepts and descriptions are based exclusively on examinations of the socio-cultural context, with the source of the concepts being the perspective of the socio-cultural environment examined. The so-called etic conceptualization and description utilizes the concepts and categories of the relevant scientific discipline.

262 Examples can be found below.

263 For further details, see Jakub Havlíček, "Existuje v Japonsku náboženství? Kategorie náboženství a postmoderní kritika v sociálních vědách," *Religio* 21, no. 2 (2013): 163–188.

264 Among others, one possible solution is the concept of symmetrical anthropology proposed by Bruno Latour. See Milan Fujda, "Connecting Fitzgerald and Latour for the Sake of Democratic Religious Studies," *Implicit Religion* 22, no. 3–4 (2020): 391–412. Cf. Tomáš Kobes, *Panenko Skákavá! Módy existence paměti* (Červený Kostelec. Pavel Mervart, 2018); Petra Tlčimuková, "Duše předmětu a tělo modlitby aneb zkoumání sociologických nejistot na případu Sóka Gakkai International," *Sociální studia* 17, no. 2 (2020): 53–69.

which are classified as sociological but which employ approaches as well as methods associated with cultural anthropology. In contrast, anthropological works routinely employ a theoretical-methodological framework primarily associated with sociology. The works of some Czech researchers in the fields of study of religions and sociology of religion, which are largely based on methods associated with cultural anthropological research, may serve as an example.

The sociologist Jan Váně based his work "Community as a New Hope"[265] on, among other methodologies, ethnographic research within Catholic lay communities. The sociologist Dušan Lužný and the study of religions scholar Milan Fujda coauthored a work on the Hare Krishna movement in which qualitative research methods frequently linked to anthropology of religion were also widely applied.[266] A more recent research example is the work of a collective of researchers associated with the Laboratory for Experimental Religious Research (LEVYNA) at the Department for the Study of Religions of Masaryk University in Brno, which also derive their theoretical-methodological profile from a cultural-anthropological examination of religion.[267] There are many more such works exploring religion which cross the boundaries of mutually related scholarly disciplines, both in the Czech and international academic environments. Classifications into a particular scholarly discipline is often determined by factors such as the institutional affiliation of the researcher.

Despite this general interdependence among related scholarly disciplines, specifics of anthropology of religion have been identified which themselves can be considered self-contained social science disciplines. Certain scholars have employed theories and methods linked to cultural anthropology as an established scientific discipline in terms of the context of their creation and use. Anthropology of religion has achieved these theoretical-methodological bases throughout the historical context of its formation, a context which will be discussed further below. An attempt will now be made to answer the question

265 Jan Váně, *Komunita jako nová naděje? Náboženské (ne)institucionalizované komunity z pohledu sociologie náboženství* (Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita, 2012).

266 Milan Fujda and Dušan Lužný, *Oddaní Kršny. Hnutí Haré Kršna v pohledu sociálních věd* (Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita, 2010).

267 See, for example, Martin Lang, Jan Krátký, and Dimitris Xygalatas, "The Role of Ritual Behaviour in Anxiety Reduction: An Investigation of Marathi Religious Practices in Mauritius," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 375, no. 1805 (2020): 20190431.

as to whether and how the epistemological foundations of the anthropology of religion as a self-contained area of study can be defined.

The Epistemological Foundations of Anthropology of Religion

The American historian Ronald J. Takaki defines epistemology[268] in general as the critical thinking ability to ask oneself the question: "How do you know that you know what you know?"[269] Thus, what is fundamental to the epistemology of the exploration of religion by social sciences, and to the epistemology of anthropology of religion in particular, is not so much the actual knowledge of religiously interpreted facts, experiences and norms, but rather how we acquire knowledge about them. The epistemological principles of anthropology of religion will be articulated beginning with the principles of the cultural-anthropological study of religion based the work of the American anthropologist Jack D. Eller. Six principles of anthropology of religion in total are defined[270] which can be viewed as its epistemological principles:

1. **Diversity and plurality of religious or, more precisely, religiously-interpreted phenomena: virtually any socio-cultural phenomena can be linked to the concept of religion in various socio-cultural environments.** An anthropologist of religion is aware that there is no religiously interpreted phenomenon that would define any sort of "norm" for religion in general. The concepts which are usually associated with religion, such as "faith," "sacredness," or "god," may be completely irrelevant in other socio-cultural environments. In various socio-cultural contexts, emphasis can be placed on a range of different religiously interpreted facts, experiences and norms.
2. **Diversity and plurality in the very conceptualizations of individual religious traditions, in which questions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy become**

268 Ronald J. Takaki, "Multiculturalism as a Cornerstone of Being in the 21st Century. A Historical Perspective," in *The SAGE Handbook of Child Development, Multiculturalism, and Media*, eds. Joy K. Asamen, Mesha L. Ellis, Gordon L. Berry (London: SAGE, 2008), 3–15.

269 Ibid.: 3–4.

270 Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion. Culture to the Ultimate* (New York: Routledge, 2007): xiii–xiv. I will try to develop Eller's key issues further, after which in my view the epistemological principles of the anthropology of religion can be delineated more precisely.

relative concepts. For anthropology of religion, no interpretation of a particular religiously interpreted phenomenon is the only correct or possible one, because it takes into account the plurality of perspectives of the different members of the socio-cultural environment examined when obtaining and analyzing data. Anthropology of religion is based on the premise that in various socio-cultural contexts it is possible to discover ways in which, or why, the participants lay claim to the "truth."[271] An anthropologist studies how and why specific participants promote "their" interpretation of the phenomena examined. Using primarily the methodology of qualitative research, an anthropologist of religion is aware that, based on the points of views of different participants, specific religiously interpreted phenomena can be perceived with often radically different, even completely contradictory, meanings which these participants present as "true." An anthropologist of religion does not decide which information is "correct" or "true." Within the framework of their theoretical-methodological procedures, an anthropologist treats the information obtained as data which they analyze on the basis of established analytical procedures. In terms of the methodological processes used, they take into account questions about the validity and reliability of their research and consider general questions as to the credibility of the research. They ask questions about the credibility of the research results with regard to the selection of participants, or how the participants themselves view the "truthfulness" of their claims, whether the findings correspond to established methods and techniques of data acquisition and analysis, whether these methods correspond to the topic and questions of the research, whether the results are verifiable and the findings repeatable in similar or different contexts and with different participants, as well as whether and how the socio-cultural context of the researchers themselves

271 One can talk of the methodological relativization of truth, while putting aside the philosophical question of the nature of "reality" and "objectivity". The perspectivistic interpretation of truth or reality is based on the work of Michel Foucault (*The Archaeology of Knowledge,* [New York: Routledge, 2002]) – see Glyn Winter, "A Comparative Discussion of the Notion of "Validity" in Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *The Qualitative Report* 4, no. 3–4 (2000), 1–14; Greg Seals, "Objectively Yours, Michel Foucault," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 1 (1998): 59–66. Cf. Juliet Corbin, Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (London: SAGE, 2015), 341–368 (chapter "Criteria for Evaluation").

is manifested in the research, in its results, etc.[272] An anthropologist of religion may learn, for example, certain information about a religiously interpreted phenomenon from a religious expert, such as a priest. They may consequently learn additional information contradicting the previous data from an ordinary participant in the research. This situation is common in research. An anthropologist of religion does not automatically give greater importance to the information received from a religious expert, clergy, etc., and does not underestimate or reject the information provided by a lay or ordinary rank participant in research as "incorrect." The anthropologist is aware of the plurality of perspectives of the various participants "within" the examined religious traditions. The awareness of diversity and plurality in religious traditions themselves can be linked to the aspects of normative and real-life religion.[273] The normative side represents what the participants themselves consider the correct forms of religiously interpreted facts, experiences and norms, while the real-life aspect represents more what the participants actually do. The anthropologist of religion is aware not only that the conceptualization of the normative side of religion can vary considerably in the perspective of various participants, but that it can also differ fundamentally from the real-life forms of religion of those participants.

3. **A holistic approach in which every single religiously interpreted phenomenon needs to be studied not only in relation to a specific but also to a general socio-cultural context.** Individual religiously interpreted phenomena can be understood only when they are examined in relation to the entire socio-cultural environment in question. Cultural anthropology is often described as a science rooted in methodological holism. In other words, the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. A member of a socio-cultural environment is fundamentally influenced by the overall context in which they operate. The examined phenomenon must therefore be viewed in relation to the relevant socio-cultural environment as a whole. Other approaches in cultural anthropology, however, are based on methodological

272 See Michelle K. McGinn, "Credibility," in *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, Volume 1., eds. Albert J. Mills, Gabriell Durepos, Elden Wiebe (London: SAGE, 2010), 242–244.

273 Cf. Jacques Waardenburg, "Official and Popular Religion as a Problem in Islamic Studies," in *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies*, eds. Pieter H. Vrijhof, Jacques Waardenburg (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 340–386. Waardenburg sees the real-life religion as having "actual" and "normative" dimensions.

individualism, i.e. based on the premise that the subjective motivations and dispositions of an individual participant determine the formation of the overall socio-cultural context. The history of cultural anthropology usually presents research based on methodological holism, which serves as the basis for the theoretical perspectives of structuralism, functionalism and configurationism. Conversely, methodological individualism is linked, for example, to the transactionalism of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, in which an emphasis is placed on the individual characteristics and motivations of the various participants shaping the socio-cultural environment as a whole.[274]

4. **Modularity of religion or religiously interpreted phenomena, through which every phenomenon associated with religion can also have a non-religious aspect, for example, an act classified as a "ritual," can be encountered both in religious and non-religious contexts.** The classification of a particular phenomenon as either "religious" or "religiously interpreted" makes it possible to consider the subject of study as part of the anthropology of religion. The fact that an anthropologist of religion identifies a particular phenomenon as "religious" is essentially the result of a synthesis of the emic and etic perspectives on the phenomenon in question. Making use of research methods, an anthropologist identifies concepts and relations in which the participants or proponents of a given socio-cultural environment perceive the phenomenon under analysis. This process reflects the emic perspective. In studying the particular phenomenon, they also apply the theoretical and methodological procedures of cultural anthropology in particular and social sciences in general, together with concepts which are the scientific "tools" of an anthropologist. This process reflects the etic perspective. The result can also be that an anthropologist examines a given phenomenon as "religious" with regard to its overall context without the participants themselves explicitly interpreting it as "religious." The anthropologist cannot, however, act arbitrarily, but must respect the methodological procedures of cultural anthropology as a scholarly discipline, including the ethical principles of scientific work. The results of their research will not

274 Cf. Carl Ratner, "Methodological Holism Versus Individualism," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Volumes 1 & 2., ed. Lisa M. Given (London: SAGE, 2008), 513–516. Nigel Rapport, Joanna Overing, "Methodological Individualism and Holism," in *Social and Cultural Anthropology. The Key Concepts*, ed. eosdem (London: Routledge, 2000), 249–257.

then be a manifestation of ethnocentrism or outright cultural imperialism, interpretations which introduce their own categories and concepts to different socio-cultural environments in an unreflective way. This environment is simply evaluated by means of conceptualization tools of the particular anthropologist.

5. **The question of language and linguistic conceptualizations of religiously interpreted phenomena in which certain terminology is linked to a particular sociolinguistic context**. Certain terms and associated concepts such as "faith," "prayer," "god," "soul," but also "religion" are linked to certain meanings in our (i.e. Western, Euro-American) environment which stem from Christianity. In different socio-cultural contexts, actors may not embrace the same meanings, or analogies may not exist at all.
6. **The local and practical aspect of religiously interpreted phenomena linked to the changeability of these phenomena over time.** Religiously interpreted phenomena are not static but dynamic, i.e. they are vibrant phenomena which are subject to change with respect to local and temporal contexts. Anthropology of religion places an emphasis on studies in a practical, "real-life," local context. It does not avoid the perspective of religious authorities, but usually emphasizes the study of religiously interpreted phenomena from the perspective of participants who can be described as "common believers."

It cannot be said that these characteristics or principles of anthropological study of religion are not found in other fields of study of social science dealing with religions. In general terms, however, it can be argued that these are self-contained features of anthropology of religion. Anthropology of religion provides detailed insights into the particularities associated with religion in a specific socio-cultural environment. Major emphasis is placed on the emic perspective and description, i.e. the "insider" view of the socio-cultural environment examined, highlighting the perspective of the examined participants. From a methodological point of view, it also includes a reflexive aspect which attempts to take into account as much as possible the influence of the researcher's socio-cultural environment on the course and results of the anthropological examination of religion.

Anthropology of religion makes possible the study of a specific phenomenon both in depth and in detail at the micro level of a given socio-cultural environment. One example of such a cultural-anthropological study carried out on a very detailed scale is Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami. Portrait of a Moroccan*,[275] from 1980. This is an experimental interpretive ethnography based on interviews with a single participant, a Moroccan worker who according to his own interpretation became the husband of a camel-legged demoness. Although this consists of the anthropologist's intersubjective insights into the world of his informant (with the participation of the anthropologist's field assistant), the work does not avoid general questions about the nature of truth and reality.[276] Crapanzano's work is, above all, methodologically unique. This can still be viewed, however, as an example of an anthropological work which due to its subject matter falls within the domain of anthropology of religion, and which, with its interpretative hermeneutic approach, demonstrates certain specific modalities of the culturally anthropological study of religions.

An Example of Applying the Epistemological Principles of Anthropology of Religion

Finding a socio-cultural phenomenon that cannot under certain circumstances be religiously interpreted would be difficult. A concrete example of studying such a potentially problematic phenomenon applying the epistemological principles of anthropology to religion is discussed below.

In his 1991 book Religion in Contemporary Japan,[277] the study of religions scholar Ian Reader describes an interesting case he encountered in his field research. He makes mention of a shop selling herbal remedies for hearing problems on a street leading to the Ishikiri Tsurugiya shrine in Osaka.[278] Next to

275 Vincent Crapanzano, *Tuhami. Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

276 Cf. Toshiko Sakamoto, "Writing Culture: The Dynamics and Ambiguity of Ethnographic Production," *Ritsumeikan Social Sciences Review* 40, no. 4 (2005): 1–17.

277 Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 53.

278 Reader photographed the location in 1987. Upon returning in 2011, he discovered that neither the shop nor the nearby shrine exist any longer (see Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, "Street Diviners and Healers," (not dated), https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/photo-archive/nc-image/298/ [18. 9. 2020].

the shop was a desolate plot of land in which passers-by often used to relieve themselves. In an attempt to prevent this undesirable act, the shop-owner modified this unattractive locale, setting up a small pond and placing two large stones in it. He joined with a *shimenawa* rope, which is usually used in shrines to denote a ritually pure space associated with *kami* deities. He was correct in assuming that no one would dare pollute a place marked with such an object. *Shimenawa*, with strips of paper folded into the shape of a lightning bolt called a shide, usually denotes a place that is in a state of purity or ritually purified (*harae*), free of impurities or defilement (*kegare*), both physically and, more importantly, in the spiritual or religious sense of the word. Places where a deity (*kami*) is present are also frequently marked in this manner.[279] What finally came about, however, was much more than the merchant seemed to have intended. People began to leave small coins at the location as a sacrifice to the deity, asking the merchant what deity was actually worshiped there and what its *riyaku* (areas of beneficence) were. The merchant placed a chest for financial sacrifices in the newly built sacred space, customary in shrines, and informed passers-by that a deity resided there who provided aid with hearing conditions. Thus a locale that had once been polluted by passers-by became a religiously interpreted space under these particular circumstances. Its creation was linked to the actions of a particular participant, this being a shop-owner who was trying to prevent the pollution of the adjoining area and who then used the addition of a formative religious aspect to promote his medicinal business. There is also a connection to the wider socio-cultural context of the area. The *kami* linked to nearby Ishikiri Tsurugiya are revered mostly because of their ability to help people recover from a disease.[280] The whole case can be related to an essential feature of real-life everyday religiosity in Japan which focuses on the concept of the *genze riyaku*, "this-worldly benefits," and on addressing normal life situations through religious activity,[281]in this case in relation to the alleviation of hearing problems. The example provided by Reader demonstrates that presumably any human activity, in this case, an effort to prevent the pol-

279 Stuart D. B. Picken, *Historical Dictionary of Shinto* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2011), 245.

280 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Ishikiri Shrine and its Role in Surgery," in *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan. An Anthropological View*, ed. eadem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 126–138.

281 Ian Reader, George J. Tanabe Jr., *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

lution of a place, can become a religiously interpreted activity because of its specific and general socio-cultural context. Anthropology of religion helps to understand such phenomena from the perspective of the examined participants as well as in the broader socio-cultural context.

Methodological Procedures of Anthropology of Religion

Anthropology of religion is characterized by the method with which it approaches the study of religions. Field research including the personal presence of a cultural anthropologist in the socio-cultural environment examined leading to the acquisition of ethnographic data is the basic methodological toolkit of this field of study. This methodological approach in cultural anthropology has been emphasized within the historical context of how it established itself as a self-contained scholarly discipline. The personal, usually long-term, presence of a researcher in the field is what represents the fundamental contribution of cultural anthropology to the social sciences. Field research, along with some of the associated methodological procedures, can also attempt to transcend the limits of the emic and etic perspectives, for example, in conjunction with so-called native/indigenous anthropology, in which the research is led "from within" the area.[282]

A researcher working in the field of anthropology of religion typically makes use of a number of specific, established, research designs linked to the methods and techniques of data acquisition or more precisely data creation and processing, such as participant observation, working with informants, interviews, the biographical method or visual techniques such as recordings using photography, sound, video, etc. The data obtained are then analyzed and interpreted, usually

[282] Fiona Bowie makes mention of issues that may be related to anthropological efforts to transcend the emic and etic perspectives in conjunction with the concept of "going native," in which a researcher may show a tendency to "blend in" with the environment under research. The objection that the researcher is in this way crossing the paradigmatic field of anthropology as science, as the researcher loses scientific critical perspective, is related to this. Cf. Fiona Bowie, "Anthropology of Religion," 13, in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 3–24. Cf. eadem, *Anthropology of Religion. An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 2–12. For the topic of "native anthropologist," see Kirin Narayan, "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist*, New Series 95, no. 3 (1993): 671–686.

using qualitative analytical methods, then related to theoretical concepts within the framework of cultural anthropology and related social-science disciplines.

Institutional Background of Anthropology of Religion

In addition to the defined subject of study, the marks of a self-contained scholarly discipline must include the history of its research tradition and methodology as well as the institutional anchoring of the given discipline. Anthropologists of religion usually work in departments of cultural and social anthropology, study of religions, ethnology or sociology. In addition, anthropology of religion also has its own specific professional organizations at the national and international level. The Society for the Anthropology of Religion (SAR) exists within the American Anthropological Association (AAA). SAR was formed in 1997 as a separate division (Anthropology of Religion Section) within AAA through the merger of several previously independent platforms of anthropologists of religion, i.e. the Anthropology of Religion Interest Group and the Society for the Anthropology of Religion (SofAR). In 2000, the Anthropology of Religion Section changed its name to the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, the title it still bears today. Every two years the society organizes specialist conference forums with international participation, with the conference sections that SAR holds in the annual AAA congresses also having international representation.[283] In the Czech Republic, the professional platform of researchers in the field of anthropological study of religion is a self-contained section within the Czech Association for Social Anthropology. This name Anthropology of Religion, Magic and the Supernatural was established at the founding meeting of the section in September 2020.[284]

283 "AAA Anthropology of Religion Interest Group. Annual Report," (1997), http://sar.americananthro.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ARS-IG-annual-report.pdf [17. 3. 2020]. "Application for Section Status: Anthropology of Religion Section," (1997), http://sar.americananthro.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ARS-SAR-Section-Application.pdf [17. 3. 2020]. "Executive Committee, ARS. Section Name," (2000), http://sar.americananthro.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ARS-SAR-name-change-request.pdf [17. 3. 2020]. SAR. *Society for the Athropology of Religion*, http://sar.americananthro.org/ [17. 3. 2020].

284 CASA – Česká asociace pro sociální antropologii, "Založení nové sekce: Antropologie náboženství, magie a nadpřirozena," (2020), http://www.casaonline.cz/?p=3182 [18. 2. 2021].

Historical Context for Forming the Anthropological Study of Religion

In a historical perspective, one can observe changes taking place in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches within the cultural-anthropological study of religion. These changes must be viewed in the broader context of the history of cultural anthropology as a self-contained scholarly discipline. As such, it was formed in the western,[285] socio-cultural environment in which the roots of cultural-anthropological thinking can be traced far back in history. Alan Barnard points to the classical roots of anthropology, finally placing the shaping of anthropology as a scholarly discipline as far back as the seventeenth century, although cultural anthropology as a science in the contemporary sense of the word can only be referred to from the nineteenth century onward.[286]

The Legacy of Colonialism

The formation and development of cultural anthropology as a self-contained discipline is linked to European colonial expansion.[287] In this context, the European perspective and environment has been confronted with "different" socio-cultural realities. In its early days, the forming of cultural anthropology as a scholarly discipline was linked to practical power and political needs, i.e. European colonizers needed to *understand* a particular socio-cultural environment in order to *gain control* over it more effectively.[288]

Talal Asad points out that the direct influence of ethnologists and anthropologists on the governance of nineteenth-century colonial empires should not be overestimated, and the historical context in which cultural anthropology as a self-contained scholarly discipline was first formed cannot be ignored. Asad

285 By the concept of a "Western" socio-cultural environment, I mean the cultures and societies of the European and American environments which arose from the ideological traditions of Greek and Roman antiquity and built on Jewish and Christian roots.

286 Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

287 See Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973).

288 A detailed summary of the existing literature on this topic would be the subject of a separate publication. An overview of the issue is provided by Herbert S. Lewis, "Imagining Anthropology"s History," *Reviews in Anthropology* 33, no. 3 (2004): 243–261.

argues that, contrary to widespread opinion, the role of anthropologists in the maintenance and administration of colonial empires was not overly significant. On the contrary, the spread and maintenance of European colonial power had a major influence on the formation of anthropology itself and on the ways in which it described and analyzed the populations under colonial administration.[289]

The colonial context in the formation of cultural anthropology as a scholarly discipline also must be recalled in order to address the history of anthropology of religion, as the concepts within which anthropology of religion functions are closely linked to this historical context. This applies, above all, to the very concept of "religion"[290] which developed in the context of European ideological history. "Religion" represents one of the many concepts which were defined and developed outside of the scientific environment, but which science accepts and seeks to define for the purposes of its own research. In fact, the term "religion" serves as an excellent example of such a concept. Further, a number of concepts that anthropologists of religion work with can be approached in a similar way, including "supernatural," "sacred," "ritual," "magic," etc. All these and many other concepts are inextricably linked to the European socio-cultural environment through the context of their definition. This fact poses a considerable theoretical-methodological problem for anthropology of religion. It specifically raises the question of how to study religion at all in socio-cultural contexts in which the concept may no longer even exist, or in which the concept may be proven to be applied to some socio-cultural context only with the arrival of European colonizers, traders and missionaries.[291] If an anthropologist uses such terms outside his own socio-cultural environment, the researcher risks the possibility that the resulting work might be influenced by ethnocentrism. In connection with the subject of religion in the nineteenth century, the formative period of anthropology of religion, two fundamental perspectives can be described: theological and secularizing. This binary serves as an ideal distinction of historical approaches to the study of religions in this formative period of

289 Talal Asad, "Afterword," 315, in *Colonial Situations. Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, ed. George W. Stocking Jr. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 314–324.

290 See Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man, New Series* 18, no. 2 (1983): 237–259.

291 See, for example, Havlíček, "Existuje v Japonsku náboženství?" (2013).

cultural anthropology as the discipline was first being developed. In particular cases and generally in practice, these two perspectives are usually closely intertwined. Both perspectives are essentially ethnocentric and thus unsuitable for the theoretical-methodological principles of contemporary social sciences. The further evolution of anthropology of religion over the course of the twentieth century involves critical reactions to this oversimplification as well as attempts to replace the theological-secular dichotomy with new approaches.

A Theological Perspective on the History of Anthropology of Religion

The history of the formation of the concept of religion in the European Middle Ages and the Early Modern period has been the subject of scholarly works which place the concept of religion in a historical context and point to the inseparable connection of religion with the Christian worldview.[292] It is important to note that early cultural anthropologists often did not conduct their own field research, usually relying on reports from colonial officials, missionaries and travelers. This situation led to the popular designation of these early representatives of cultural anthropology as "armchair anthropologists," who would take their data from texts by other authors, often non-professionals. The view of anthropologists on the subject of religion was therefore necessarily influenced by the nature of these sources, which due to their origin and the ideological background of their authors often represented the perspective of a Christian worldview, depending on the confessional background of the author in question.[293]

Christianity in this perspective is usually seen as the prototype of religion. Christianity is also regarded by scholars of the European colonialism era as the peak of historical development, having enabled the power-political rise of the European civilization in which it is based. Christianity, from this point of view, is the one "true," real religion, for it is based on the word of God, on the Gospel containing the will of God, and on instructions for life leading to the salvation

[292] See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–284.

[293] Timothy Larsen, *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

of the soul. Other religions are classified as "false", leading to eternal damnation. At other times, these belief systems are usually thought to represent lower degrees of a predicted linear general evolution of civilization, from more "primitive" forms to more complex forms.[294] This theological perspective is not exclusively linked to the nineteenth century. In 1912, for example, the Austrian ethnologist, linguist and Catholic priest Wilhelm Schmidt began to publish the twelve-volume work *The Origin of the Idea of God*. In the books, he tried to prove the proposition of an "original" or "primitive monotheism" in work which was based on the Urmonotheismus of the Scottish anthropologist Andrew Lang. This proposition was based on the assumption that, in so-called primitive cultures, one can find faith in one First Cause supreme divine being, but that this faith had gradually disappeared or faded away into the background. The belief, however, has persisted in Christianity and the so-called monotheistic religions. The development of religion thus does not represent a qualitative advance in this perspective, but rather a decline.[295]

In this ethnocentric, evaluative perspective, researchers search for phenomena that are in their defining terms *similar* to the model religion, Christianity. They look into different socio-cultural environments and seek out and study phenomena such as "holy scriptures," "religious rituals," "community of believers," "faith in god" or "gods," "religious leaders and founders," etc. This process can lead to overlooking or even omitting altogether the specific characteristics of the socio-cultural environment in question, and the phenomena selected for analysis can easily be taken completely out of their socio-cultural context. "Foreign" religious traditions can therefore be seen as ethnocentric scientific constructs, with their scientific image substantially distorted. When in the research such phenomena are discovered in different environments, they are often categorized as "primitive," as early forms of a supposed universal spiritual development of humanity. From the perspective of a missionary, the solution is to replace these "backward" religions with Christianity.

294 See Jana Valtrová, *Středověká setkání s „jinými": Modloslužebníci, židé, saracéni a heretici ve středověkých misionářských zprávách o Asii* (Praha: Argo, 2011).

295 Henryk Zimoń, "Wilhelm Schmidt's Theory of Primitive Monotheism and Its Critique within the Vienna School of Ethnology," *Anthropos* 81, no. 1–3 (1986): 243–260.

The Secularization Perspective in the History of Anthropology of Religion

Within this perspective, the concept of civilization and progress is linked to the idea of rational obtaining of the knowledge of reality represented by science. At the top of socio-cultural evolution is the civilization of the colonizer, a white European man who bears responsibility for ensuring that even the last "uncivilized" society and its culture are properly civilized, i.e. subjugated by a colonial protectorate and ultimately adapted to the culture of the colonizers. Religion and magic will be replaced by science. This ideology is aptly expressed in Rudyard Kipling's celebrated 1899 poem "The White Man's Burden."[296] In short, the proverbial "white man's burden" involves the task of civilizing the "primitive," "uncivilized savage." Here "religion," "magic" and a belief in the "supernatural" are associated with everything irrational and uncivilized: in an evolutionist perspective, religious worldviews will eventually be replaced by a scientific one. Magic and religion are therefore destined for extinction in terms of the laws of social and cultural evolution.

We can gain a closer acquaintance with at least one example of an early anthropological view of religion that combines both perspectives, theological and secularizing.

John Lubbock (1834–1913) on Religion and Science

In the early history of social sciences, which heralds the formation of cultural anthropology as a modern scholarly discipline, many examples can be found of a religious or secularizing perspective. One particularly expressive example is the work of the British polymath and Victorian anthropologist John Lubbock.[297] In a book of his written in the early 1870s devoted to the development of civilization, Lubbock discusses, among other things, the religion of "savages." He even

296 Rudyard Kipling, *100 Poems, Old and New* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 111–113; the poem was originally published in 1899 – see ibid., 178. The poem celebrates the struggle of the United States to gain control of the Republic of the Philippines. For Kipling's poem and its socio-cultural context, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 203–225.

297 See Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 28, 208.

contemplates labeling such belief systems as "superstitions," ultimately coming to the conclusion that many "superstitions" have gradually evolved into "nobler conceptions." Lubbock expresses respect for any sincere belief, regardless of its "absurdity" and "imperfection." He does, however, insist that religion in the conception of "lower savage races" differs substantially from "ours," that is to say, Christianity, even being its direct opposite. He notes that the "religion of savages" focuses on this world, not the next one. The deities of the "savages" are "evil" and can be forced by magical manipulation to fulfill human wishes, usually requiring bloody sacrifice, with these divinities even "rejoice" in human sacrifice. These deities are mortal and a part of nature, i.e. generally they are not seen as its creators. These beings are worshiped by dance rituals, not prayer, and they finally often welcome what the Christian would call vice rather than what is valued as virtue.[298]

Lubbock's approach is an example which brings together the two typical perspectives of the nineteenth century: theological and secularizing. The peak of the development of religion, according to Lubbock, is the reconciliation of the positions of religion and science. Lubbock believes that when man rises from savagery to civilization, so does his religion. He argues that science and religion exist in a harmonious relationship, and if knowledge is elevated, religion will be as well. Lubbock expresses his belief that progress in understanding the laws of the universe and in the growth in scientific knowledge is evident among nations that adhere to various forms of Christianity. Therefore the real religion, Christianity, is directly linked to the growth of scientific knowledge in the world.[299]

Lubbock's view of religion is affected by the ethnocentric thinking of his period. Despite expressing a degree of respect for the beliefs of the "savages," his view of "primitive religion" embodies the contemptuous view of "white man" who must bear Kipling's burden of spreading the progress of civilization.

298 John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man. Mental and Social Condition of Savages* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), 202. The book was first published in 1870.

299 Ibid., 386–387.

Religious Systems as an "Invention" of Colonizers? The Case of Hinduism

Lubbock pondered whether it was even justifiable to apply the term "religion" outside the context of Christianity. He is not driven by critical skepticism, but by a time-period conditioned, ethnocentrism-based doubt as to whether it is not more appropriate among "savages" to speak of "superstitions." In the end, he chooses to use the term "religion" in a broader context. The fact that representatives of the colonialist mentality of early anthropology use the term "religion" to describe and analyze "non-Western" socio-cultural environments is unlikely to come as much of a surprise. Their later successors and critics, however, did so as well and modern social sciences also use the term "religion." Is this application of the term "religion" outside the socio-cultural context of the term's origins justified? In the end, is the term not in itself a manifestation of the ethnocentrism that contemporary anthropology of religion is burdened with? The question of the applicability of the term "religion" and its related categories arises, among others, in connection with the study of the societies and cultures of the Indian subcontinent, where the term "Hinduism" is commonly used to refer to the sum of local religious traditions. A critique of the term "Hinduism" demonstrates how the specialized use of the concept of religion can be burdened by the legacy of colonialism. To speak of Hinduism as the religious system of India may be an example of a so-called invented tradition.

The term "invented tradition" is associated with the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm.[300] In short, the concept involves the historical process of institutionalizing a newly identified or defined tradition or a set of beliefs and practices in a way inseparable from the ideological dimension of the onlooker. From a historical perspective, the origins of an invented tradition can be traced from a specific, formative time period, usually historically recent. It can be argued that prior to this formative historical period, such a tradition as a concept existed neither in an emic context nor in an etic perspective. At the same time, from the emic perspective, the invented tradition is conceptualized as historically continuous and deeply rooted by its proponents. From an etic point of view, the

300 Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). A short summary (for Czech readers) was written by Michal Svoboda, "Vynalézání tradic," AntropoWebzin 1 (2005), no pagination, http://www.antropoweb.cz/cs/vynalezani-tradic [1. 9. 2020].

emphasis on deep historical continuity provides legitimacy and social relevance to the invented tradition.

Hobsbawm formulates this definition as follows: "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past."[301]

Defined as an "invented tradition," the concept of Hinduism as a coherent religious system only came into existence as a result of the influence of European, mainly British, colonizers. The historical origins of the concept of Hinduism as an invented tradition are situated in the period after 1800, when the term "Hinduism" first appears. As an invented tradition, Hinduism is essentially a Western invention. The Indologist Richard King notes that while the concept is derived from the older term "Hindu," used to refer to the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, the term "Hinduism" is a Western construct. King argues that it was conceived by Western Orientalists and reflects the colonial Judeo-Christian mentality. Western Orientalists "invented" the exonym based on their own ideas about the concept of religion, and on what they imagined the term to mean under the influence of their own socio-cultural environment. The term "Hinduism," as a systematic religious tradition, was eventually taken up by Indian nationalists, who used it as an ideological anchor in their struggle for self-determination and in their struggle with British colonial rule. Hinduism as the ancient religious system of India is actually a modern myth, according to King.[302]

According to other researchers, Hinduism should be seen exclusively as an etic research construct, the creation and exploitation of which is substantially burdened by an ideological dimension.[303] This means that, historically, the re-

301 Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," 1, in ed. idem, Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (1992), 1–14.

302 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 100. Cf. idem, "Orientalism and the Modern Myth of 'Hinduism'," *Numen* 46, no. 2 (1999): 146–185 (see p. 156).

303 See Hermann Kulke, Günther-Dietz Sontheimer, ed., Hinduism Reconsidered (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001). Cf. i Timothy Fitzgerald, "Hinduism and the 'World Religion' Fallacy," Religion 20 (1990): 101–118. See also Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and*

ligions of India cannot be referred to as "Hinduism" without the systematic, inherently ethnocentric, influence of Western colonizers, even if the concept was eventually taken up and is still used by Indians themselves.[304]

Criticism of the concept of Hinduism as an invented tradition demonstrates at least one essential fact: European explorers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were influenced by Orientalism in their view of the socio-cultural environment of India. The concept is linked to a book by the literary scholar Edward W. Said from 1978.[305] In brief, the ways of Western, mostly European, conceptualization of the "Orient" range from admiration to contempt. The "Orient" is situated in a relatively wide geographical area, usually comprising the Eastern Mediterranean with the Near East (which Said himself was focused on) as well as the Middle East and Far East. The fluid concept of Orientalism can be, however, applied to any colonial context, regardless of this usual geographical delineation, even to the conceptualization of the "Wild West" from the perspective of immigrants in the United States of America.[306] Referring to the work of Michel Foucault, Said writes: "(...) Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[307] It is linked to the idea of European superiority and, in the field of science, represents the intention to: "(...) understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (...) world (...)."[308] From this point of view, the naming of, and in fact the very creation of, Hinduism reflects an Orientalist mentality.

This line of criticism of the concept of Hinduism as an invented tradition can be summarized as follows: eighteenth and nineteenth century European modern researchers viewed the immensely rich socio-cultural environment of India from the perspective of the scholars of their time who were burdened by

the Colonial Construction of Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

304 See David N. Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism? Essays on Religion in History* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2006). Peter van der Veer,. "Religion in South Asia," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 173–187.

305 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Czech translation: id., *Orientalismus. Západní koncepce Orientu* (Litomyšl: Paseka, 2008).

306 Richard V. Francaviglia, *Go East, Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2011).

307 Said, *Orientalism,* 3.

308 Ibid., 12.

the Orientalist mentality, a Christian worldview, period stereotypes and often racist prejudices.

This kind of mentality has already alluded to in the work of John Lubbock. In this perspective, a white Anglo-Saxon gentleman was always at the top of the notional civilization ladder. His quest was to bring the "enlightenment of civilization" to the so-called lower races.[309] To accomplish this task, he needed to be familiar with the socio-cultural environment of India, which was in his perspective, chaotic and incomprehensible. He therefore systematized it using the period concepts at his disposal. It is no coincidence that the beginnings of a scholarly study of religions are linked to this "colonial situation." The scholars of the nineteenth century focused on the phenomena they considered important from their perspective, such as literary relics, defined as "holy texts," the meaning of which they knew from their own cultural background. They focused on studying, for example, the Vedas or Bhagavad Gita, for which they introduced the terms "Hindu Bible" or "Hindu Gospel," sometimes still used to this day.[310] They tended to look with contempt at the daily, real-life religious practice of natives of colonized areas and viewed the beliefs and rituals as "superstitions."

While the concept of Hinduism as a systematic, self-contained religious tradition has been substantially influenced by the cultural imperialism of European colonists, researchers and missionaries, it cannot be simply concluded from this historical context that "Hinduism does not exist." The study of religions scholar Jeffery D. Long offers a more appropriate phrasing which expresses the proverbial lion's share of colonial scholars in the modern conceptualization of Hinduism. This view seems to cast doubt upon the fact that "Hinduism" as such was unknown through much of history until nineteenth century scholars created it. Long points out that although the current concept of Hinduism historically arose in conjunction with the specific colonial situation of the nineteenth century, many Hindus today would feel such a claim to be an affront to their collective cultural tradition, the historical continuity of which can be in their view traced back to the ancient past. In addition, the actions of Indians themselves were instrumental in conceptualizing Hinduism, including the leaders of movements associated with the activities of religious leaders such

309 Timothy Parsons, T., *The British Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A World History Perspective* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

310 Catherine A. Robinson, *Interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gita and Images of the Hindu Tradition. The Song of the Lord* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

as Rom Mohan Roy (1772–1883), Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and many other Indian philosophers.[311]

As is evident from the example of the Indologist Richard King cited above, critics of "Hinduism" tended to confuse the term and the actual set of beliefs and practices. These are undoubtedly closely related, but the absence of one cannot simply be inferred from the absence of the other. The historian of religion David Lorenzen concludes that the absence of the term "Hinduism" itself does not indicate that the concept of an "Indian religion" as a systematic tradition is not to be found in history.

In Lorenzen's view, it is inaccurate to claim that Hinduism was "invented" or "constructed" by European colonizers, mostly British, only around the year 1800. A number of documents demonstrate that the concept of an Indian religion had already been shaped much earlier, whether in terms of theology or in the formation of religious communities. According to Lorenzen, one of the foundations for the emic-perspective interpreted concept of a systematic Indian religious tradition consists of texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and the rich literature produced in the six traditional schools or Darshanas. All this led to the conscious formation of religious identity in the Indian environment, to which the historical rivalry between Muslims and Indians between the thirteen and sixteenth centuries also contributed significantly. This conscious collective identity, formed in religious terms, had therefore been firmly established much earlier than 1800.[312] According to Lorenzen, it should be borne in mind that the earliest historical evidence of the use of the term "Hinduism" is in the writings of the Indian scholar Rom Mohan Roy, not in the documents of British colonizers.[313]

Despite the fact that the concept of Hinduism in modern history is firmly linked to the colonial context, it would be a mistake to view it merely as an etic concept which can be dismissed entirely as a construct due to the ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism of nineteenth century colonial scholars. Hinduism was a concept shaped in the complex interaction of various groups of participants, a significant part of whom consist of the "colonized people" themselves. Moreover, the existence of the concept of the Indian religious tradition as a coherent system of beliefs and practices associated with defining the

311 Jeffery D. Long, *Historical Dictionary of Hinduism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 2.

312 Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism?* 2 (italics in the original).

313 Ibid., 3–4.

identity of its proponents cannot be linked historically merely to the influence of European colonizers. The process of "inventing a tradition" called "Hinduism" must be sought further in the past in a diachronic, historical perspective.

To interpret the concept of Hinduism as an example of an invented tradition is certainly possible, but on further analysis this may seem too simplistic. In considering the complex processes of conceptualizing a collective Indian religion in the historical interactions of different participants, the concept of Hinduism may serve as an example of cultural hybridization, a concept developed by the postcolonial studies theorist Homi K. Bhabha. Hybridization critiques the putatively simplistic view of Said, who assumes that essentially the entire Orientalizing discourse is the "property" of the Western colonizer. Colonized people are also participants with agency, not merely passive subjects of discourse processes and actions imposed by colonizers. The process of cultural hybridization in which concepts such as Hinduism are formed is a process of dynamic interaction between the colonizers and the colonized.[314]

The perspective of the so-called cultural turn, post-colonial theory, and associated postmodern criticisms in cultural anthropology have strongly highlighted the fact that cultural anthropology to date, its work and its authors are burdened by a socio-cultural context which has not been sufficiently reflected upon. This claim has had a major influence on the mentality of authors of ethnographic and anthropological works, shaping their worldview and of course, the methods, theories and related concepts that they use in their work.[315] This is also the case for anthropological studies of religion and the concepts linked to it, such as Hinduism. The socio-cultural context in which anthropology of religion is formed is necessarily reflected in the practice and results of cultural-anthropological research of religions. A possible solution point is to incorporate the reflexive aspect into the theoretical-methodological bases of anthropological research, i.e. the need to know as clearly as possible the history and the formation of the terms and concepts that anthropology works with, including the various contexts in which they have been used. Simply rejecting concepts

314 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Cf. Haj Yazdiha, "Conceptualizing Hybridity: Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid," *Formations* 1, no. 1 (2010): 31–38. See also Anthony Easthope, "Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity," *Textual Practice* 12, no. 2 (1998): 341–348.

315 See James Clifford, George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1986).

such as "religion" or "Hinduism" for the purposes of scholarly work does not present a satisfactory solution.

Postmodern Criticism in Anthropology and the Concept of Reflexivity

Let us return to precisely defining religion as studied in cultural anthropology. In light of the historical connection to a particular so-called Western socio-cultural context, certain authors have suggested eliminating the term "religion" as an analytical category entirely from the vocabulary of science, or, more precisely, leaving it as merely an emic term.[316] According to these critics, science could legitimately use the concept of religion only if it is also used by the examined participants, otherwise its use is basically a manipulation and manifestation of cultural imperialism. The removal of terms such as "religion" from the analytical vocabulary of science may seem justified at first glance, given the historical context. What reasons can justify, however, the use of the term in the analytical apparatus of social sciences?

Firstly, there is the risk of science becoming incomprehensible, especially when communicating outside its own scientific environment.

Secondly, while the term "religion" is firmly linked to the Western context, this does not preclude its presence in other socio-cultural contexts. As we have seen in the case of Hinduism, equating a term with a concept can lead to mistakes. Conceptualizations of religion are part of many "non-Western" socio-cultural contexts in both contemporary and historical perspectives. The influence of cultural interaction cannot be ignored when the term "religion" along with its "Western" conceptualization enters different socio-cultural environments. This does not mean, however, that concepts with very similar content had not historically been present there before. This is not only the case for Hinduism, but also in the Japanese environment, in which the Western origin of the concept of religion associated with the activities of Christian missionaries, is also

316 See Timothy Fitzgerald, "A Critique of 'Religion' as a Cross-Cultural Category," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9, no. 2 (1997): 91–110; Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). See also Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a summary of this topic by Fujda, see "Connecting Fitzgerald and Latour," (2020).

usually emphasized.[317] There is evidence, however, of local conceptual thinking associated in particular with the Buddhist intellectual environment in which the notion of religion exists outside of Western influence.[318] The fact that the name for religion itself did not exist or does not exist in a non-Western socio-cultural context does not mean that it is impossible in the historical or contemporary perspective to identify very similarly defined concepts in the native terms of local languages. Even when the language expression for religion itself and its associated conceptualizations are an import from a Western socio-cultural background, this does not indicate that in a different socio-cultural context concepts that are similar in content to the concept of religion and are linked to terms in native languages had not previously been present.

Finally, the term "religion" can be seen to facilitate a suitable definition of the areas of the phenomena that will be designated and explained here.

The use of the term "religion" in the social sciences in general and in anthropology of religion in particular must always be based on the principle of reflexivity, a rather broad when linked to social sciences. In the broadest sense, it can be understood as a conscious, critical turn toward ourselves, toward researchers themselves and their ideological background, toward their own assumptions, their thoughts, and the context of their formation. In social science research, this means that the researcher consciously reflects the influence of her / his worldview on the planning, course, processing and presentation of the research work.[319]

In fact, the epidemiological basis of reflexivity as a methodological principle in cultural anthropology is quite simple. Anthropological research and the

317 Jason Ā. Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

318 Hans M. Krämer, "How 'Religion' Came to Be Translated as Shūkyō: Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan," *Japan Review* 25 (2013): 89–111. See also Christoph Kleine, "Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–34. See also Havlíček, "Existuje v Japonsku náboženství?" (2013). Anette Lindberg, "The Concept of Religion in Current Studies of Scandinavian Pre-Christian Religion," *Temenos* 45, no. 1 (2009): 85–119. Jim Stone, "The Ideology of Religious Studies by Timothy Fitzgerald," *Religious Studies* 37, no. 2 (2001): 242–246. Jolyon B. Thomas, "The Concept of Religion in Modern Japan. Imposition, Invention, or Innovation?," *Religious Studies in Japan* 2 (2013): 3–21.

319 Charlotte A. Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

particular personality of the researcher conducting it are unquestionably part of the cultural context in which anthropology as a science originated and from which the researchers themselves come. From this point of view, the anthropologist is not some sort of totally objective "independent observer," but is in every way part and "product" of his own socio-cultural environment. The anthropologist's entire personality is factored into the process of research, for each researcher is the primary tool of the work. The principle of methodological reflexivity guides the anthropologist to project this position openly into the work, while also being aware that the work, and ultimately herself / himself, are also being formed by the circumstances of the ongoing research. Following this perspective, anthropological research should be subjected to a constant reflexive criticism that allows the anthropologist's presuppositions, which she / he may not even be aware of yet, to be openly articulated.

Robert Scholte, who first articulated the principle of reflexivity in conjunction with cultural-anthropological research in the late 1960s and 1970s, defines it as follows: "Every procedural step in the constitution of anthropological knowledge is accompanied by radical reflection and epistemological exposition (...). We cannot and should not avoid the "hermeneutic circle" (...) but must explicate, as part of our activities, the intentional processes of constitutive reasoning which make both encounter and understanding possible."[320]

Scholte also describes how the understanding of others and the researchers' understanding of themselves are inextricably linked and interdependent.[321]

In research practice, the need for a reflexive position can be applied in various ways. Further, the researcher should also approach reflexively the tools of the scholarly discipline itself along with the theories, methods and concepts associated with it. At the epistemological level, anthropologists should reflect on the context in which these "tools" of science originated, as well as in what contexts and with what consequences they have been and are applied. With the benefit of this knowledge, they should reflexively attempt to observe the process of their own research outside of the process itself.

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320 Robert Scholte, "Toward a Reflexive and Critical Anthropology," in *Re-inventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Pantheon, 1972[1969]): 430–457, 441, quoted from Philip C. Salzman, "On Reflexivity," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 805–813, 805.

321 See Scholte, "Toward a Reflexive and Critical Anthropology," 448 – quoted from Salzman, "On Reflexivity," 805.

In relation to the concepts used in anthropological research, James Clifford formulates the principle of reflexivity as follows: "Ethnography in the service of anthropology once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or nonhistorical (...). Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as other."[322]

Part of the reflexive methodology of the cultural-anthropological research of religion is then the need for epistemological reflection on one's own theoretical and methodological tools, in addition to the researcher's self-reflection.

Anthropological Definitions of Religion

Knowledge of the historical context of the formation of the notion of religion and of the accompanying reflexive-principle use of the term in science remains a vital contribution of post-modern criticism to the study of religions in the social sciences in general and in cultural-anthropological research in particular.

In cultural-anthropological research on religion, a number of definitions of religion exist, with two well-known definitions listed here as examples. Both have their weak spots, but this does not mean that they should be described as "flawed" and that they cannot be used. These definitions exist within the paradigmatic field of anthropology of religion as part of its research tradition. The use of these terms in a conscious, reflexive way in our own research work is therefore very much possible.

Edward Burnett Tylor, whose approach to the study of religion will be discussed in detail below, formulated a so-called minimalist definition of religion, according to which a belief in spiritual beings is involved.[323] Tylor thus selects one key characteristic which he believes is the essence of religion. His definition is an example of the substantive approach to the definition of religion based on one or more phenomena that make up the content, *essence*, or subject of the beliefs of its proponents.[324] The weakness of this approach is specifically

322 James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1–26, 23.

323 Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. Volume 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 383.

324 For definitions of religion, see William E. Arnal, "Definition," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, eds. Willi Braun, Russel T. McCutcheon (London: Continuum, 2000), 21–34.

the fact that substantive definitions such as Tylor's tend to be too narrow and are also strongly linked to the Western concept of religion.

Another well-known definition, the origins of which are linked to anthropological studies of religion, was formulated by Clifford Geertz. Religion is: "A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[325]

Geertz's definition is an example of a functional approach to the definition of religion which focuses on what religion *does*, what it causes and what functions it has in an individual's life or the life of society. The main issue with the definition of Geertz is that it allows too many different specific phenomena to be included. Geertz's definition can also be criticized as too burdened by Western ideological context.[326] The very concept of a symbol as a sign which must carry some sort of "meaning" which an anthropologist is supposed to reveal may also be problematic.

In connection with anthropology of religion, another approach to the definition of religion authored by the American anthropologist Benson Saler can be described as prototypical.[327] Saler's philosophical bases include the thesis on the "family resemblances" of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Saler also elaborates on the work of the cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch and her discussions of the psychological foundations of thinking about concepts and categories.

Saler's prototypical approach to defining religion is not actually a definition in the strictest sense of the word. It instead represents a theoretical premise that includes a reflexive aspect in addition to its philosophical and cognitively psychological foundations. This aspect consists of an open, explicitly expressed, acceptance of the socio-cultural position of anthropology of religion within the context of European or so-called Western mentality, to which is linked

325 Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publishing Company, 1966), 1–46, 4.

326 See Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, ed. idem (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–54.

327 Benson Saler, *Conceptualising Religion. Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

the prototype of religion in the form of so-called Western monotheisms. Saler argues that the best examples of what is understood by the term "religion" are so-called Western monotheisms, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He calls for the conscious, reflective inclusion of this fact in the anthropological conceptualization of religion as an analytical tool of science. Religion, according to Saler, can then be defined based on the *similarity* of socio-cultural phenomena to what we understand to be the content of the concepts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Saler is aware that the understandings of the content of exemplary cases of Western monotheisms are also going through transformations, which means that we should abandon the idea of trying to delineate any firm line which would be set in stone around the concept of religion. We do need, however, basic guidelines, Saler says, in order to actually determine the range of phenomena to study. The prototypical approach allows us to establish this practical function of the area-of-interest.[328]

Among the benefits of a prototypical approach are: a) a reflexive aspect which openly incorporates the socio-cultural context of the term "religion" into our theoretical bases; b) allowing the area of anthropological study of religion to be defined with sufficient precision, but not with rigidity. Saler explains that studying phenomena within a particular socio-cultural context, while being part of another socio-cultural context, will always be essentially ethnocentric. This does not mean, however, that the only solution is to abandon our research altogether. When reflexive methods are adhered to, the research does not necessarily have to be associated with undesirable cultural imperialism and the hegemonization of our default perspective.[329]

328 Ibid., 212–214, 218, 225.

329 Cf. review of Saler's book by Donald Wiebe (idem, "Conceptualising Religion. Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories by Benson Saler," *Numen* 42, no. 1 (1995): 78–82. For a criticism of the prototypical approach, see Benson Saler, "Conceptualizing Religion: Responses," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12, no. 1–4 (2000): 323–338.

5. Cultural-Anthropological Paradigms and the Anthropological Study of Religion

Jakub Havlíček

The definition of anthropology of religion as a self-contained scholarly discipline is linked to a particular historical perspective. A rich research tradition involving studying religiously interpreted phenomena can be described, as social and cultural anthropologists have often dealt with religions throughout the history of cultural anthropology. Based on the cultural-anthropological study of religion in specific socio-cultural contexts, a number of studies and theories have been developed focusing on both the general term "religion" and a number of other concepts associated with religion, such as various forms of religiously interpreted beliefs and practices, behavior and actions, language and symbols, authorities, etc. The purpose of the following sections of this text is not to provide an exhaustive overview of anthropological studies of religion but to suggest a way of classification with regard to this topic. Several examples from the history of anthropological study of religion will also be presented.

Anthropology of religion is firmly linked to the history of the discipline of cultural anthropology as such. In the historical point of view, the same approaches as in the history of cultural anthropology can therefore be defined for the anthropological study of religion as a self-contained scholarly discipline. In his history of cultural anthropology,[330] the anthropologist Alan Barnard presented a systematic overview of theoretical perspectives or paradigms. His overview is based on the paradigm concept of the philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn, meaning that Barnard understands paradigm concepts and theoretical perspectives as synonyms. He defines a theoretical perspective or paradigm in cultural anthropology as a "grand theory" or theoretical framework. In the broadest sense of the word, it would be possible to speak of a worldview. When

[330] Barnard, *History and Theory* (2004).

an anthropologist speaks of so-called traditional cultures, a "cosmology" is also often referred to as well. The concepts of theoretical perspective, cosmology, or paradigm have a shared characteristic in that they define the fundamental questions the theorist deals with while providing a framework for their solutions. The history of anthropology can be described as a history of Kuhn's "revolutions," the fundamental paradigmatic shifts associated with rethinking ways of asking questions and resolving issues.[331]

Barnard provides an overview of these perspectives or paradigms in cultural anthropology by defining three basic groups: diachronic, synchronic and interactive. The diachronic perspectives primarily emphasize changes in the examined phenomena over time, while synchronic highlight perspectives on the interrelationships of phenomena within a specific time period. Interactive perspectives combine both these aspects. Through the history of cultural anthropology as a self-contained scholarly discipline, a shift can be delineated from an emphasis on diachronic to synchronic perspectives, and subsequently to interactive ones.[332]

Diachronic perspectives	Synchronic perspectives	Interactive perspectives
Evolutionism	Relativism (including "culture and personality", resp. Configurationalism)	Transactionalism
Diffusionism	Structuralism	Processualism
Marxism (in some aspects)	Structural Functionalism	Feminist Anthropology
Culture-area approaches (in some aspects)	Cognitive approaches	Poststructuralism
	Culture-area approaches (in most aspects)	Postmodernism
	Functionalism (in some aspects)	Functionalism (in some aspects)
	Interpretivist approaches (in some aspects)	Interpretivist approaches (in some aspects)
		Marxism (in some aspects)

331 Ibid., 7–9.

332 Table based on ibid., 9. I have modified the content and form of the table.

An Example of a Diachronic Approach: an Evolutionist Perspective in Anthropology of Religion

The cultural anthropology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is based on the idea of universal, unilineal evolution, which argues that the evolution of human societies and cultures follows the same patterns everywhere. Simpler, so-called "more primitive," socio-cultural forms are thus being replaced by more complex ones. The idea of progress is inextricably linked to social and cultural evolution, which is usually seen as a positive qualitative change allowing humans to gradually control the environment in which they live with greater efficiency over time. The rationality of the human worldview is also gradually increasing. Cultures at higher levels of this assumed qualitative development are better equipped to deal with the life problems of man and with society as a whole. More advanced societies in this view are justified in controlling other, more primitive, ones.[333] It is apparent that the traditional evolutionist paradigm is closely bound to Western colonialism, which it provides legitimacy for.

Edward Burnett Tylor

A well-known example of the evolutionist approach to religion in cultural anthropology is associated with the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917). Tylor's work covers a large number of specific themes and also deals with the topic of religion.

Based on the idea of unilineal evolution, Tylor assumes that it is possible to identify the most evolutionarily ancient and therefore most primitive form of religion. These origins of religion are represented by animism, that is, belief in souls and spiritual beings. Tylor derives from this which has been called his minimal definition of religion: belief in spiritual beings.[334]

Although Tylor's work is based on traditional evolutionist thinking, it presages many approaches to modern-day cultural anthropology. Tylor specifically attempts to engage in a non-evaluative conceptualization of cultural phenomena, including in the area of religion. He rejects the use, for example, of the term "superstition" for so-called primitive religions. Tylor writes that the term is regarded at present as a reproach and, while certain uses of the term might sometimes

333 Ibid., 27–45.

334 Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 383.

be justified, he rejects its use for scientific purposes, as not only "harsh" but, above all, "untrue." He instead suggests the term "survivals" for the presumed "remains of a dead lower culture embedded in a living higher one."[335] Despite the fact that Tylor's approach is derived from the standards of knowledge of his day and essentially remains based on ethnocentric, evaluative opinions, his mentality represents the beginnings of a cultural-anthropological effort at an objectifying, non-evaluative approach to the study of cultural phenomena.

Another interesting contribution of Tylor's reflections on the subject of religion which could be considered topical in a sense is his interest in spiritualism. Today, we would probably examine spiritualism as an example of alternative religiosity or spirituality. Even as early as in his publications from the 1860s, Tylor points out that phenomena such as astrology, spiritualism and cartomancy could be found in British society.[336] In keeping with his evolutionist approach, he views these phenomena as having survived teachings related to the early stages of knowledge.[337] Nevertheless, Tylor remained intrigued by the spiritualism of his period to such an extent that he undertook field research among spiritualists in London.[338] Through these efforts, he also laid the foundations for the modern anthropological study of religion.

Examples of Synchronic Approaches

Franz Boas and the Relativistic Paradigm in Anthropology of Religion

Franz Boas, a German anthropologist active in the United States of America, was interested in overcoming the classical evolutionist perspective. At the heart of Boas's approach to culture, and thus to religion, was a critical approach to the idea of unilineal, universal cultural evolution and an emphasis on detailed knowledge of the specific context of examined socio-cultural phenomena. From this point of

335 Ibid., 65.

336 See Edward B. Tylor, "The Religion of Savages," *The Fortnightly Review* 6 (1866): 71–86; Edward B. Tylor, "On the Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization (2.)," *Appletons' Journal: A Magazine of General Literature* 1, no. 19 (1869): 598–600.

337 Tylor, "The Religion of Savages," 85.

338 George W. Stocking Jr., "Animism in Theory and Practice: E. B. Tylor's Unpublished "Notes on 'Spiritualism'," *Man, New Series* 6, no. 1 (1971): 88–104.

view, Boas's perspective can be placed among the synchronic paradigms, i.e. those which focus primarily on the form of the phenomena studied at a given point in time and the interrelationships between them. Although Boas does not completely reject the historical, diachronic level, the path to explore these elements is the synchronic perspective with a focus on the specific context of selected phenomena within this perspective. The basics of his approach are explained by Boas in a number of texts. An apt summary is provided, for example, by a dictum included in his 1904 lecture: "The grand system of the evolution of culture, that is valid for all humanity, is losing much of its plausibility. In place of a simple line of evolution there appears a multiplicity of converging and diverging lines which it is difficult to bring under one system. Instead of uniformity, the striking feature seems to be diversity."[339]

Boas's starting point is the concept of cultural relativism. This does not mean, however, that it would not be possible to attempt to formulate universal definitions of certain cultural phenomena such as religion. In 1910, Boas published a text on the religion of the Native Americans in which he provides this rather broad definition of religion: "(...)group of concepts and acts which spring from the relation of the individual to the outer world, so far as these relations are not considered as due to physical forces the action of which is accounted for by purely rationalistic considerations."[340]

The anthropologist George W. Stocking places Boas's definition within the ideological context of his time, comparing it to the one provided by Émile Durkheim published in 1912 in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.[341] It is interest to note that both Boas and Durkheim define religion in similar terms. Boas speaks of "concepts," of thought constructs, of ideas, and of "acts," behavior or actions, while Durkheim speaks of "faith" and "practices," which form a unified system of religion in his thinking. For Boas, however, religion is the sum or literally the "group" of concepts and actions associated with them. Durkheim's understand-

339 Franz Boas, "The History of Anthropology. Address at the Internatonal Congress of Arts and Science, St. Louis, September 1904," *Science* 20, no. 512 (1904): 513–524, 522.

340 Franz Boas, "The Religion of American Indians," in *The Shaping of American Anthropology. 1883–1911. A Franz Boas Reader*, ed. George W. Stocking Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 257–267, 257.

341 Ibid., 255–267. For Durkheim's definition of religion, see Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, a Study in Religious Sociology* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915), 47. Boas formulates his definition in the summer of 1907, see *The Shaping of American Anthropology*, 255.

ing of religion is based on distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, while Boas views the domain of religion as the relationship between man and the "outside world," with this relationship not based on physical forces (tangible, material, real) which are substantiated by purely rational explanations.

Despite the differences in formulation, the two definitions are extremely similar. While Durkheim views religion primarily in its social aspect (a key characteristic in his definition being the community of believers and the church), Boas emphasizes the individual aspect of religiosity. Religion for him stems from the *individual's* relationship to the outside world. Boas does not ignore the social aspect of religion, but understands this as a manifestation of specific socio-cultural circumstances. While emphasizing the individual aspect of religion, he also points out that "religion has become closely associated with the social structure of the tribes (...),"[342] which is reflected primarily in religious rituals.

The weak point of Boas's definition is the use of the dichotomy of the rational and the irrational to define religion. Religion, for Boas, is the area of man's relationship with the outside world which is not primarily linked to reasoning. It becomes apparent that it is the assumption of the irrationality of religious phenomena which later came to be criticized by other anthropologists, who conclude on the basis of field data that this definition is virtually unusable for the purposes of anthropology of religion.

For Boas, the key method of anthropological research in general, not just in conjunction with the subject of religion, is field research, which he replaces with the evolutionists' emphasis on a comparative approach, often based on the use of secondary resources. On a theoretical level, field research is based on cultural relativism, whereby any socio-cultural phenomenon must be investigated directly and within the context of its occurrence. Boas defines the field research method as a detailed study of selected phenomena in relation to their anchoring in a specific socio-cultural environment as a whole. Only this kind of research, Boas argues, will help us discover the historical causes of selected phenomena, to obtain knowledge about the psychological processes involved in their development, or to discover the environmental influences on the phenomena examined.[343] One could argue that the field research method combined with specific field data acquisition

342 Ibid., 265 (cf. p. 256).

343 Franz Boas, "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology," *Science* 4, no. 103 (1896): 901–908, 905.

techniques (mainly participant observations and interviews with informants) form the basis of a cultural-anthropological study of religion to this day.

Bronislaw C. Malinowski and the Functionalist Paradigm in Anthropology of Religion

Malinowski's approach to religion-related topics can also be categorized as a synchronic perspective. Like Boas, Malinowski is convinced of the crucial role of field research in anthropological study, which allows for the obtaining of a detailed knowledge of the *current* form of the phenomena examined, which an anthropologist acquires through a personal, long-term presence in the field. The principles of anthropological field research, including a vivid description of the researcher's own experience in the field, are presented in the opening chapter of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.[344] The basic condition for successful field research, Malinowski argues, is for the researcher to be isolated entirely from the company of "white men" and remain in the closest possible contact with "natives," this being linked to the anthropologist's stay in aboriginal settlements.[345] For Malinowski, the default method of obtaining anthropological data is the long-term, in-depth, field research that an anthropologist conducts in strict isolation from her / his own socio-cultural environment.

This also applies, of course, to religion, which Malinowski deals with in an essay collection published in 1948 entitled *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*.[346] He regards religion, magic and science as socio-cultural universals and the three basic ways (Malinowski speaks of "domains") in which man interacts with the world.[347] These domains are based on a dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, which, as the introductory theoretical premise of Malinowski's essays suggests, also represents a universal element of human mentality: "There are no peoples however primitive without religion and magic."[348]

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344 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 2002). The book was first published in 1922.

345 Ibid., 5.

346 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and other* Essays (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1948).

347 For more details, see Karl E. Rosengren, ed., "Malinowski's Magic: The Riddle of the Empty Cell [and Comments and Reply]," *Current Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (1976): 667–685.

348 Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, 1.

When comparing Malinowski's thoughts on this subject with examples from Lubbock's work, however, a fundamental shift in the approach to these topics is very clear, as Malinowski follows with: "Nor are there, it must be added at once, any savage races lacking either in the scientific attitude or in science, though this lack has been frequently attributed to them. In every primitive community, studied by trustworthy and competent observers, there have been found two clearly distinguishable domains, the Sacred and the Profane; in other words, the domain of Magic and Religion and that of Science."[349]

Both magic and religion are manifestations of the domain of the sacred, although there is a difference between them. While magic is always directed toward a specific, clear goal, a religious act lacks this defining characteristic. A religious ceremony lacks the presence of a clearly intended, immediate effect.[350] Magic consists of relatively simple, rigid adherence to certain procedures and techniques, the utterance of incantations and the performance of ritual procedures with a presumed immediate, clearly defined effect. Religion is different from magic, as it presents a more complex, sophisticated system of interaction with the supernatural.[351] Religious acts are not aimless, of course, but the ways and means to achieve the aims are generally more complex and elaborate. A religious act is based on a myth or a custom which explains this act. When a native performs a magical act, they are always able to state the intended immediate goal or effect.[352]

There is an interesting relationship in Malinowski's conceptualization between magic and science. Both domains of approaches to the world are similar in terms of their focus on practical goals, as well as in being based on theoretical thinking and established procedures.[353] Substantial differences also exist between magic and science, however, the most significant of which, perhaps, is that science represents knowledge based on empirical experience of the world in which the native lives. Science is generally based on empirical observance, which is contemplated by reason. Magic arises primarily from experiencing emotion. Although the element of rationality is not entirely absent, the magic is

349 Ibid.

350 Ibid., 21.

351 Ibid., 68.

352 Ibid., 21.

353 Ibid., 66.

not primarily based on this, but on faith, on the hope of the efficacy of magical procedures, and on the desire to fulfill human wishes.[354]

Magic and religion serve similar functions in the life of man and society. They primarily help people overcome the emotional stress associated with crisis situations in their lives: "Both magic and religion arise and function in situations of emotional stress: crises of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries, unhappy love and unsatisfied hate."[355]

Using the example of rituals associated with death, Malinowski demonstrates that their function is directed not only toward the individual, who is helped to overcome emotional stress, e.g. caused by the death of a close one, but also toward society, in which it restores group solidarity and reinforces a sense of togetherness.[356] When people feel a threat to their own health and life as well as the sense of togetherness of an entire group, and when people need to obtain or retain control over certain developments, one usually finds a number of examples of magical or religious acts. Where people are self-confident and can rely merely on their rational knowledge, displays of religion or magic can rarely be witnessed.[357]

In his interpretation of religious and magical mentality, Malinowski critically evaluates previous approaches. His starting point is the new data from field research of the day which leads him to the conclusion that, for example, Tylor's proposition on animism as the starting point of development of religion is based on a set of facts which are too narrow. Tylor, Malinowski writes, made the mistake of overly considering early man as "contemplative" and "rational." Why would early humans try to muse on explanations of dreams and out-of-body experiences when it turns out that the "savage" is far more interested in activities such as fishing and gardening as well as tribal events and festivities?[358] The "savage," in period terminology, is a pragmatist, i.e. one who acts based on what she / he considers useful in any given situation.[359]

354 Ibid., 67.

355 Ibid.

356 Ibid., 35.

357 Ibid., 14.

358 Ibid., 2.

359 See Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists. The British School in the 20th Century* (London: Routledge, 2015), 50.

Out of the research of anthropology and related disciplines to date, Malinowski views research on totemism as one of the greatest contributions, since this highlighted the essential role of the social aspect of religion. Totemism and other "early" forms of religion associated with ritualistic behavior allow for the conclusion that religion is undoubtedly closely linked to social organization. In his emphasis on the social aspect of religious mentality and behavior, Malinowski is clearly very close not only to Émile Durkheim, whom he mentions several times, but also to Boas, who also pointed out the connection between religion and the social structure of the communities examined. Malinowski does not, however, view religion in its collective form merely as a means of social cohesion, nor does he regard it as only sanctified social values. In contemplating religion, he also emphasizes the distinct mental needs of individual people. Malinowski believes that the "savage" depends much more on others in terms of both practical cooperation and mental solidarity than does "civilized" man.[360] If religion serves as the basis of social cohesion and solidarity, as can be seen based on examples of so-called primitive societies, this is mainly due to the practical and mental needs of each individual member of such a community.

Religion represents a specific set of phenomena for Malinowski with both social and individual dimensions, and these should also be the subject of anthropological study. The anthropological approach to the study of magic and religion, Malinowski argues, is based on an understanding of the fact that magic and religion are not based solely on teachings or philosophy; they are not merely a set of doctrines. Religion and magic represent a special mode of behavior, a pragmatic attitude based on both reason and emotion and the will to deal with life situations. Malinowski views religion and magic as modes of behavior, just as are the systems of beliefs which are both a sociological phenomenon and a matter of personal experience for individuals.[361] Thus, neither magic nor religion is entirely devoid of an element of rational thinking in Malinowski's anthropological perspective. The study of these modes must be based, however, not only on the question of their social functions, but also on the functions in the lives of the individual members of the communities examined.

360 Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*, 5.

361 Ibid., 8.

E. E. Evans-Pritchard and the Structural-Functionalist Paradigm in Anthropology of Religion

While religion was only one of a number of topics that Boas or Malinowski were dealing with, Edward E. Evans-Pritchard focused on it exclusively in his most important research work. He published a series of works devoted specifically to the subject of religion: among others, his first major work, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*.[362] This theme is also covered in the books *Nuer Religion*,[363] *Theories of Primitive Religion*,[364] and *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*.[365] Closer attention will be devoted here to the first of these publications, in which Evans-Pritchard summarizes his theoretical and methodological foundations as well as explains his celebrated typology of witchcraft and wizardry.

Like Boas and Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard views religion and magic in close connection with the social system of the community examined. In his later work *Nuer Religion*, he highlights the contribution of sociological approaches to the study of religion. He names, among others, Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, who he believes have convincingly demonstrated the connection between a number of religious phenomena and the social structure of the community examined. Evans-Pritchard does, however, criticize the idea of religion as a sanctified symbolic representation of the social order. "It was Durkheim and not the savage who made society into a god."[366] From the position of a social anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard condemns the traditional theory of the sociology of religion, and similarly rejects the generalizing period evolutionist and psychological theories. Without attempting to formulate his own systematic theory of religion, Evans-Pritchard encourages researchers to focus on a rigorous study of everyday, real-life religiosity. He believes that the focus of research on these forms of religion demonstrates that the so-called "religions of the primitives" are no different from the so-called world religions.[367]

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362 Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937). Some of the citations below are from the shortened 1976 edition in which the theoretical-methodological introduction is not included.

363 Idem, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

364 Idem, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

365 Idem, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

366 Idem, *Nuer Religion*, 313.

367 Ibid., 314.

Evans-Pritchard elaborates on his critical approach to traditional general theories about so-called "primitive religions" in *Theories of Primitive Religion*. He elaborates, with some reservations, on Tylor's minimalist definition, which he does not consider exhaustive enough. Evans-Pritchard also has a similar approach to linking concepts of religion and magic for research purposes.[368] Evans-Pritchard, however, calls for an anthropological study of religion to always relate religious phenomena to the social order of the given community. He argues that this is a theoretical-methodological premise which allows for an anthropological grasp of the topic of religion.

In *Theories of Primitive Religion*, Evans-Pritchard articulates the principles of a structural-functionalist approach to anthropological study of religion. He argues that to understand the role of religion, detailed knowledge of the social structure of the given community is necessary. In the case of individual religious phenomena, a relational analysis has to be carried out. This analysis has to be based on a search for the functional relationships of religious phenomena to other social realities (moral, ethical, economic, legal, aesthetic or scientific), as well as the relationships to the entire culture and society in which the religious phenomena examined are located.[369] Only through this procedure can the most precise understanding of the phenomena be attained. Religious phenomena studied: "(...) must be seen as a relation of parts to one another within a coherent system, each part making sense only in relation to the others, and the system itself making sense only in relation to other institutional systems (...)."[370]

Although religious phenomena must be studied within their socio-cultural relationships as a whole, Evans-Pritchard is aware that these relationships cannot be captured in their full complexity with no omissions. The anthropologist's description is always a selection and an abstraction. He explains his position on this issue at the very beginning of his first major monograph *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. The type of human behavior examined is always in relation to others, and if the phenomena are directly related and interdependent, they need to be captured and described, writes Evans-Pritchard.[371] When it comes to magic, witchcraft rituals and prophecies, these can function in relationship

368 Idem, *Theories of Primitive Religion*, 3–4.

369 Ibid., 112.

370 Ibid.

371 Idem, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic* (1937), 2.

to virtually any type of social activity. "In writing about Zande mystical beliefs and ritual practices, must I therefore describe the whole of Zande social life?," he asks, answering: "I think not. Everything in the world is ultimately related to everything else, but unless we make abstractions we cannot even commence to study phenomena."[372]

Evans-Pritchard's description and analysis of magic and witchcraft among the Azande in socio-cultural contexts is a deliberate, openly reflective, research construct based on extensive field research. Regarding procedure, he does not aim to provide a full description of all the social situations in which magic, witchcraft and prophecies occur, as that would be practically impossible. The aim is to examine the interrelationships between these practices and beliefs as an ideological system and how it is expressed in social behavior.[373] He clarifies: "agriculture, hunting, and collecting are not functions of these beliefs and rites, but the beliefs and rites are functions of agriculture, hunting, and collecting."[374]

The anthropologist's task is to therefore describe on the basis of the field data acquired the connection between magical acts in the context of social situations in the communities examined. An anthropologist should not only delineate the discovered facts, but seek out the relationships and connections between these facts. The analysis by the anthropologist is driven more by the question of "how" than "why."[375] The description and analysis of an anthropologist's findings are closely related, since the analysis and the resulting interpretation are actually contained in the facts themselves. Evans-Pritchard explains that an anthropologist is not simply an ethnographer who only collects the bare facts about Zande magic and witchcraft, but that the investigator must seek out the similarities and relationships between these facts. This serves as the basis for a comparison with our own beliefs and practices. He continues with the often cited question: "Is Zande thought so different from ours that we can only describe their speech and actions without comprehending them, or is it essentially like our own thought expressed in an idiom to which we are unaccustomed?"[376]

372 Ibid.

373 Ibid., 2–3.

374 Ibid., 3.

375 See ibid., 4.

376 Ibid.

Since the Zande mentality is essentially identical to ours, the researcher is thus entitled to ask what the motives are behind Zande behavior, how the Zande understand reality, and how those motives and concepts of reality are expressed in socio-cultural customs and practices. "My interpretations are contained in the facts themselves, for I have described the facts in such a way that the interpretations emerge as part of the description,"[377] Evans-Pritchard concludes.

A related important feature of Evans-Pritchard's approach to magic and witchcraft is challenging notions of rationality and irrationality as their defining characteristics. "Our" and Zande thought are essentially one and the same. In a comparative perspective, the Zande conception of magic and religion can therefore be grasped in terms inherent in "our" ideological world and the former distinctions between rational (scientific) and irrational (religious) thinking lose significance.

For Evans-Pritchard, magical and religious thought are therefore based on the same principles as other modes of thought, which can be described as scientific and cannot therefore be contemplated simply in terms of rationality or irrationality.[378] Magical and religious thought should be interpreted, however, exclusively in the context of its own socio-cultural environment in which it takes on its significance. Only within this environment can an anthropologist describe the mechanisms of how it works, the aforementioned "how" which always underlies the anthropologist's analysis.

One of the classic contributions of *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* to the anthropological theory of religion is the distinction between magic and witchcraft, which Evans-Pritchard bases on the perspective of the Azande themselves.[379] Witchcraft among the Azande is based on an unspecified substance which is a bodily part of witches and can be inherited from ancestors. This is a characteristic of an "organic," "biological" nature which allows a warlock or a witch to influence the course of events in the world. This can also come about without the intent or knowledge of the witch themselves. The witch usually casts

377 Ibid., 5.

378 Cf. Jacob Struan, "Two Sources of Michael Polanyi's Prototypal Notion of Incommensurability: Evans-Pritchard on Azande Witchcraft and St. Augustine on Conversion," *History of the Human Sciences* 16, no. 2 (2003): 57–76.

379 See Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press – Clarendon Press, 1976). The following paragraphs about witchcraft and magic are based on this revised edition.

no spells and uses no magical substances or medicines, but makes use of his innate magical powers. Unlike a witch, a wizard or a magician (who is always a man among the Azande) acquires his art by learning. A magician uses spells, ritual procedures and magical substances, medicines and herbs. He can cause both harm and benefit with his actions, and he carries out his activities in a deliberate and purposeful manner, often at the request of others. The magician uses his knowledge as a means of counteraction against the actions of witches, whose activity is the cause of unhappiness, sickness and death, and can be detected by the fortune-telling procedures the magician commands.

The concept of witchcraft allows the Azande to explain unfortunate events. In cases in which we would perceive coincidence, the Azande consider the influence of witchcraft. An example provided by Evans-Pritchard which is often cited is the collapse of a granary on a Zande who had been seeking shelter from the scorching sun in its shadow. This use of the shadow cast by a massive structure is described by Evans-Pritchard as an otherwise quite common and normal activity. The granary fell naturally because the wood rotted or because the termites eroded its massive, heavy structure, a causality about which the Azande have no doubts. The fact, however, that the unfortunate person was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time was not the result of any coincidence, but was caused by the activity of a witch. The concept of witchcraft allows for a missing link to be added and the completion of the causal chain.[380] The Azande belief in witchcraft also does not have the characteristic of a formalized worldview: it is formulated with regard to specific situations and in relation to the specific socio-cultural context of certain cases or situations, not as some explicit doctrinal system.[381]

One could criticize Evans-Pritchard's intellectualizing approach to magic and witchcraft among the Azande. He emphasizes the chains of causal thought into which witchcraft and magic fit in the given cultural context. Does, however, the need for a causal explanation or justification of the causes for the participants examined have a similar importance for the anthropologist and his "Western" Euro-American readership?

And if witchcraft and magic do not have the character of a formalized set of beliefs and practices for the Azande, does the anthropologist go too far in his attempt to interpret them and place them into a systematic context with a

380 Ibid., 22–23.

381 Ibid., 23.

socio-cultural context? In the act of describing and interpreting, the anthropologist is actually constructing a system which is accessible to the understanding of readers from "our" socio-cultural background.[382] Nevertheless, one should remain mindful of the fact that Evans-Pritchard quite deliberately presents a scientific anthropological abstraction of the phenomena examined: without abstraction, one cannot examine the phenomena at all.

An Example of an Interactive Perspective: Mary Douglas

The wide-ranging work of Mary Douglas is not merely limited to topics related to religion. It can be argued, however, that phenomena related to religiosity are among her principal areas of interest, and her significance for anthropology of religion is therefore without question. The work of Mary Douglas cannot be unequivocally classified as belonging to one of the paradigms in cultural anthropology as defined by Alan Barnard. He himself calls Douglas a "maverick" in the history of anthropology, for she is not in clear favor of either of the period paradigmatic trends. She does combine them, however, in a unique way.[383] Douglas proceeds from the structural-functionalist approach of her mentor Evans-Pritchard, while at the same time applying ideas of structuralism on both theoretical and interpretative levels as well as articulating concepts associated with symbolic and interpretative trends in anthropology. She builds her own original theoretical thinking on this rich foundation.[384]

A key publication in which Douglas focuses on the field of anthropology of religion is *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.[385] She bases her analytical interpretations and theoretical generalizations on a series of field data references which she draws primarily (but not exclusively) from two basic areas. She refers to the historical material contained in the ritual purity rules in the Tanakh, particularly in Leviticus, as well as to her own field research among the Lele tribe on the Kasai River, located in the Belgian

382 Brian Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion: An Introductory Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 194–195.

383 Barnard, *History and Theory*, 149.

384 Ibid., 152–157.

385 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966). Czech translation: eadem, *Čistota a nebezpečí. Analýza konceptu znečištění a tabu* (Praha: Malvern, 2014). I quote from the edition: eadem, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

Congo at that time. The binary opposition of "pure" and "impure" on which the monograph is built is based on a structuralist approach to the analysis of socio-cultural phenomena.[386]

Douglas explains her theoretical-methodological premises in the opening chapters of the book. The emphasis on the crucial importance of ethnographic data, which is obtained by direct observation in the field and forms the basis of an anthropological approach to religion, is evident from the first pages, where Douglas critically summarizes previous anthropological approaches to so-called "primitive" religions. She states that field observations do not support the assumption of nineteenth century missionaries, travelers, and ethnographers that "primitive religions" are defined primarily by fear. In opposition to this traditional assumption, Douglas places the conclusions of her teacher Evans-Pritchard along with her own observations: the Azande display genuine outrage when they learn that they have fallen victim to a witch; for the Nuer, god is a "close friend"; adults and children make disrespectful noises and play in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, at the very heart of the Catholic world. In conclusion, based on a number of field observations an anthropologist knows that religiosity is not usually associated with some horrific, fascinating mystery and sense of awe, as some nineteenth century missionaries, travelers, and ethnographers believed.[387]

Douglas argues, in contrast, that these traditional works describing so-called primitive religions present another general insight which she considers to be accurate: the insight that these religions are inextricably linked to topics of purity and impurity. Douglas states that hygiene issues are an excellent way to study religiosity. She notes that "dirt" is linked to disruption of order, and "cleansing" is an effort to organize our surroundings: "There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder."[388] Pollution or disease are often understood in conjunction with disturbance of the social order, and the conceptualization of "purity" is from this point of view a tool of social pressure to maintain order in society: anti-social behavior is accompanied by disturbance of order, therefore it is "impure" and, moreover, there is a danger that offenders will infect and endanger

386 In her later works, Douglas herself criticizes the assumptions in her early texts based on structuralist theory as "a too facile solution". See Mary Douglas, "Self-Evidence. The Henry Myers Lecture, Given for the Royal Anthropological Institute, 4 May 1972," in eadem, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1999): 252–283, 258.

387 Eadem, *Purity and Danger* (1984), 1–2.

388 Ibid., 2.

their close ones with this "impurity."[389] One who disturbs or "pollutes" the order of the world places themselves and society at risk. The ideas of the "pure," "impure" and the associated prohibitions, regulations or taboos, are symbolically related to the social order of a given society as a whole and must also be described and interpreted in relation to it.

As concerns the definition of religion, Douglas openly rejects that it is possible or even necessary to base anthropological research of religion on any settled definition. She does, however, eventually present her view of the concept. Her book begins with a critical overview of older approaches to the conceptualization of magic and religion. Douglas specifically examines works by William Robertson Smith, James George Frazer and Émile Durkheim, among others. She rejects the evolutionism-based idea that magic and religion are two different developmental stages of human thought. The strict separation of the magical and the religious is a mistake according to Douglas. This is demonstrated by the fact that the emphasis on an effective ritual process, which is supposed to be the foundation of magic, is actually part of religion, and the etic aspect, the supposed defining characteristic of religion, is also inherent in so-called primitive communities.[390]

Similarly to Evans-Pritchard, Douglas views as inadequate Tylor's minimalist definition of religion as a belief in spiritual beings. Compared to Evans-Pritchard, she is more critical towards it: "In the first place we shall not expect to understand religion if we confine ourselves to considering belief in spiritual beings, however the formula may be refined."[391] Despite her skeptical attitude toward the need for a definition, Douglas formulates a theory in which she outlines her approach to the conceptualization of religion. She views religion quite broadly as the worldview of the fate of humanity and its place in the world, including (among other things) ideas about contagion of disease as well as on the sacred and the secular. Religion and its contents and functions can then be explored and analyzed in a comparative perspective. The basis of a comparative analysis must be, however, critical reflection on our own concepts and categories. Douglas explains that we should, above all, stop trying to refine and polish definitions and focus instead

389 Ibid., 3.

390 See e.g. ibid., 28.

391 Ibid.

on comparing worldviews. Until we understand our own cosmological ideas and conceptions, we cannot expect to understand those of others.[392]

Similarly to Evans-Pritchard, Douglas holds the assumption that there are no fundamental differences between our own thinking about the world and the worldviews expressed by so-called primitive religions. Douglas notes that in "our" environment, "pure," in the general public awareness, is associated with hygiene issues only as a result of recent advances in the field of medical sciences, particularly the discovery of harmful microorganisms. When we look at the very fundamentals of the conceptualization of impurity in our environment and compare them to so-called primitive religions, fundamental similarities can be found. Shoes are not themselves unclean, for example, but it is unclean to place them on a dining table. This is defined by the order of how shoes are used.[393] Therefore exactly the same principles as in so-called primitive cultures lie at the heart of our own concept of purity. Douglas explains: "If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. (...) Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity."[394]

For Douglas, the basic definition of impurity as a state of "non-order" represents not only a cultural universal, but also a basis for interpreting the pure and the impure on a symbolic level. If we want to understand why in a particular socio-cultural environment a phenomenon is understood as "pure" or "impure," we have to first inquire about the ways in which the order is defined in a given socio-cultural context.

Douglas deals with a number of specific examples. Perhaps the most famous are those linked to the interpretation of kashrus in the Tanakh, Leviticus in particular, and linked to those animals which humans are allowed or forbidden to eat.[395] Douglas primarily expresses disagreement with the usual traditional ways of interpreting these dietary rules, whether this involves a claim that they

392 Ibid., 29.

393 See ibid., 37.

394 Ibid., 36–37.

395 See ibid., 42–58.

are an irrational, random selection of appropriate and prohibited edibles or a simple guide to life discipline. There is an elaborate order behind the kashrus dietary regulations which Douglas reveals in relation to the way ancient Jews classified the world, specifically animals. Consumption of a creature that somehow falls outside a given category is forbidden, and such a creature is "impure." The biblical order of God's creation is the key to interpreting the kashrus dietary regulations: "If the proposed interpretation of the forbidden animals is correct, the dietary laws would have been like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal."[396]

Thus, the consumption of food becomes a ritualized expression of respect for the order established by God himself as well as the fulfillment of the biblical command that every single Jew by living life "in holiness" should affirm Israel's covenant with God.

The book *Purity and Danger* was the subject of a number of critical reflections, and its concept of the (im)pure was used in a number of other works.[397] More recent works, however, have complemented, developed, and refined Douglas's theories rather than rejecting and refuting them completely. These later works also correct some of the mistakes which Douglas made, for example in her interpretation of the biblical texts.[398] The conjunction of the concept of purity and social order may also be considered too simplistic, if only because the concept of "order" may differ substantially in the perspectives of the various participants of the examined environment itself, and of course may be subject to change. If the "impurity" is dependent on the observer, certain other questions must also be posed: who and under what circumstances is the "observer"? The conjunction of concepts of purity and impurity with the social

396 Ibid., 58.

397 Pádraig Belton, *An Analysis of Mary Douglas"s Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2017).

398 The biblical studies scholar Walter Houston draws attention, for example, to the factual errors Douglas makes in her interpretation of the Bible verses – Walter Houston, *Purity and Monotheism. Clean and Uncelan Animals in Biblical Law* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1993). For the influence of Douglas's work on biblical studies, see Jonathan Klawans, "Purity in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. John J. Collins, Timothy H. Lim (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 377–403.

order cannot easily be used to interpret all kinds of cases of things and phenomena that are considered "impure." Thus, for example, more recent research has added an evolutionary perspective to this interpretation of the "impure." The conceptualization of certain things as "impure" seems to be linked to the evolutionary disposition to avoid that which is detrimental to health such as purulence or feces.[399]

Finnaly anthropology of religion can be considered a self-contained, fully established area of study within the framework of cultural anthropology. Its subject of study, theoretical bases, and the history of research associated with it are closely linked to certain related disciplines, particularly study of religions and sociology. Its specificity lies primarily in its emphasis on in-depth research into the socio-cultural context of religiously interpreted phenomena which the researcher conducts directly in the field using ethnographic research methods. Anthropology of religion primarily focuses on real-life everyday religiosity and seeks to primarily describe and analyze the emic aspect of the religiously interpreted facts, experiences and norms that are defined through research. Therein lies the theoretical-methodological basis of the anthropology of religion. Another essential feature of anthropology of religion is its emphasis on the research response to individual religiously interpreted experience, and only then can this response be linked to the whole of the socio-cultural environment examined with an emphasis on a holistic perspective. The attempt to employ a reflexive aspect to the study of religion is a contribution related to the development of a particular cultural-anthropological theoretical-methodological background. Although these characteristics are not exclusively linked to anthropology of religion and are present in research linked to related scholarly disciplines as well, they represent an established component of the anthropological exploration of religion both in the historical perspective of its formation and in current research.

399 See Robbie Duschinsky, "Introduction," in *Purity and Danger Now: New Perspectives*, ed. idem, Simone Schnall, Daniel H. Weiss (New York: Routledge 2016), 1–21. See also Richard Fardon, "Purity as Danger: "*Purity and Danger* Revisited" at Fifty," in *Purity and Danger Now: New Perspectives*, ed. Robbie Duschinsky, Simone Schnall, Daniel H. Weiss (New York: Routledge 2016), 23–33. Cf. the summary of approaches to excrement as "impure" in the perspectives of Douglas, Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva in Kelly Anspaugh, "Powers of Ordure: James Joyce and the Excremental Vision(s)," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 27, no. 1 (1994): 73–100.

6. A Cultural-Ecological Approach in the Study of Religions

Rudolf Havelka

Cultural-ecological approaches to anthropology generally deal with the relationship between the environment and human culture, both in a synchronic and diachronic sense (in an evolutionary perspective). Many protagonists of this research approach directly refer to the issue of religion as one of the important components of human culture. The conclusions of more general cultural-ecological studies can also be applied to research specifically focused on religion.

In the Anglophone tradition of early cultural anthropology, Julian Steward is considered the first researcher in this field. Steward drew ethnographic data for his theoretical conclusions from field research into indigenous cultures, for example in the Great Basin, but also in Peru (he was the editor of the extensive compendium *Handbook of South American Indians*).[400] Unusual for the mid-20th century, Steward's field research focused on the practical theme of ways of subsistence in the ecological context, including its technological and social connotations. He generalized the conclusions of his research in the 1972 study *Theory of Cultural Change*,[401] in which culture is described as a form of adaptation to the environment. Steward emphasizes the importance of the so-called "cultural core," i.e. those constitutional elements of culture that are most closely connected with subsistence. By comparing the cultural cores of different cultures, he was able to create a typology. In opposition to primitive ecological determinism, Steward's theory of "multilinear cultural evolution" explains the principle of an independent albeit type-related, for example within circumpolar ethnic groups, cultural adaptation to a specific environment. In the post-war years (1946-1953), Steward developed a coterie of students including,

400 Julian H. Steward, ed., *Handbook of South American Indians* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1946).

401 Julian H. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

for instance, Roy Rappaport (see below). Steward's work then became inspired by the well-known "cultural materialist" Marvin Harris, who interpreted for example Aztec ceremonial cannibalism from this perspective, in this case the lack of animal protein.[402]

Outside the Anglophone context, the Swedish study of religions scholar Åke Hultkrantz attempted to apply Steward's general theoretical conclusions directly to the study of religion. Hultkrantz was aware of the a priori methodological difficulties, since religion according to Steward is not one of the components comprising a cultural core which is directly affected by adaptation to a given ecosystem. Perhaps due to his anchoring in the Scandinavian phenomenological tradition, Hultkrantz surprisingly strongly rejects the possibility that religion is directly influenced by the ecological, economic and technical context of the culture in which the religion is practiced: "Religion as such, the religious sentiment etc., cannot be coped with ecologically, it springs from sources associated with the psychological make-up of man."[403]

By emphasizing the great autonomy of "truly religious" phenomena, the author indirectly opposes excessive reductionism. Thus, according to Hultkrantz, religion is affected by the environment only indirectly (not by direct determinism) through other parts of the culture which are "closer" to its core, as defined by Steward. Hultkrantz sees the influence of the environment on religion for example in the fact that selected elements of the environment represent "material," a kind of basis for the religious rituals and beliefs of the population under study, especially in the "primitive" environment of religion (including in prehistory). Here Hultkrantz also sees a limitation in the applicability of the ecological approach to the study of religion in the narrower sense, since it is these that are most "visibly" influenced by their natural environment.[404]

Hultkrantz views the methodological potential of the synthesis of Steward's theory of cultural types and religion mainly in the creation of an analogous, expanding theory of types of religion in which the key classification attributes of a given religious type would be defined, i.e. those attributes which are most

402 Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

403 Åke Hultkrantz, "An Ecological Approach to Religion," Ethnos 31, no. 1 (1966): 142; see also Åke Hultkrantz, "Ecology of Religion: Its Scope and Methodology," in *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*, ed. Lauri Honko (Berlin: Mouton, 1979), 226.

404 Hultkrantz, "Ecology of Religion: Its Scope and Methodology," 224, 229.

closely connected with its cultural core in Steward's sense. An example of one of these types would be the "Arctic hunting religion."[405]

Unlike the conservative attempt at a religious elaboration of early cultural ecology as represented by Hultkrantz, the further development of the Steward cultural ecology school was fundamentally linked as well as enriched by the simultaneous development of theoretical knowledge in systems theory and ecology as a discipline. This historical-scientific context should be mentioned briefly in order to understand the fundamental difference for example between the approaches in the works of Åke Hultkrantz and Roy Rappaport or Gregory Bateson (see below), although the first two researchers were practically peers, and Bateson (born 1904) was practically a generation older.

The second and subsequent generation of American anthropologists studying cultural ecology had thus already been directly influenced by the new ecological paradigm in the narrower sense, the central concept of which is the key term "ecosystem." Although this term had been used before, it was developed and defined primarily by the American biologist and ecologist Eugene Odum.[406]

The ecological paradigm seemed extremely suitable again especially for the cultural-ecological study of relatively small groups of hunters, gatherers and "horticulturalists," whose plant component of food is provided by a combination of the cultivation of native wild crops as well as gathering. In these societies it is relatively easy to identify and describe the links within one ecosystem.[407] These groups can be perceived in a strictly ecological lexicon as an analytical unit of research, "a population," i.e. a territorially defined group which, like other ("non-human") populations in the ecosystem, shares specific ways in which it achieves a set of trophic relationships with the ecosystem it inhabits.[408]

Within one ecosystem, culturally and ecologically oriented anthropologists attempted to describe and analyze the environmental and behavioral relationships between its subsystems, including human communities. The fact is emphasized that human culture does not exist in isolation from the ecosystem to which it necessarily belongs and to varying degrees co-creates. Analogous

405 Åke Hultkrantz, "Type of Religion in the Arctic Hunting Cultures," in *Hunting and Fishing*, ed. Harald Hvarfner (Luleå: Norrbottens Museum, 1965), 265–318.

406 Eugene Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953).

407 See e.g. Roy Ellen, *Environment, Subsistence and System: The Ecology of Small-Scale Social Formations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 75–78.

408 Ibid.

to other subsystems of the holistic ecosystem, modern cultural ecology does not perceive human culture as a more or less closed ecosystem-independent system. Culture and the environment are not understood as separate spheres, but as interconnected subsystems of the superior (eco)system. In this way, the ecosystem and culture are interconnected and linked by feedback causality. All social activities thus directly or indirectly affect ecological processes. This phenomenon, although appearing elsewhere, is more evident in the environment of hunting and gathering and pastoral societies then, for example, in urban cultures (even archaic ones). Social activities within hunting and gathering as well as pastoral groups have an immediate environmental impact, although generally less permanent and potentially irreversible. In this way, the link between social activities and their ecological impacts is more noticeable and describable, especially over the short term, for example in field research or in a more limited research framework (e.g. one family or community). Seemingly small social phenomena and their ecological connotations are also taken into account, as they can potentially impact (due to the general properties of systems) the entire system.

In the classical concept of Odum ecology, an ecosystem can be understood simply as a closed system. On the other hand, any ecosystem that interacts with other ecosystems (i.e. involving an energy and information exchange) is an open system. Thus, every living ecosystem is necessarily an open system. It is only open systems, especially biological ones, that are able to attain a time-independent state that oscillates around a genuine state of equilibrium (homeostasis). However, constant changes are manifested in the system which, due to mutual correction (multiple and mutual negative feedback), do not deviate the system from a near state of equilibrium. These nonlinear oscillations allow for both adaptive changes in the system and the dynamic character of the system, which remains compositionally constant despite these irreversible processes and external influences constantly taking place within it.[409] In other words, "[H]omeostasis regulates the [inside of the] system by keeping the state of the contained variables within limits that allow the system to continue to exist."[410]

[409] Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 142.

[410] Roy Ellen, *Environment, Subsistence and System: The Ecology of Small-Scale Social Formations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 181.

Hunting and gathering as well as pastoral societies live (or have lived in the past) in close relationship with a given ecosystem and are not largely isolated from it either in fact (energy flow) or mentally (information flow) from their perspective. These societies are also usually strongly conservative and also, seemingly paradoxically, quite adaptable in terms of sensitive reactions to the ongoing changes in various parts of the superstructure (eco)system. Between the ecosystem and the human community which is part of it (the subsystem), a large number of complex feedback processes occur that allow for the existence of the largely homeostatic state[411] of the whole system in which the balance of the ecosystem is maintained and thus the survival of the community in it.

It is the role of social phenomena which we conventionally refer to as "religious" in the process of maintaining a homeostatic state in the (eco)system of a given human population in its environment that is the central theme of cultural-ecological studies focused more specifically on religious research.

Roy Rappaport's study *Pigs for the Ancestors* is a classic example of research from the 1960s focused on the regulatory significance of religious rituals.[412] His field research took place in the cultural environment of the Maring of New Guinea, specifically the Tsembaga tribe. The main source of livelihood of the Maring is horticulture along with hunting, gathering and pig husbandry. Pigs were killed in limited quantities for about ten years, for example at weddings. Over time, the herd of pigs become too large and begin to make horticulture more difficult to manage, this being mainly the responsibility of women, as pigs in herds need more food than is available in nature and must be actively provided with supplemental feeding from agricultural production. The *kaiko* festival is initiated by uprooting a bush called *rumbim.* During this festival, the majority of the pigs are killed. During the festival attended by Rappaport, 96 pigs were killed over two days, which was equal to almost 2.5 kg of meat per person. In other time periods, the Maring diet is relatively poor in animal protein. About two-thirds of the meat is distributed to neighboring allies. This connotation is important to ensure the allies' allegiance in physical battles to come, as the uprooting of this bush at the same time initiates ritual fighting against enemy tribes during which specific "villages" are abandoned for several years, or even permanently. After the relatively ritualized battles when a truce is agreed upon,

411 Although the word "state" implies stasis, a continuous dynamic process is at work here.

412 Roy A. Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

the *rumbim* bush is planted again and the taboo against warfare is reinstated which establishes a new social *status quo*. In this ritual cycle, Rappaport sees a form of negative feedback that helps restore both the social and ecological balance. The social balance is established between men and women: reducing workload in taking care of food and the large pig population as well as establishing an alliance with friendly tribes and achieving a newly defined truce with enemy tribes after ritually fought battles. The ecological balance is restored: by culling the large pig population together with the consumption of nutritious food (meat) before the fighting period and thus reducing the pigs impact on the environment along with restoring the fertility of depleted agricultural land by changing the location of "villages" due to fighting.

Rappaport's research was primarily quantitative in nature (in the sense of a strictly ecological approach). Rappaport sought to consistently quantify as many as possible of the variables entering the system and set thresholds for each of the key indicators that keep the whole system running.[413] Despite this focus, the study strictly distinguishes between the implicitly functional meaning of specific rituals within the entire ritual cycle, and their socially reflected meaning. These meanings were socially understood in such a way that the right time to initiate the *kaiko* ritual is determined by ancestral spirits. Rappaport deliberately[414] does not provide an answer to the question of the origin of the ritual cycle, but does convincingly demonstrate that religious rituals can play a culturally adaptive role in maintaining an inhabited environment with more or less equilibrium, one with ecological principles which are difficult to grasp overtly and are socially intuitively modeled by beliefs in a supernatural being endowed with a supra-human mind and the power and rituals of consecration.

The growing emphasis on the importance of the cultural-adaptive role of religion (specifically rituals) in Roy Rappaport's work is especially evident in his posthumously published book *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999) in which he applies systems theory not only to the role of religion in the human system society-environment, but also to the internal self-regulation of religious systems themselves.[415]

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413 Rappaport, *Pigs for the Ancestors*, 230.

414 Ibid., 230.

415 Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 429–437.

According to Rappaport,[416] one of the most important roles of religion in cultural adaptation is that through it the individual and the community can to some extent overcome their (self)consciousness. This is usually inextricably linked with an intentional, purposeful effort to achieve a specific goal which seems significant and beneficial (to the individual) at that moment. Thus as a rule defined purposeful thinking and behavior in a holistic, long-term perspective is harmful within the superstructure system (social, and more broadly, ecological and even global). According to the British-American anthropologist (and multidisciplinarian) Gregory Bateson, from whom Rappaport often draws, intentional human consciousness precludes the view of the environment as a larger interactive system "which, if disturbed, is likely to generate exponential curves of change."[417] An example of such an exponential curve is the growing pig population in the Rappaport study. In Bateson's conception, consciousness is primarily organized precisely on the basis of intentionality and is thus a shortcut used to obtain what one wants, i.e. not to act with maximum "wisdom" for the purpose of survival, but to follow the shortest logical and causal path to what an individual or group wants at a given moment, thereby disrupting the feedback homeostatic systems within the body as well as the superstructure:

"On the one hand, we have the systemic nature of the individual human being, the systemic nature of the culture in which he lives, and the systemic nature of the biological, ecological system around him; and, on the other hand, the curious twist in the systemic nature of the individual man whereby consciousness is, almost of necessity, blinded to the systemic nature of man himself. Purposive consciousness pulls out, from the total mind, sequences which do not have the loop structure which is characteristic of the entire systemic structure. If you follow the "common-sense" dictates of consciousness you become, effectively, greedy and unwise – again I use "wisdom" as a word for recognition of and guidance by a knowledge of the entire systemic creature. The lack of systemic wisdom is always punished. One could argue that the biological systems – the individual, the culture and ecology – are partly living sustainers of their component cells or organisms. The systems are capable,

[416] Ibid., 401.

[417] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1972]), 439.

however, of punishing any species unwise enough to quarrel with its ecology. Call the systemic forces "God" if you will."[418]

Participation in rituals dedicated to supernatural beings and the very human ability to imagine these supernatural beings envisaged with minds analogous to human minds, only (ideally) more and clearer knowing, are key according to Bateson and Rappaport.[419] Partaking in these rituals (through culturally embedded, highly formalized rites and imagery) are thus a way for people at the individual and community level to intuitively cope with or "balance" problems concerning the regulation of their intentional behaviors which could potentially cause imbalances both in society and in the ecosystem.

It is apparent that mere formal participation in religious rituals cannot influence the "purposeful" environmentally harmful behavior of an individual to a large extent. The psychological state that allows an individual to perceive the holistic nature of the environment is a state that Bateson and Rappaport[420] call "grace," which is characterized by the unification of subconscious intuition and consciousness.

The term grace, rooted in Christian theology, is somewhat disruptive in the context of cultural ecology, which is largely associated with research in the environment of originally non-Christian, animist cultural groups. Nevertheless, this theme, which is referred to in various ways, is a relatively common leitmotif of studies devoted to, for example, North American indigenous people or the so-called small nations of Siberia. This state of mind, based on everyday practices within a given environment and at the same time on a shared tradition is called for example by (researcher of the Evenki) David Anderson[421] "sentient ecology," and by Fikret Berkes in a synthesizing study of the same name "sacred ecology."[422] In addition, according to R. Nelson, for the traditional Koyukon Athapaskans, religious [i]deology is a fundamental element of subsistence, as important as the more tangible practicalities of harvesting and utilizing natural resources. Most interactions with natural entities are governed in some way

418 Ibid., 440.

419 Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 403.

420 Ibid., 383.

421 David Anderson, *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

422 Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology. Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1999).

by a moral code that maintains a proper spiritual balance between the human and nonhuman worlds. This is not an esoteric abstraction, but a matter of direct, daily concern to the Koyukon people. Failure to behave according to the dictates of this code can have an immediate impact on the violator's health or success. And so, when Koyukon people carry out their subsistence activities they make many decisions on the basis of supernatural concerns. The world is ever aware.[423]

The British anthropologist Tim Ingold (see below) deals in detail with the theoretical comprehension of the process by which this mental state is achieved as well as how the achievement of this state, which facilitates the maintenance of a balance with the given environment, is supported by the given cultural tradition.

In many hunting and gathering and pastoral societies, an intuitive, socially shared, understanding of feedback systems in the ecosystem (including human society) results in a relatively abstract, universal cosmic principle. This cosmic order, or *logos* in the sense synthesized by Rappaport, is a principle that unites nature, society, human individuals, and supernatural beings of power into

[a] great cosmos, (…) which is eternal, true, moral, and in some sense harmonious. Logoi are conceived to be naturally and divinely constituted but, because they are incomplete without human participation, and because human action may be understood to be requisite to their maintenance, they are, and may be recognized to be, human constructions as well. Although humans should follow them, it is within their power to ignore the Logos, or even to violate it.[424]

Rappaport also features a number of *logoi* from various cultural backgrounds, such as the *wakan-tanka* ("Great Sacred" or "Great Spirit") of the North American Dakota, a division of the Sioux nation. *Wakan* has the character of something that is not fully intelligibly comprehensible, something that is inaccessible to analysis or "disassembly," and that is primordial.[425] *Wakan-tanka* is an all-encompassing and non-personified existence, which contains elements of the heavenly and earthly including animate and inanimate nature. These

[423] Richard K. Nelson, *Make Prayers to the Raven. A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 15–16.

[424] Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 353.

[425] Ibid., 361.

elements are not only encompassed in the concept, but transcend them: "Basically, there is no reality other than wakan-tanka." In the human world, one of the symbols of the *wakan-tanka* is a circle represented by the organization of a camp within which the Dakota peace (universe) rules, a *wakan-tanka*, and outside, where enemies, evil spirits, randomness, unpredictable everyday events reside, including those of the white man. *Wakan-tanka* can be, however, weakened and thrown off balance, either by human actions or other conditions. A Dakota man can only restore this balance through ritual. Most Native American nations had a similar concept of the cosmic order that guided them and which they were obliged to ritually restore periodically. These included, for example, *orenda* of the Iroquois, *pokunt* of the Shoshone, *manitou* of the Algonquian and Navajo *hózhó.* In the Siberian region, perhaps an analogous order known under the Russian term *zakon tundry* (law of the tundra) might be mentioned.[426]

Roy Rappaport viewed his study *Ritual and Religion* as the culmination of his research efforts. This effort began with *Pigs for the Ancestors*, in which he functionally described the importance of ritual behavior for maintaining the homeostatic balance of the "unit" of the human population and its environment. This led up to his final study, in which he expanded his research to include a more philosophical-religious description of the role of religious ritual as a phenomenon of central religion as such in the process of humanity's adaptation to the cosmos.[427] In my opinion, *Ritual and Religion* remains most valuable in its chapters dealing directly with the adaptive role of religion in the narrower, ecological sense. Certain captured phenomena relatively vaguely outlined here such as the phenomenon of "grace" and intuition, which facilitates a holistic perception of the inhabited natural environment, are phenomena potentially open to empirical research, for example within experimental methods of cognitive science of religion (see the relevant chapter of this book).

The bridging between analytical and methodological problems within field research and the resultant theoretical conclusions remains the dominant issue of all holistic cultural-anthropological approaches. This is all the more true for research which directed toward the field of the very complex relationships of human societies (or, strictly ecologically, communities), their culture and their

426 Florian Stammler, *Reindeer Nomads Meet the Market* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2005), 84.

427 Cf. Robert A. Segal, "Religion as Ritual: Roy Rappaport's Changing Views from Pigs for the Ancestors (1968) to Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity (1999)," in *Contemporary Theories of Religion: a Critical Companion*, ed. Michael Stausberg (New York: Routledge, 2009), 66.

environment. Attaining a state of intuition, or "grace," as mentioned above, is associated for example with a number of psychological and social connotations which are in fact necessarily related again to the inhabited environment. The following representative example can be mentioned. The issue of obtaining information (in the cyber sense)[428] about a given environment and the individual and social coding within it has an impact on repeated behavior towards this environment. In order for such research to be conducted in a rigorously scientific manner with quantitatively descriptive outputs, projects cannot be conceived holistically as part of long-term research into the cultural adaptation of a particular ethnic group which takes into account the maximum number of all variables which are dynamic and occurring in time. Research will always be a matter of creating a more or less sophisticated model, usually verbal, descriptive, even narrative, within cultural anthropology. By analyzing the observed and described individual phenomena and processes, it should be possible to achieve their maximum simplification (methodological adjustment), enabling the design of a method for the experimental research or, more precisely, verification. It should always be borne in mind, however, that such a separately studied partial phenomenon has an interpretable meaning only within its context, and it is thus impossible to draw general conclusions from the partial research itself (as the early researchers in cognitive science of religion often attempted to do).

Within traditional social anthropology (i.e. outside the scientific neo-Darwinist evolutionary and cognitive approaches),[429] the synthesis by the British anthropologist Tim Ingold is likely the most elaborate and most closely paradigmatic outline of a perspective for approaching the study of the relationship between man and society to the environments they inhabit. Like those who came before and after him, Ingold traditionally conducts work on hunting and gathering as well as pastoral cultures.

In his work on the relationship of the Skolt Sami to their environment,[430] for example, Ingold's research career followed to some extent the direction of the most important cultural anthropologists in field research towards theoretical studies. These researchers draw both on their own experience working

428 See, for example, Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 315.

429 See Martin Lang, Radek Kundt, "Evolutionary, Cognitive, and Contextual Approaches to the Study of Religious Systems: a Proposition of Synthesis," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 32, no. 1 (2020): 1–46.

430 Tim Ingold, *The Skolt Lapps Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

in the field as well as on the studies of other cultural anthropologists.[431] In a retrospective written more than 20 years later,[432] Ingold indicated his increasing concern about the implicit dichotomy between man as a social being and man as an organism in his environment. This dividing line follows the general long-term dichotomous perspectives of the social and natural sciences. The way this paradigmatic discrepancy might be overcome was outlined by Ingold in a set of thematically focused studies published in the monographs *The Perception of the Environment*[433] and *Being Alive*,[434] in which he applied his approach, which was inspired by the synthesis of ecological psychology, systems biology and relational approaches in cultural anthropology to selected areas of basic anthropological topics, such as ways of providing livelihood, living in the most general sense of dwelling, and various practical skills. Ingold views these topics from a very theoretical perspective, but still draws his conclusions on the basis of specific ethnographic data, usually drawn from case studies conducted in the environment of hunting and gathering as well as pastoral societies.

Ingold's "dwelling perspective" provides an explanatory / interpretive framework for the study of various cultural phenomena in a given environment. This approach has been followed in research conducted by many anthropologists, especially those dealing with circumpolar "small" nations (see below). The work has three main sources of inspiration. The first one is philosophical phenomenology, namely Heidegger, especially the 1951 article *Bauen, wohnen, denken* (Building, Dwelling, Thinking), and Merleau-Ponty, in particular his 1945 work *Phénomenologie de la perception*. Following Heidegger, Ingold comprehends the way of living in the world as determination for every other human activity ("building") both on the ground and in the imagination. Ingold based his perspective on the assumption that "the forms humans build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the currents of their involved

431 Tim Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists and Ranchers: Reindeer Economies and their Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Tim Ingold, *The Appropriation of Nature: Essays on Human Ecology and Social Relations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987).

432 Tim Ingold, "From Science to Art and Back Again: The Pendulum of an Anthropologist," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 43, (2018): 213–227.

433 Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

434 Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011).

activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings."[435]

Human activity on the ground is thus an interaction between man and his surroundings, which man simultaneously shapes and is shaped by. At the level of material culture, man then works *with* materials, not *from* materials. In contrast to Heidegger's limited distinction between the world of animals that exist in their surroundings and the world of people who are in a world partly of their own work, Ingold argues that the relational systems "organism in a given surrounding" and the "human being in the world" are ontologically equivalent. If this is so, it is then possible to include phenomenology and ecology under the same paradigm. According to Ingold, animals as well as humans "deftly" lead their lives both in and through their environment using their ability to focus on and respond to the world. These abilities are acquired and embodied in their organisms through active participation in the world and through acquired experience. Since Heidegger's concept of dwelling is relatively static (standing in opposition to the dualism of the mind as an "entity" for which the body is only a carrier), Ingold is further inspired by the psychology of "direct perception" by James J. Gibson.[436] Ingold emphasizes perception as a product of the movement of the whole organism in a given environment, within which it does not perceive "things," but only the particular aspects ("affordances") necessary to for the organism to perform a specific task. In Gibson's perspective, however, the world is somehow passive, with its meaning coming only through the "need" of a given organism. As Ingold notes aphoristically, the world understood in this way "affords" a great deal, but does not afford "dwelling," creating a perspective which is alienated and non-interactive. To bridge this weak point of Gibson's theory of perception, Ingold turns to Merleau-Ponty, whose main thesis is the claim that man (and any organism) is "woven" into the world to such an extent that his perception is actually the perception of the world by the world itself. In this view, the inhabited world is itself sentient. This thesis is fully in line with the Batesonian characterization of the ecosystem as a system in which mental activity takes place (in the form of receiving, reflecting on and responding to

[435] Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 10.

[436] James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979).

changes taking place) and of which the individual and the human community are part (a subsystem).

The way of perception of the inhabited ecosystem in a specific "eco-social" framework of hunting and gathering as well as pastoral societies is quite specific. In many ways, this eco-social perspective differs from the way the surrounding world is commonly perceived in modern Western societies. The differences mainly lie in the sensitivity of the eco-social view to changes in the environment as well as in the manner of individual and social response to these changes. The basic characteristics of this perspective are mentioned by Ingold in the 1996 article *Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment*:[437] hunters and gatherers do not perceive themselves as separate from the surrounding world in such a way that they would differ in a relevant way from animals, which are seen in some sense as equivalent to them. Hunters view the surrounding world as fully soulful, not just as a neutral "space" filled with objects and matter. Their relationship to this world is based on engagement through routines, i.e. day-to-day activities largely associated with ways of subsistence, natural materials for various uses, etc. These activities are qualitatively different from the activities associated with the ways of subsistence of most members of contemporary Western cultures: "Nor, however, can [the activities of hunter cultures] be regarded as planned interventions in nature, launched from the separate platform of society, as implied in the notion of production."[438]

In anthropology, the term "foraging" is widely used to refer to the sum of sustenance-seeking activities of hunters-gatherers-pastoralists. This word is rejected by Ingold for its behavioral connotations i.e. behaviorism's tendency to understand these activities as relatively primitive responses to external environmental stimuli and therefore unsuitable for designating a set of very complex activities of hunters and gatherers. He suggests "procurement" as a suitable term, an expression with aptly describes the nature of activities conventionally referred to as hunting and gathering, which are in fact extremely complex activities requiring both a large amount of practical knowledge (leading to intuition) and skills that take place "in an environment replete with other agent powers of one kind and another."[439]

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437 Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, 40–60.

438 Ibid., 58.

439 Ibid., 59.

According to Ingold, the emphasis on the ability to (intuitively) reflect the changes taking place in a given environment is manifested in the way these activities necessary for a traditional way of life are "taught," including teaching about religious phenomena such as ritual practice.[440] Teaching takes place with an absolute minimum of verbal instruction. From an early age, children learn by imitating as they participate in virtually all age-appropriate activities. In response to certain approaches in cognitive anthropology, Ingold describes this learning process as a "guided rediscovery" through which it is important for the novice to gain immediate personal experience.[441] At a more abstract level, he summarizes the learning process in hunting and gathering as well as pastoral societies as "education of attention" towards environmental phenomena.

Ingold's theoretical monographs, which analyze the relationship of "natural nations" to the environment they inhabit, along with his direct teaching at the University of Manchester and later in Aberdeen, have influenced a number of prominent social anthropologists of the "great middle generation," many of whom followed Ingold's circumpolar ethnic research approaches in several ways.

In a partial dialogue with Ingold's theoretical contributions to the ways in which hunters and gatherers perceive the environment, professor at the University of Haifa Nurit Bird-David has formulated a somewhat complementary theory, one which views animism as "relational epistemology." Like Ingold, Bird-David opposes rationalist epistemology, which is generally understood in Western culture as the only objective and correct approach to scientific work. From this perspective, animism, for example as presented by E. B. Tylor, is understood as a "mere" type of primitive religion with a misunderstood "primitive" epistemology. In the mind set of an "objective" scientist, according to Bird-David,[442] it is difficult to understand when a member of a hunting and gathering population (here specifically the South Indian Nayaka tribe) is "talking with trees." The researcher uses "talking" here as shorthand for various forms of social behavior towards objects or groups of objects of an animate and in-

[440] Tim Ingold, "Religious Perception and the Education of Attention," *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 4, no. 2 (2014), 156–158.

[441] Tim Ingold, "From the Transmission of Representations to the Educations of Attention," ed. Harvey Whitehouse, *The Debated Mind: Evolutionary Psychology Versus Ethnography* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 113–153.

[442] Nurit Bird-David, "'Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology," *Current Anthropology* 40 (1999): 67–91.

animate nature. The purpose of such actions is intuitive mutual[443] learning as well as learning about relationships among other entities of the environment in a specific spatio-temporal context. In contrast, atomization and the conscious distance of the learning subject from the learned object are inherent to Western objective learning. Although this relational way of learning is not the only way the Nayaka approach their environment, it is the way they prefer and is also inherent in other hunting and gathering societies.[444]

The last comprehensively elaborated ecological-religious theory which we will include in this section is the "relatively universalist"[445] theory of relations of members of cultures of various ideal types to their environment. This model was described in a monograph by the French cultural anthropologist Phillipe Descola, a student of Claude Lévi-Strauss who remains faithful to the tradition of structuralism. Descola finds the basic "structure" in evolutionarily developed cognitive schemes in a process that allows for and at the same time limits the variability of known forms of culture. As a basic ideal scheme, one which is still cognitive in nature, Descola introduces four "modes of [self] identification" called animism, totemism, naturalism and analogism as well as six modes of relations among these. Since these terms were already in use in various ways with various meanings, Descola describes in detail how he intends to employ them. Animism and totemism are not to be used all that differently from how these terms are generally understood. Naturalism is the way of relating to the world which has been specific to Western rationalist culture since approximately the seventeenth century. Although the basic features of Descola's definition of naturalism include a (hierarchical) continuity between animate and inanimate nature as well as among various plant and animal species, what has been practically separated from nature is the mental human world, which forms the basis of specifically human culture (as opposed to nature), and specifically modern culture, which is seen to have advanced far beyond other cultures, both previous historical periods as well as "primitive" societies. The world of nature and the world of other cultures are typically approached from a rational distance (in a putatively neutral or objective way), or from a perspective of relative su-

[443] The quotation marks around the word 'mutual' are intentionally omitted in the text because in this case it is a matter of reciprocity, achieved regardless of whether it is a thought or real.

[444] Ibid. 78.

[445] Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 305.

periority.[446] Analogism, Descola's fourth mode, has historically existed mainly in traditional Chinese religion and in pre-modern Europe. A typical feature of analogism is, for example, a parallel understanding of the interaction between the regions of the microcosm and the macrocosm (e.g. astrology), in metempsychosis as well as in Galenic medicine, which works with an analogous theory of elements.

Added to the four primary modes of identification are the six modes of relations that a member of a given culture has to entities in the environment: exchange, predation, gift, production, protection and transmission. Combinations of these basic modes "suffice to explain the principles underlying most known ontologies and cosmologies."[447]

As the title of Descola's monograph suggests, his goal is to overcome the rationalist dichotomy between nature and culture to consider different "ontologies" in their own perspective. Descola, however, approaches these issues without postmodern resignation to the deeper, common principles he had found in evolutionary cognitive schemes which determine the basic conceivable features of any culture. Descola has thus been critically derided that his structuralist and schematic approach lies too deeply within the tradition of naturalism, if we use Descola's term. Marshall Sahlins[448] argues for example that Descola in fact divides known cultural types into only two groups, with his naturalistic ontology enabling him to "look down" on anthropomorphic ontologies, which can be then rather perfunctorily divided into the animistic, totemic and analogous. From a similar position, Ingold criticizes Descola's approach, calling the latter's laborious and conservative approach an anachronistic one which is not suitable to the study and description of real societies in a specific environment.[449]

Even in my admittedly somewhat subjective choice of representative cultural-ecological approaches in anthropology to present here, the gradual effort toward the use of as many scientific approaches as is possible is obvious.

446 Ibid., 172–200.

447 Ibid., 114.

448 Marshall Sahlins, "On the Ontological Scheme of *Beyond Nature and Culture*," HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 4, no. 1 (2013).

449 "I believe that Descola's approach is an anachronistic one, and that it belongs more to the museum of ontology than to the dynamic, pulsating, weather-beaten world that we inhabit every day of our lives." (Tim Ingold, "A Naturalist Abroad in the Museum of Ontology: Philippe Descola's Beyond Nature and Culture," *Anthropological Forum* 26 (2016): 301–320.

This effort can be seen to culminate in Roy Rappaport's *Pigs for the Ancestors*, published in 1968. This experimentally rigorous approach, however, did not become prevalent. In my view the central issue is that of bridging the middle range analytic problem, i.e. the methodological bridging of the gap between ecological (natural science) data and the symbolic-religious systems of hunting and gathering as well as pastoral societies. Within field research, it is practically impossible to describe in a scientific way such a complex feedback system as that of a given human society (a population) within its environment (ecosystem). In relatively recent monographs dealing with the role of religion in relation to the environment in hunting and gathering as well as in pastoral societies of circumpolar areas, the authors are usually satisfied with intuitive insights into the particular system and a general verbal description. Further, this description usually comes only from one direction, e.g. how a religious ideology influences the way a human population behaves towards the ecosystem. Still, this system is necessarily mutual in terms of feedback, e.g. the influence on a religious ideology by a given ecosystem. It is in all probability no coincidence that scientific biographies of researchers who have a strong ecological-scientific intellectual background (Gregory Bateson, Roy Rappaport, Tim Ingold) describe directly, or at least comment upon, the shift towards scientific approaches described above. Both Bateson's[450] and Rappaport's[451] posthumously published work has the character of philosophical or philosophical-study of religions, albeit with a constant effort not to abandon completely the social-scientific field. In his monographs, which are usually composed of individually thematically focused but organically connected essays, Ingold seeks to embrace and express the general principles abstracted from the ethnographic and cultural anthropological works of leading field researchers. He uses the theories of other social science researchers, psychologists and philosophers to interpret these ethnographic "data." One example of the difference between Ingold's interpretive (not explanatory) procedure and that of Descola is the former's fundamental adherence to the real, living and changing world of organisms, animals and humans in their environment. Thus, the theories of Ingold are not particularly philosophically abstract as they schematize and (paradoxically) simplify such complex phe-

450 Gregory Bateson and Mary C. Bateson, *Angels Fear. Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987).

451 Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*.

nomena as the relationship between religion and ecology. It can be assumed that this approach demonstrates a possible way of connecting field research, which aspires to be culturally and ecologically oriented, and social anthropology, which tends towards the theoretical and the generalizable. It can be said that specializations in the study of religious phenomena have followed these two tracks, and at times attempted to combine them in various ways.

A Sociological Perspective in the Study of Religions

7. The Specificity of Asking Questions

Dušan Lužný

Understanding a scholarly discipline, in our case the sociology of religion, requires the acquisition of a certain way of thinking, this being the way which the given scholarly discipline views what it explores and studies. Science in general studies the world in its complexity, even when an individual scholar is only concerned with a tiny part of it. Theorists and investigators then look at this part of the world and the entire world from a certain perspective, that of the particular scholarly discipline. The fact that they reduce their view of the complex world to only one perspective does not mean, however, the denial of other perspectives or (even worse) that they consider their perspective the only one. Although they might act as if this was the case, i.e. to convince others about the importance of their perspective, this is not a particularly valid position.

Describing this specific perspective amounts to a description of the entire scholarly field. With regards to the plurality of scholarly production, this would be challenging and even impossible. It would therefore be better to understand the given perspective by grasping the nature of the questions that the given scholarly discipline asks, the way they are formulated and why they are formulated in this particular way. In order to understand sociology of religion, one has to be able to formulate sociologically relevant questions about religion. Sociology of religion is thus a specific manner of posing and formulating questions.

It is particularly important to realize that the search for answers to questions is the foundation of scholarly knowledge. This implies that questions are the essential foundation of science. In fact, it may even be argued that answers are secondary, not only because there can be multiple correct or credible answers to the same questions, but also because even posing a question in a certain way already leads to an particular answer. Thus analyzing the very way in which questions are formed within a given scholarly discipline leads to development within the field.

Let us imagine a situation in which technological progress has reached such a stage of development that it is possible without major issues to land a team of scientists on Mars. Undoubtedly, one of the most important questions that the scientists will seek to answer will concern the existence of life on this planet. The research question is thus simple: is there life on Mars? The question is, however, only seemingly simple. To be able to answer, we have to first ask: what is life? Only based on the answer to this question can one create tools which will be able to recognize and identify life. The problem is of course that these tools (either in the form of technical devices or mental cognitive processes) will then identify as life only what they have been predetermined to recognize as life. In other words, if there are other forms of life which do not correspond to our ideas, and therefore our definitions of what life is, we will be unable to identify life forms with our tools. If it is presupposed that the presence of carbon, nucleic acids and proteins is the foundation of life, the tools will seek to locate these molecules. If it is established that adaptation is a sign of life, then something that evolves through changing based on its surroundings will be sought. But why should these qualities be identified as signs of life in the first place? To be able to answer this question, one has to understand the perspective of biology and biochemistry. Understanding the perspective of biochemistry, however, involves understanding the long term development of this scientific discipline, including the history of this field, its theories and methodology.

The situation is analogical with sociology of religion. To be able to ask sociologically relevant questions, one has to understand the history, theories and methodology of sociology of religion, i.e. to learn the skill of thinking about religion in a sociological manner. Already at this beginning point, however, one has to avoid falling into the trap that the institutional division of science into individual disciplines and subdisciplines has laid for us. The fact that science is traditionally divided into sociology, economics, psychology, history, political science, anthropology, linguistics, pedagogy, andragogy, etc. does not mean that reality itself, i.e. the world around us and in us, is divided in a similar way. Humans create these divisions because it is easier for us to study partial aspects of reality than to consider, or even define, the whole reality. We have to be well-aware of this fact in order not to mistake epistemology with ontology, meaning *how* we study the world with *what* the world is. To better understand this potential error, Zen Buddhism uses the following metaphor: If we point our finger at the moon and say: "this is the moon," we have to be aware that the

moon is not the finger. The finger is a mere tool. This caution works similarly both within individual scientific disciplines as well as with interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary projects. In fact, segmentation should be recognized as artificial and should not preclude fluidity among the perspectives of individual disciplines or fields, quite the opposite. The perspective of another scholarly discipline besides one's own can help the researcher better understand or explain the matter that is being focused on. Moreover, scientific knowledge of the world should not be considered the world itself. In other words: we should not absolutize any knowledge. History has shown us how time and time again over the ages information and practices once called undisputable science has come to be understood as flawed or even completely wrong. And of course vice versa.

To describe the perspective of sociology of religion here, however, it would be good to outline in brief the sociological perception of the world and the way in which sociology poses questions. What does "thinking sociologically" mean?

In *Thinking Sociologically* by Zygmund Bauman and Tim May, one will not find an explicit and unambiguous answer to this question. What can be found, however, are certain cues:

"Individual actors come into the view of sociological study in terms of being members or partners in a network of interdependence. Given that, regardless of what we do, we are dependent upon others, the central questions of sociology, we could say, are: how do the types of social relations and societies that we inhabit relate to how we see each other, ourselves and our knowledge, actions and their consequences? It is these kinds of questions – part of the practical realities of everyday life – that constitute the particular area of sociological discussion and define sociology as a relatively autonomous branch of the human and social sciences. Therefore, we may conclude that thinking sociologically is a way of understanding the human world that also opens up the possibility for thinking about the same world in different ways."[452]

Peter Berger's aptly titled *Invitation to Sociology* provides another valuable look into the sociological perspective. Apart from countless inspirational notes which enable us to enter the sphere of sociology, certain examples of sociological questions can also be found here, which according to Berger always remain the same: "What are people doing with each other here?" "What are

[452] Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May, *Thinking Sociologically* (Malden, Oxford and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 5.

their relationships to one other?" "How are these relationships organized in institutions?" "What are the collective ideas that move men and institutions?"[453] Berger also points out that the effort to answer questions is a form of obsession which can lead the answer-seeker into various environments and forces him or her to cross demarcation lines. The search for answers will lead the sociologist both to the milieu of social elites as well as to the environment of people profoundly despised by others. "And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers." This obsession can also be more tolerantly referred simply to the curiosity that grips any sociologist in front of a closed door behind which there are human voices. If he is a good sociologist, he will want to open that door, to understand these voices. Behind each closed door he will anticipate some new facet of human life not yet perceived and understood.[454]

The image of a closed door and the effort to understand what is happening behind it and why introduces another level of sociological questioning, what Charles Wright Mills labeled as "the sociological imagination" in a book of the same name. This level can be understood as seeking a spiritual ability which enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated.[455]

Mills develops his thoughts further, arguing that the foundation of the sociological imagination lies in the above-mentioned ability to cross barriers (in this case primarily mental ones, but in fact also social and cultural ones):

"For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another – from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an

453 Peter Berger, *Invitation to Sociology. A Humanistic Perspective* (New York: Anchor Book, 1963), 20.

454 Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, 19.

455 Charles W. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self – and to see the relations between the two."[456]

Sociological imagination is the basis for asking sociologically relevant questions which can lead to new realizations. According to Mills, there are three basic sorts of questions. The first sort focuses on the structuring of human collectives, the second focuses on the historicity and historical context of human collectives and the actions of individuals. The third type focuses on the general social characteristics of human individuals. According to Mills, the specific types of questions consist of the following:

"(1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?

(2) Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period – what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?

(3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for "human nature" of each and every feature of the society we are examining?"[457]

These types of questions cannot, however, be viewed as set in stone and they should definitely not hinder an imaginative approach to asking new questions. These enquiries can only be used as introductory steps, that is as the approximation of a certain perspective. They also demonstrate at least three levels of sociological thinking about social reality: One level formed by asking for

456 Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 7.

457 Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 6–7.

structures and their period dependence; second level questioning an individual action and its place in a wider context; the third questions about stability and the changes in these structures or individual actions.

All three of these levels of the sociological perspective can then be connected via two terms which refer to the particular attributes of what we question: relations and connections. One can then say that the foundation of the sociological perspective lies in research (asking about the existence and character) of social relations and connections, that is a) research into relations among individuals, among groups, among processes, among phenomena – this entailing the realization of the mutual interconnectedness of everything with everything else but also the ability to recognize the varying importance of the particular relations, with some more significant in a specific context than others, and b) research into connections and contexts – these relations as well as individuals, groups, processes, phenomena, etc., are located in specific contexts and their meaning and importance can only be understood in relation to the given context, which also means that when contexts change, their meaning and importance change as well.

If one draws inspiration for these introductory notes from communication analysis, the following tool (the structure of which one should also be questioned) can be suggested as a manual for learning to ask particular sociological questions while studying the individual themes and problems: "Who, what, to whom, how and why, in which context and with what consequences?"

In this way we ask about:

"Who" – we ask about the protagonists (individuals, groups, etc.) and factors (phenomena, processes, etc.).

"What?" – we ask about the content of the actions (of individuals, groups, etc.) and activities.

"To whom?" – we ask who the addressee or recipient is, or rather the object of specific actions or activities.

"How?" – we ask about the concrete forms of actions or activities;

"Why?" – we try to determine the aim of actions or activities;

"In which context?" – this question concerns the realization of a specific social, cultural, historical context of actions or activities;

"With what consequences?" – each of the actions or activities leads to certain consequences. These can be planned goals, but apart from these, there are also several other consequences, often secondary and unintentional, which

can become so significant that they turn into impulses for further activities or processes (with a differing degree of importance).

One can demonstrate the sociological perspective in studying religion using a particular example. The subject of investigation will be a village parish in Moravia. What can we study and which questions can be asked? We will find that there are a number of them.

We can ask about the position of the parish within specific structures. What is the position of this parish within the Roman Catholic Church? What impact do the processes taking place in the Church have on this parish? What position does the parish have in the regional structure of society?

We can ask about its history: When was the parish established? What significant events have occurred there over the course of its existence? Who were the parish priests who served there? How did its size develop, in other words, the number of parishioners? When was the church built? Where there any remarkable figures among the parishioners?

We can ask about the importance of the parish in the political life of the locality. How did the priests influence decision-making processes in the village? Were the parishioners part of the local government? Which religion did the individual mayors belong to?

We can ask about the form and location of the parish church. Who was the church consecrated to? How was / is it decorated? Who decided on its design, its possible reconstruction or architectural style? What was the role of the church building in the overall urban planning of the village? Are other buildings or structures connected to the church, such as cemeteries, pilgrimage crosses, shrines, plague columns, etc.?

We can ask about the psychological dispositions of the individual parishioners. Do the parishioners possess different psychological qualities than the rest of the village inhabitants? What is the state of their mental health? Do they suffer from some psychological issues or does their faith help them deal with these psychological problems?

It is apparent that the basic perspective will also determine the sources of data that we work with. For a description of the history, we will need various historical documents (such as archived materials, chronicles, parish books, etc.), but we can also work with the memories and recollections of current parishioners or people who are familiar with the history of the place. We will mainly use interviews to analyze the psychological state of the parishioners.

If we studied this parish primarily from a sociological perspective, we would most likely ask the following questions. What is the relationship between the believers (parishioners) and non-believers in this village or locality? How has the number of parishioners fluctuated in the village over the past one hundred years? What impact has technological progress and traveling for work to larger towns had on the life of the parishioners? Did variances in level of education influence the life strategies of the believers? Do young people still follow the traditions of their parents and grandparents? How did the lives of the families of parishioners change as church members started their own separate families or even relocated to different localities?

As can be seen, the sociological perspective is not diametrically different from others. In carrying out a sociological study of religion (for example, in a local parish) one cannot do without a knowledge of the history and the political and economic operations of the given village. Additional information need not be, however, directly useful for the sociology of religion. In analyzing a decrease in the birthrate or a decrease in the number of parishioners or members of another religious community, it will not be of much help, for example, to know who the patron of the church was. The sociologist will, however, want to know if the decrease in the number of believers is connected with increased education.

It is apparent here that in contrast to other scholarly disciplines, which lean towards description, sociology attempts to analyze connections, ideally causalities. Sociology can also, for example, analyze the connection between growing education, decreasing birthrate and decreasing declared religiousness. Therefore an *explanation* of a phenomenon is sought out with the help of other phenomena, meaning that it explains the given phenomenon by uncovering its *causes*. Attempts can also be made to *understand* phenomena, which means the *meaning* of these phenomena (such as in the life of individuals or all society) can be mediated. In both cases, both the social as well as the cultural context of the phenomena studied are taken into account. The phenomenon is not investigated separately from society, but is understood as part of a complex network of social relations of varying nature, characteristics and aims. This is reflected in the wording of sociological questions, which always take into consideration the social context (or rather social contexts) of a certain religious phenomenon. Does the popularity of non-traditional religions relate, for example, to cultural skepticism? Is the decrease in the number of those professing traditional religions a manifestation and constituent of the process of individualization? Is the

growing popularity of religious fundamentalism a reaction to the consequences of globalization, such as a reduction in the significance of nation states and the spread of secularism? It is apparent from these examples of questions that without knowledge of a number of scholarly disciplines, it is impossible to fully understand these matters, beginning with asking the correct questions. Without developing this kind of sociological perspective, questions may seem banal or even without meaning altogether. The ability to form a sociologically relevant question is based on a knowledge of a given discipline. Regarding sociology of religion, a certain knowledge of various religious perspectives is necessarily assumed as well.

The Approach of Realism and Nominalism

Sociology is often viewed as a multiparadigmatic discipline. This means that none of the existing theoretical and methodological approaches (such as structuralism, phenomenology, theory of conflict, ethnomethodology, functionalism, critical theory, etc.) which have formed over the course of the development of sociology have assumed a dominant position. Additionally, different approaches (perspectives on reality) are equally legitimate in sociology, although they may not be equally significant in a given context. They exist either alongside each another (in relative isolation, when individual communities of sociologists work in parallel fashion without an effort to connect different approaches), or certain attempts are made to interlink various perspectives incorporating particular essential paradigms. It can be stated, however, that sociology has been divided throughout its existence into two large camps which differ from one another due to the paradigmatic concept of social reality (ontology) and the means by which they study the reality (epistemology). Referring to the medieval problem of universals, one can label these two camps as sociological realism and sociological nominalism.

The foundation of sociological realism (both ontological and epistemological) is a notion according to which general categories (such as society, structure, processes, etc.) are projected to exist in the world and thus are objective in nature. This approach attempts to, first, uncover these structures, natural relations and processes, after which they can be explained. In this context, one can speak of sociology as a scholarly discipline with its foundations in the principle of *explanation*, which means that a particular specific phenomenon (such as conversion,

departure of members from well-established churches, the emergence of a new religion or the form of a certain ritual) is explained as a consequence of a different process or phenomenon, which therefore functions as the cause. This concept of science and sociology is based on the notion of causality and natural relations, which means that if a certain phenomenon occurs (for example, inhabitants move from villages to a town), it will necessarily impact other areas (such as a decrease in religiousness). In the given example, however, the movement of people from villages to towns is not itself the cause. According to sociology, the cause could reside in a weakening of social control. Social control is strong in a village due to proximity and transparency – people know one other and meet frequently, which results in greater uniformity in the observation of customs and traditions. Social control in towns is weaker, as with greater anonymity, individuals congregate in more varied social groups and therefore in a larger number of social worlds which are not connected. The believer can finally chose from not only different religious traditions but also specific communities, e.g. churches. This leads to decreased pressure to observe certain customs and traditions. In studying Émile Durkheim, it is also apparent that one particular phenomenon (i.e. weakened social control) may have a number of consequences. In short, sociological realism attempts to uncover objective natural relations which remain unknown through which it can then explain particular social phenomena.

Sociological realism clearly establishes a distinct barrier between "objective reality" as the object of cognition and the recognizing subject (the science or even the scholar). This is based on the assumption that when observing clearly determined methodological procedures, the recognizing subject (a trained scholar) can achieve "objective cognition," meaning the cognition of the "object" itself. This type of cognition is projected to be free of all subjective distortions which can stem from specific value orientations, cultural interdependences and world-view perspectives of the recognizing "subject." The reality that we want to understand and that seems to unfold in front of us (the recognizing subjects), is available to us "in itself," with our task being to eliminate all possible connections between this objective reality and ourselves, that is "our own reality" during the cognitive process. The reality which we are attempting to understand is therefore an external object, as it does not depend on us.

One of the founders of sociology, Émile Durkheim, tried to establish this discipline based on these foundations. In his view, sociology is a science focused on social phenomena while "the first and most fundamental rule is to consider

social facts as things."[458] This means that social facts are "of a specific type," "they have a consistent way of existing," "their character does not depend on individual consciousness," and they stand outside of the individual.[459] From the ontological point of view, Durkheim's sociological requirements are disputable, in other words, how can a sociologist as "an individual" or an individual subject be separated from social phenomena and society, or rather the social reality of which he or she is a part of? Durkheim's outcome is more epistemological, however, than ontological. Concerning the tools for sociological analysis, it is important to look for those sources of data which are materialized in a way free of individual interpretations and are, thus, external. Durkheim writes about social phenomena as "general signs" as if they can be studied in their material and generally accepted form: "Law is embodied in codes; the currents of daily life are recorded in statistical figures and historical monuments; fashions are preserved in costumes; and taste in works of art. By their very nature they tend toward an independent existence outside the individual consciousnesses which they dominate."[460]

If the perspective of sociological realism and Durkheim is accepted as such, to discover the natural relations of the functioning of society the investigator should not be too occupied (or rather not at all) with her / his own individual consciousness or psychological states. At this point, Durkheim presents clear and inspiring instructions. If social facts are to be determined and analyzed, certain internal habits and behaviors must be overcome by the investigator, including every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual [investigator] an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.[461]

According to Durkheim, sociology should study those ways of conduct that are objective (external) to the individual, independent from individual (general) manifestations, and which are capable of external constraint on the individual.

458 Émile Durkheim, *Pravidla sociologické metody* (Praha: Masarykova sociologická společnost, 1926), 47.

459 Durkheim, *Pravidla sociologické metody*, 21–43.

460 Durkheim, *Pravidla sociologické metody*, 62.

461 Durkheim, *Pravidla sociologické metody*, 46.

This account of the acquisition of the sociological perspective is foundational in Durkheim's approach.

Sociological realism is in practice the very application and development of the general principle of realism upon which the European concept of science was established, one which has dominated the natural sciences for a long period of time. Based on scientific realism, the world is defined as having a specific structure independent from the human mind, a structure which the scientist seeks to discover and describe. Investigators consequently formulate statements about this reality which can be either true or false. The theoretical terms that science works with, however, refer to entities which are seen as real.

Anyone who has had even a fleeting interest in sociology knows that the foundation and aim of the discipline is to establish theories which explain events, beliefs and practices through the prism of sociological realism. Apart from the theories, data is primary, meaning that information about reality which is acquired through observation, experimentation, laboratory practice or field research (the most frequent method in sociology) is of key importance. Within the abstract theory and empirical data, there are two other levels differing from one other in terms of the extent of abstraction and universality. Scientific terms which have an empirical meaning, i.e. they are present in statements which give the terms the empirical content, are closer to data. Laws or general statements about relations between terms as well as between the empirical entities to which the terms refer are closer to theory.

Sociological theories consequently attempt to explain *what* is objectively taking place in reality. This explanation then means that these theories explain *why* something happens in reality. These include, why certain people or rather certain social groups vote for specific types of political parties and movements? Why is the divorce rate growing? Why is the birth rate decreasing? Why do people join specific religious groups? Why do religious groups become more active in political struggles?

Sociology in the realist approach is the study of specific situations and attempts to find the causes of these phenomena. The outcomes of these processes are scientific statements, according to which specific factors under specific conditions lead to specific consequences. These statements refer generally to causal relations among factors, conditions and consequences. These statements are consequently determined as general rules or laws.

Science and sociology, in the realist point of view, attempt to discover general rules and laws. This pursuit of the formulation of generally valid laws is labeled as the nomological character of science (nomos – law). According to nomologism, scientific laws take a general form, i.e. they postulate an invariable relation between the members of one category of events and the members of another category of events. This relationship is atemporal and permanent.

Sociological realism forms the foundation for quantitative research strategies. These are based on the assumption that all entities, phenomena and processes can in reality be described or formulated through numbers and have quantitative values. Entities can be measured and the acquired quantitative values provide evidence about these entities. Inherent in the quantitative approach is the assumption that if enough information is obtained about the entities (enough different values), relations among these entities will emerge which can be documented. In other words, changes among these values can be measured. If the values of other entities are measured as well, causal relations can be identified among them. This process is facilitated by various statistical tools.

The realistic approach is manifested in sociology of religion, for example, in the effort to explain the decrease in declared religiousness through changes in the nature of the family. It can be assumed that the decrease in multi-generational family living as well as the increased employment rate of women would lead to weakened religious education in families. Another potential cause is urbanization, which entails the departure of people from villages to towns where, as we have seen, there is a lower level of social control. The causal relation can also be approached from the opposite point of view with the argument that religion influences human behavior and consequently one can assume that a lower birth rate can be the consequence of the diversion of people away from traditional religions.

If we assent to the principles of sociological realism and work with the quantitative data and master the statistical tools, we will be able to carry out relatively complex analyses. Moreover, if we have sufficient data from repeated studies, we will be able to predict trends, which is a great achievement of science. We will, however, always have to think critically about the credibility of our statements as well as the credibility of the data that we use in the analyses.

This also accounts for the second approach, sociological nominalism, according to which, there is no unequivocal causality in the world of humans. Sociology thus cannot explain the world, although it can contribute to an un-

derstanding of it through an interpretation of social situations and human actions. The world of nature as viewed by disciplines such as physics or chemistry, differs fundamentally from the world of people according to this approach, with the principal difference lying in the fact that while people attribute a specific importance to the world, their own actions and the actions of others, chemicals or rocks do not do this (or at least we are unaware of it).

The interpretive sociology (Verstehende Soziologie) of Max Weber is an example of sociological nominalism. Sociology, from this perspective, should be an attempt to pursue an understanding or comprehension of meanings that people attribute to social action, i.e. behavior oriented towards other people, which has some meaning. The approach of Max Weber became the foundation of a school known as interpretivism, since it focuses on an understanding of how people interpret the world around them as well as themselves. Clifford Geertz, a representative of symbolic cultural anthropology, aptly captured the foundation of the approach: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[462]

To explain this approach, Geertz uses an example of two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one, this is an involuntary twitch; in the other a conspiratorial signal to a friend. The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-a-camera “phenomenalistic” observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and a wink is vast, as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows. The winker is communicating, and indeed communicating in a quite precise and special way: (1) deliberately, (2) to someone in particular, (3) to impart a particular message, (4) according to a socially established code and (5) without cognizance of the rest of the company.

The situation can grow, however, even more complex:
Suppose, he continues, there is a third boy, who, “to give malicious amusement to his cronies,” parodies the first boy’s wink, as amateurish, clumsy, obvious, and so on. He, of course, does this in the same way the second boy winked and the first twitched: by contracting his right eyelids. Only this boy is neither

462 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

winking nor twitching, he is parodying someone else's, as he takes it, laughable, attempt at winking. Here, too, a socially established code exists (he will 'wink' laboriously, over obviously, perhaps adding a grimace – the usual artifices of the clown); and so also does a message. Only now it is not conspiracy but ridicule that is in the air. If the others think he is actually winking, his whole project misfires as completely, though with somewhat different results, as if they think he is twitching. One can go further: uncertain of his mimicking abilities, the would-be satirist may practice at home before the mirror, in which case he is not twitching, winking, or parodying, but rehearsing (...).[463]

The situation described by Geertz is quite illustrative for *comprehension* (not *clarification*) of the specificity of social sciences and humanities. The two winking boys and the other boy practicing different types of winking in front of a mirror can serve to indicate how significant the meanings which we can ascribe to various situations or phenomena actually are. Any number of interpretations can be made, yet the skill of the scholars of social science and humanities lies in the fact that they are able to decode the situation and thus the corresponding meaning. The magic of sociology, as well as social and cultural anthropology, lies in the fact that it is well-aware that the foundation of these meanings (or rather their formation) is intersubjectivity, which demonstrates that these meanings are created in interactions among individuals or groups. Even if we could rid our mind of the precondition of the objective existence of structures and natural relations (the existence of which is postulated by sociological realism), we would not be left in a world with isolated individuals designing their own meaning irrespective of other people. Sociological nominalism is not a type of solipsism which would finally deny the existence of society. Sociological nominalism does not reject society but understands it as a space for interpersonal interactions. Society is not sui generis and above people, as Durkheim assumed, but it is constantly being created among people, with the word "among" also including the individual protagonists, thus "in" people as well.

The fact that society is created is aptly depicted in another example of sociological nominalism, usually labeled as social constructivism. This is not a different approach, since the foundations of interpretativism and constructivism do not actually differ. It instead involves a slight shift of emphasis or rather a different denomination of the same thing. According to social constructivism,

[463] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 6–7.

social reality is being constantly constructed (created and maintained) through social interactions. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in the pioneering book *The Social Construction of Reality* described the entire process as a dialectic one, including externalization, objectification and internalization, articulated as follows: "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product."[464] It is important to understand these three statements in their shared unity or rather not to understand them unidirectionally, but dynamically and dialectically.

As the position of nominalism is extremely strong in sociology of religion, it is important to state that it is also a consequence of a certain cultural stereotype based on which religion is a highly individual matter too delicate to grasp quantitatively. While in other cases individuals are willing to accept the idea that human behavior can be measured quantitatively (i.e. shopping preferences), in the case of religion they reject this premise and claim that it is important to understand human behavior "on a deeper level," which actually means understanding its meaning. This stereotype is also replicated in academic studies of religion. Sociological nominalists ask, for example, what meaning people attribute to their beliefs, or what their idea of God or other transcendental figures is. What specific individuals or groups find attractive in non-traditional religions can able be a topic of query. Or what are the reasons certain believers do not eat pork, and what function does this prohibition fulfill? Or what determines the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and how is it connected to distribution of power or, how does it become a power or political instrument? Why is Pentecostal Christianity spreading dynamically in South America, Africa or south-east Asia? One can also ask how representatives of a particular religious group understand the healing properties that seem to help them, and how this belief is shared in the group.

At the beginning of this chapter, the emphasis was on the fact that the sociological approach is based on the ability to ask a specific type of question as well as the argument that sociology is multiparadigmatic in its nature. It should also be emphasized at this point that the magic of sociology as well as in sociological skill lies in the ability to view a research problem from different perspectives. The acquisition of the multiparadigmatic aspects of sociology

[464] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966).

and plurality of perspectives enables us to choose questions which correspond to the specificity of the given phenomena we want to study. The gap between sociological realism and sociological nominalism is not unbridgeable, although some are of this opinion and ideologically cling to the foundations of this impeachable binary. Still, it is always important to realize that even this dichotomy is only a perspective, one which can be changed. In changing perspectives, the type of questions changes as well, and those who pursue sociology should be able to ask different questions from shifting perspectives.

8. The Multiparadigmatic Character of Sociology of Religion: Marx, Weber, Durkheim

Dušan Lužný

The multiparadigmatic basics of sociology and sociology of religion can be clearly seen in the ways in which the authors who laid the foundation of this scholarly discipline approached the study of society and religion. Karl Marx, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim were occupied with basically the same questions: what is the exact nature of the radical social and cultural change which came about at the turn of the nineteenth century? It had become apparent by the first half of the century that the existing social system or type of society in European countries had begun to crumble and collapse to varying extents and in various ways, and that a new system or type of society had begun to form. These authors and of course many others tried to *understand* the nature of this change by grasping the context and forms of this change, as well as to *explain* the change by defining the causes and demonstrating the consequences thereof. Karl Marx attempted to explain the creation of capitalist society as the consequence of primary economic processes; Émile Durkheim described it as the consequence of change in the character of social cohesion, which he labeled as "solidarity;" while Max Weber tried to understand the cultural context which created a space for the creation of modern capitalism. All three theorists were linked by their efforts to investigate, describe and analyze the creation of a new type of socio-cultural structure which is labeled as modernism. It is also of importance for our purposes that all these authors were linked by the topic of social change, social stability and the formation of modernism within the context of religion. They consequently contributed to the constitution of a tradition of thought which can be labeled as sociology of religion. Various other ways of thinking about society and the place of religion within it have consequently crystallized with reference to these thinkers.

Although Karl Marx's work can be interpreted in various ways, it is safe to say that his strongest philosophical legacy for sociology is reflected in so-called critical theory. Not only does theory attempt to explain society but it also raises a demand for changes with the aim of liberating people from restrictive social conditions. Marx tried to explain the creation of modernism (capitalism) as a consequence of objectively defined rules, but also wanted the knowledge of these rules to lead towards radicalization of society through one particular part of it – the working class – with the aim of establishing a fundamental restructuring. This consisted of the emergence of a new way of social organization which he called communism. Marx was convinced (fully in the spirit of ontological realism) that he had discovered objective rules for social development and that this would lead to the heightened self-awareness of the working class, resulting in its greater freedom and emancipation.

According to Marx, the basic dynamic feature of social development is social conflict rooted in the economic sphere, more specifically in the means of production. The level of the productive forces and the corresponding relations of production form the base of society. A political and legal superstructure which corresponds to specific forms of social consciousness can be found above this base. Apart from the legal and political system, the sphere of values, art as well as religion should be included. According to Marx, this superstructure reflects the shape of the base and corresponds to specific productive forces and relations.[465] The feedback loop between base and superstructure also serves to legitimize not only the relations of production, but also power relations. Religion in general, but also each belief system in particular, corresponds to the conditions in the base and justifies the prevailing structure of production and the whole of society as such. Religion serves as a means of the legitimization of the power ruling society. In Marx's view, religion prevents any social change and, thus, human emancipation.[466]

The conditions in the base are dynamic, while the social dynamic is determined by two types of movement. One of these is technological development or the development of productive forces, this proceeding extremely quickly, with its dynamics failing to correspond to the development of relations of production

[465] Karel Marx, „Ke kritice politické ekonomie," in *Spisy XIII*, eds. Karel Marx and Bedřich Engels (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1963), 31–189.

[466] Karel Marx, „Ke kritice Hegelovy filozofie práva. Úvod," in *Vybrané spisy I*, eds. Karel Marx and Bedřich Engels (Praha: Svoboda 1976), 11–12.

and, most importantly, the development of the superstructure. As a result of these different dynamics of development, tension occurs since the relations of production and the contents of social consciousness (superstructure) do not reflect the actual shape and level of the productive forces, and thus become an obstacle to further growth. Put in today's terms, one would say that politics, education, law, etc. lag behind technical development. Social consciousness stagnates, but sooner or later even this consciousness must change, as the natural rule of societal development is based on this. When social consciousness shifts to a sufficient degree, changes in the political structure, the legal system, content and forms of education, etc. will automatically follow[467]

A second factor of social dynamics is the conflict between two social classes. According to Marx, classes are large groups of people differing mainly in terms of their position within the production sphere, which is determined by the ownership of the means of production. One social class owns the means of production, while the second owns nothing and is the mere labor power itself. Social development is therefore determined by the antagonism between these two social classes, which Marx denotes as class conflict. In this conflict, the subordinate and exploited class will attempt to overthrow the ruling class. Marx consequently identified several socio-economic formations within history, whose very foundations lie in class conflict: the system of slavery, the feudal system and the capitalist system. In the first, the conflict exists between the slave masters and the slaves; in the second, between the lords and serfs; and in the third one between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Before class societies formed, there was a classless society, so-called primitive communism, where no private property existed, nor any family, dominance or ideology. Based on Marx, social evolution necessarily leads to the elimination of classes (its natural relation) as well as the dissolution of all the limitations which prevent all people from achieving their complete emancipation. The outcome of the historical development will therefore be the establishment of a classless society, i.e. a communist society.[468]

What is the role of religion in this development? According to Marx, religion hinders positive development, as it justifies the existing relations in society and

[467] Karel Marx, „Německá ideologie," in *Spisy III*, eds. Karel Marx and Bedřich Engels, (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1962), 23–555.

[468] Karel Marx, „Ke kritice Hegelovy filozofie práva. Úvod," in *Vybrané spisy I*, eds. Karel Marx and Bedřich Engels (Praha: Svoboda 1976), 11–12.

the power of the exploiting class. It provides the exploiting class with the highest legitimacy while serving as a source of consolation to the exploited. Religion essentially prevents the exploited from understanding reality, from recognizing the exploitative nature of the ruling socio-economic system. Religion is a form of ideology, a false consciousness which does not reflect the true nature of the social structure and which creates an illusion that this social order is just and unimpeachable.[469] Marx and his followers consequently attempted to critique these received ideologies and to uncover the hidden legitimization of power mechanisms, including religious legitimizations and forms of power.

Religion also limits the full emancipation of people for a different reason: it introduces a form of human alienation. Marx follows here the atheistic critique of religion by Ludwig Feuerbach, who believed that self-alienation was the very foundation of religion.[470] Human beings project their own inner nature along with all that is good in them, outside of themselves, to the heavens. God is consequently an alienated human essence which people do not comprehend, thereby preventing them from achieving complete freedom and its realization in the world. Both Feuerbach and Marx then suggest that alienated humanity should come back to themselves and thus abandon religion. This cannot happen by the use of violence, as this shift is simply an unavoidable consequence of social development, i.e. part of its natural relations. Religion as false consciousness can be terminated by cancellation of those societal conditions which create the need for religion, the need for false ideologies. Social change founded on the elimination of class exploitation will thus lead to a spontaneous decline in religion, since the classless society does not need it at all. Religion will thus lose its functions and cease to exist.

The role of religion in the process of modernization was approached completely differently by Max Weber, whose influence on the formation of sociology is absolutely fundamental and whose work influenced representatives of all sociological movements and paradigms from structural functionalism to phenomenology. He is considered a representative of interpretivism since based on his teachings sociology should lead towards an understanding of the meaning that protagonists ascribe to their own actions and the actions of others, upon

469 Karel Marx, „Německá ideologie, " in *Spisy III*, eds. Karel Marx and Bedřich Engels, (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1962), 23–555.

470 Ludwig Feuerbach, *Podstata křesťanství* (Praha: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1954).

the basis of which they choose the goals they want to reach and the means to achieve them. Weber does not completely reject, however, the effort to determine the causes of various phenomena, but he views this causality somewhat loosely and not wholly deterministically.

His acclaimed statement about the connection between Protestant ethics and modern capitalism,[471] according to which the teachings of some Protestant movements (mainly Calvinism) were in harmony with the emerging mentality of modern entrepreneurs and the core values of capitalism, can also be seen in this light. Based on Weber's concept, puritan Protestantism contains several elements whose concurrence significantly dynamizes society towards higher productivity and making financial profit, which is the basis (in Weber's terminology "the spirit") of capitalism. This encompassed a new appraisal of work and wealth along with a secular direction for everyday discipline ("asceticism" for Weber). Work no longer has negative connotations, i.e. as earlier justified as a consequence of original sin, and is now not perceived as punishment. On the contrary, it is seen as an activity which can demonstrate harmony with the will of God. There is nothing wrong with wealth, but it cannot be used in prodigality and waste. Success in business (generating profit and accumulating wealth) can be understood as proof that the efforts of an entrepreneur are not only in compliance with the will of God, but are also its active fulfillment. Work is not only an occupation but a "calling," or an activity through which the individual is tested and which proves if he or she is "called" to do so by God, and is therefore predetermined to achieve salvation. These concepts are theologically framed by the Calvinist idea of predestination, based on which the fortunes of individuals are predestined by the will of God, which is, however, concealed or rather unknowable to ordinary mortals. An individual can therefore never be certain if his or her life is with accordance with God's will and if it is conducted towards permanent action which can serve as proof of this harmony. Success in business can therefore be interpreted as compliance with the will of God and a manifestation of one's own predestination (or rather calling).

Another aspect of Protestantism which can lead towards the dynamic character of capitalism is the specific form of asceticism. Protestantism includes asceticism in its daily professional and family life. All sex, for example,

[471] Max Weber, „Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik* 20 (1904, 1905): 1–54, 1–110.

is no longer a sin, but sex which is not aimed at conception is. Any type of wasting, including wasting of time or power and energy also becomes a sin. Everything comes to be evaluated based on its relationship to the goal, i.e. salvation brought by diligence. This form of asceticism was labeled by Weber as inner-worldly, since the goal of asceticism lies in this world. Its opposite is consequently outer-worldly asceticism, which strives for salvation outside this world. Orientation in this world is another form of positive evaluation of secularity and a strengthening of positive, active influence in this world in accordance with God's will. Inner-worldly asceticism legitimized the efforts to attain profit in business and, at the same time, limited consumerism, which leads towards the accumulation of wealth. In accordance with the principles of the Puritan ethic, wealth should not be uselessly squandered, but used as an investment which generates further profits.

Modern capitalism, the Protestant ethic as well as inner-worldly asceticism are, however, combined in the more general principle of rationalization, which provides the foundation for the entire development of European culture. According to Weber, the situation in modern Europe is truly unique, because of the gradual rationalization of all aspects of life, on the quotidian, everyday level as well as on a social-wide level. All facets of existence are increasingly conformed to rational procedures, rational decision-making and a rational way of thinking. Intentionally rational conduct gradually prevails and through it protagonists rationally measure potential outcomes against each other, as well as the means by which one can achieve these outcomes as well as, finally, the consequences of their choices of outcomes and means. Rational calculation consequently becomes the basic mechanism.

One can generally define the process of rationalization as growing universal pressure on the organization of life by which calculation prevails as the basic strategy of social actions, where all forms of magical thinking are eliminated, and where technical and procedural thinking is developed leading towards practical orientation in the surrounding world and control over it. The essence of the historical process of rationalization lies in two key moments: a) subordination of thinking and actions to the principle of calculation and technical solutions to problems with the aim of controlling the world of nature and of people, and b) emancipation of thinking and actions from the influence of magic in a process which Weber refers to as the "disenchantment of the world." This

disenchantment enabled the emancipation of human fate from the arbitrariness and unpredictability of the conduct of supernatural forces.

The "disenchantment of the world" and gradual rationalization or modernization, do not necessarily entail the full decline of religion (as for example Karl Marx would view it), but can lead towards a change in social structure, a change in the position of religion within this structure, and towards a change in religion itself (or rather a change in particular religions under modernist conditions). The notion that distinctive changes in the sphere of religion occur within radical socio-cultural change under the conditions of modern society is shared by both Weber and Marx. Both view these changes, however, from different perspectives and frame them thematically, and in the end even in terms of value, in different ways.

Émile Durkheim also shares this notion about the socio-cultural changes occurring and related religious changes. He views the change (the formation of a new order of modernism), however, through a perspective through which it is most important to study the function of the whole. Durkheim asks the basic sociological question: how is the social order, or the order of society as a whole, created and maintained? How is it possible that under conditions of strong individualization, in which individuals are increasingly free, independent and autonomous, that society exists? What integrates society and therefore keeps it functioning? What is the relationship between the individual personality and social solidarity? How is it possible that the more independent an individual is, the more he or she depends on society? How can he or she be more personal while being more connected to others?

Durkheim describes the process of modernization, i.e. the transition from pre-modern forms of social structures towards modernity, as a change in forms of solidarity, meaning the power or mechanism which ensures social integrity. This is a transition from mechanical solidarity towards organic solidarity, the propelling power of which is the development of the social division of labor. In social structures with a prevailing mechanical solidarity, individuality (differences and distinctiveness) has not developed, thus a process of imitation and likeness is typical for this situation. This type of society is characterized by homogeneity due to the fact that all members of society are fully integrated. As they do not differ from one other, they do not have their own specific interests and they all share the same collective ideas, including religion. In the spirit of his methodological starting point, which involves studying social phenomena as

things as objective, external and placing pressure on the individual, Durkheim demonstrates the nature of the mechanical solidarity based on a study of the law. For societies with mechanical solidarity, the repressive law is symptomatic, a system in which sanctions penalize the agent with the aim to "make demands on his fortune, or on his honor, or on his life, or on his liberty, and deprive him of something" or cause him pain. The second type of law is restitutive and consists of a return to things as they were (to their original condition) and it is symptomatic for organic solidarity. Restrictive law works globally and is not all that differentiated, since the law and an awareness of what is good and bad are universally shared, thus if someone tries to break the generally shared bans, there is only one solution – a clear and general punishment. The situation is a bit more complex and differentiated in the case of organic solidarity, which is reflected in the legal instruments and institutions; the restitutive law creates organs which are increasingly specialized: consular tribunals, councils of arbitration, administrative tribunals of every sort. Even in its most general aspect, that which pertains to civil law, it is exercised only through particular functionaries.

The reason for the transfer from mechanical solidarity to an organic one is the growing division of labor in society which is taking place due to greater population density, which causes a need for greater cooperation with regard to all activities. The continuing division of labor leads towards greater specialization and differentiation, since it separates individuals from each other and divides them based on their place within the system of division of labor. The individualization deepens, which is necessarily reflected not only in the legal system, but also in all the other parts of society, including religion. Religion naturally universalizes, since it has to appeal to a more diverse population with the emphasis on the individual, and the ethical level of religious study also comes to be more greatly emphasized.

In this new type of society with a high level of social division of labor, differentiation and organic solidarity, religion occupies an increasingly smaller place in the life of society. In earlier times, religion pervaded everything, and everything social was religious. As society as a whole differentiated, different spheres of social life, which played varied roles, began to gradually separate from religion. This means that politics, economics and science separated and established themselves independently on a secular basis. At this point, Durkheim's views are closer to the beliefs of Marx and Weber, since all three share the conviction that the importance of religion radically has changed, decreasing in modern society.

Durkheim's sociology of religion does not unequivocally lead, however, to a declaration of the gradual decline of religion, as was the case with Marx. This is also due to the fact that Durkheim attributes the most basic function to religion as creating the foundation of each society as such. According to Durkheim, religion integrates society and is the one power which holds societies together. From this perspective, the approaches of Durkheim and Marx differ diametrically, since while Marx views religion as a source of conflict and social tension, or rather as a tool for concealing social conflict, Durkheim perceives religion as an instrument for maintaining social consensus and strengthening of collective identity.

It is therefore apparent that the theme of religion was fundamental at the very time the field of sociology was being created. For Marx, Weber and Durkheim, but also for other founding fathers of sociology, religion was a significant theme, since it was viewed as an important part of social life not only in pre-modern but also in modern societies. Over the course of time, the theme of religion began to appear less and less in sociological analyses, which reflects the development of advanced European nation societies, whose social, cultural and political structural foundations began to include more of the principle of structural differentiation and secularism (i.e. separation of religion from other subsystems of society), which led to a decrease in the social and cultural role of religion and to privatization of religion. The disappearance of religion from sociological analyses also demonstrates the shift of mainstream sociological thinking away from the theme of religion. This occurred as the institutional foundation of modern sociology was being developed, primarily in the first half of the twentieth century, thus sociology of religion did not become a key sociological discipline. A change did occur, however, in the second half of the twentieth century, when religion, mainly in connection with the process of globalization, once again began to attract the attention of sociologists. This process also manifested itself in the creation of sociological theories specifically regarding religion itself.

9. Sociological Theories of Religion

Dušan Lužný

The sociological theory of religion (or, rather, sociological theories of religion) cannot be separated from the history of the field, since over the course of the development of sociology, theoretical (as well as methodological) reflections on the role of religion in society were fundamentally developing as well. This has been demonstrated in the previous section in our discussions of individual aspects of sociological views of religion. In the section focused on the history of the field, there was also an attempt to demonstrate the significance of the three founders of the sociological way of thinking (Marx, Weber and Durkheim), from whom the sociological theory of religion draws from and whom it follows. It is also apparent that the foundation of sociology and therefore sociological theory comprise ideas whereby new views on socio-cultural structures have been formed formed over the past few centuries. Generally, this has been labeled as modernity, with concomitant discussions proceeding on a new type of modern society. The primary theme of sociology is modernity (modern society, the process of modernization), which of course can be extrapolated to the sociology of religion, which focuses on the position and changes in religion in this so-called modern society.

This line of development can seemingly lead to the conviction that sociology of religion studies religion only in the societies of the developed West. This view, however, is not only Eurocentric but also an insufficient response to the reality that the present world is greatly affected by globalization, itself a logical extension of modernity. The naive notion that the anthropology of religion studies "original," traditional or "indigenous" religions outside Europe and North America, while sociology focuses exclusively on the people and social structures of these regions, has been invalid. Sociology of religion studies religion both in a global context as well as in various cultural and regional contexts, with even such a dichotomy necessarily reflected in sociological theories of religion. Thus

any discussion on these matters should begin with the general sociological theory of modernization.

Modernization Theory

The foundation of most modernization theories (from Weber and Parsons to Eisenstadt or Beck) is the tracking of putative social development from a traditional (pre-modern) society to modern society. This transition should represent a truly fundamental sociocultural change involving the gradual collapse and disintegration of the existing (traditional) sociocultural order and the formation of a new one, a modern one. Although the foundation of this change lies in the period of the Renaissance (as early as the 14th century) and the Enlightenment (17th century), the major turning point is said to have occurred at the end of the eighteenth and over the course of the nineteenth century. Within this period, several changes took place which had an impact on all aspects of social life, which as they intersected came to be called modernity or the modern period. These include the following:

- rejection of traditions
- growing individualism
- spreading the notions and values of freedom and equality
- scientific and technological progress
- improvement in social conditions
- urbanization
- industrialization
- development of capitalism and the market economy
- formation of new ways of structuring society
- implementation and increased democratization of unified and general systems of education
- implementation of political systems based on laws, elections and representative government
- the rise of the nation state and the development of nationalism
- secularization.

What is called modernity comes as a result of the intersection of these processes, none of which can actually be considered most determinative, as modernity is the result of their mutual and synergetic activity. Modernity, in other words, cannot be reduced to one or only several of these processes.

If we relate these processes to the theme of religion, it is apparent that each of them influences the changing position of religion in modern society. If modern society tends to diverge from traditions and thus decrease the role and power of traditions, the same holds true for religion, since tradition is the basis of all religions (even new ones). This is connected to the growth of individualism, since as the force of tradition grows weaker, power is obtained by the individual who frees himself or herself from the traditions. The liberated individual in this context amounts to a being who is free from "the bonds" of tradition and from being locked in to fixed social groups. It is apparent here that the foundation of this "liberation" of the individual from tradition and the increased emphasis on the autonomy of the individual is brought on by the idea of freedom as a quality which each individual is endowed with regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. Freedom is considered an ontologically given fact and it is experienced as a basic human value in particular situations. It is also indisputable that freedom is the basic value of modernity. In this context, freedom and emancipation (i.e. from all forms of limitation) are two expressions of the same principle, which also involves emancipation from religion.

The development of science as a scholarly discipline rooted in the effort to rid the world of its supernatural anchoring and transcendence significantly contributed to the formation of modernity. In this view, the world is open to be studied without any ontological barriers (if not necessarily without ethical restrictions), the world can be studied freely and science can rid the world of its "mystique" by uncovering laws and relations, natural as well as social. There is no place for mystery and miracles in the world of science, as the sacred and magical were replaced with transparently and experimentally verifiable evidence-based empiricism. The same goes for the application of scientific knowledge, the field of technology. Technology demonstrates the "truth" of scientific knowledge by showing its practical applications. With regards to the fact that machines, devices and technologies came to be seen operate without the need for explanation through the "will of God," religion loses its function and meaning. In other words, a modern human being does not need religion for day to day life, i.e. a nuclear power plant or vaccine is not underpinned by

"magic powers," although the layman usually does not understand exactly how most technology works at all.

Science and the scientific view is applied in the improvement of the social conditions of life that undoubtedly occurred hand in hand with the onset of modernism. There need not be a direct connection to the change in the position of religion at this point, although certain modernization theories (such as R. Inglehart's) claim that with growing prosperity and social security, the importance of religion decreases. Urbanization and industrialization do have, however, an apparent impact on religious life. The departure of populations from rural areas (where tradition and strong social controls are in effect) to the urban environment (with its higher level of anonymity, lower social control, decreased role of traditions, and higher plurality of lifestyles) as well as the higher involvement of people in industrial production (as opposed to traditional agriculture) can lead to higher religious diversity and the popularity of non-traditional religions or even a departure from religion. The increased urbanization of populations also results in a change in social structures, indeed generally a change in the way of structuring society as a whole. While the earlier structures were derived from the key principles of feudalism and later from the relationship to the land within capitalist society, the place in industrial production within the social division of labor becomes the most significant factor in the individual's life. Class affiliation as well as gender became the determining factor, since the class structure was also pervaded through social assigning based on gender. Capitalism and the market economy as such do not necessarily lead to changes in religion, although in relation to the other above-mentioned processes, with the domination of materialism and rational calculation, modern economic forces catalyze a gradual secularization in the thinking and actions of modern people.

What is utterly convincing is the influence of the democratization of education and the introduction of a unified general education system on the decline of religion, especially after this system was wrested from the control of churches and made to conform to the secular, non-religious, or even anti-religious principles of the modern state. A higher level of education actually leads to higher emancipation, individualization and a broadening of the principle of freedom. Religion only has a limited space in the system of state public education and is often studied from the outside as an object, not from the inside as a participant. The situation is analogical in the case of the modern political system, in which the legitimacy of a decision does not depend on God's will or

similarly transcendent protagonists, but on the secular process of free elections based on law and individual civil and political rights. Electoral systems depend on the delegation of competences and often on a division of individual powers (executive, legislative and judicial) which are inherently secular and non-religious in nature. The modern state is no longer directly connected to one particular religion and its character is based on another principle, the principle of the nation state. Thus the nation, not God, is the hegemon of the polity, which signifies a fundamental shift in the modern period.

Although various determining characteristic traits can be ascribed to modernity (depending on the perspective, as will be apparent later in the text), mention should be made of the four most important of these with the help of British Marxist social anthropologist Stuart Hall:

1. The dominance of secular forms of political power and authority and the concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy which operate within the defined territorial boundaries and structures of the modern nation-state
2. A monetized exchange economy based on large-scale production and consumption of commodities for the market, extensive ownership of private property and the accumulation of capital on a systematic, long-term basis.
3. The decline of the traditional social order, with its fixed social hierarchies and the emergence of a dynamic social division of labor. In modern capitalist societies, this was characterized by new class formations, and distinctive patriarchal relations between men and women.
4. The decline of the religious world view typical of traditional societies and the rise of a secular and materialist culture.[472]

It is apparent that secularization, which can be understood as a process of de-religionization or a process of decreasing of the social (political and cultural) importance of religion, is part of all the above-mentioned processes of modernization and one of the signs of modernity, perhaps the essential one, if only one is to be identified.

[472] Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.), *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 6.

Secularization Theory

For a notable number of modernization theories, modernity is fundamentally incompatible with religion in principle. This perspective has even led to one of the most influential sociological theories of religion, secularization theory.

Sociology, modernization theory and secularization theory are closely connected. They are interlinked with the same foundations and ideas because they have the same roots. Sociology comes about as a product of changing sociocultural conditions in developing European countries, which it concurrently reflects and implements by means of its very foundations.[473]

Sociology is then a product of change in the sociocultural order which can be described as a move from traditional society to modern society and which also includes a change in the meaning of religion in this new type of society. As David Martin, a prominent representative of secularization theory, has argued, sociology and modernity emerged at the same time, when modernity was being built on a model according to which humanity is moving from the religious mode towards a secular mode.[474] The theory of secularization can therefore be understood as a more general theory of modernization which conceptually creates the basis of sociology. Secularization theory is therefore a concrete formulation of the modernization theory focused on the field of religion.

There has been an attempt to prove this point earlier in the part focused on the history of the sociology of religion. Marx, Weber and Durkheim all in essence shared the same starting points from which they were analyzing a newly created sociocultural order in which religion was gradually losing its previously important place in the life of society. This theme was most notably elaborated by Max Weber, who was convinced that an overall rationalization of the world, or so-called "disenchantment," was occurring within modern society along with a decrease in the role of traditional and charismatic rule, the growth of legal rule, the dominance of bureaucracy and the growth of a new type of rationality based on the principle of expediency. Durkheim pointed out how religion changes as a consequence of social differentiation and as individualization grows. He was convinced, however, that religion forms the foundation of any society, while Marx was convinced that religion would cease to exist completely if its structural causes, i.e. class exploitation, would be eliminated. None of these

473 Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: C. A. Watts & Co, 1982 [1992]), v.

474 David Martin, *On Secularization. Toward a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 18.

legends of sociology, however, actually created secularization theory, although Weber was probably closest to the task and was the most inspiring in this respect for the upcoming generation of sociologists of religion. While none of these thinkers can be labeled as theorists of secularization, it can be argued that all of them contributed significantly to the theory of secularization, since they laid the foundational frame of interpretation further developed later by secularization theorists.

There are many different variations of secularization theory. As the sociological theory of secularization was being created in the 1960s, Larry Shiner aptly depicted its basic elements in his definition of the six types of the secularization.[475] The first of these is secularization as the decline of religion, through which the previously accepted traditional religious symbols, doctrines and institutions lose their prestige and influence, signifying the weakening of religion in society. In Shiner's second concept, secularization entails growing conformity as religious groups or societies turn their attention from the supernatural and become increasingly interested in "this world." Growing secularization leads to a society completely absorbed by the pragmatic tasks of the moment in which religious groups are becoming indiscernible and indistinguishable from the rest of society. The content of the third concept of secularization is the notion of disengagement or separation of society from religion, which had played such a key role in all aspects of life just a few centuries earlier. Society becomes an autonomous reality, with the result that religion is reduced to the sphere of private life and has no impact on the functioning of society. This concept is identical to what is also labeled as differentiation. Shiner labeled the fourth concept of secularization as the transposition of religious beliefs and institutions, i.e. the knowledge, patterns of behavior and institutional arrangements which were once understood as grounded in divine power are transformed into phenomena of purely human creation and responsibility. In Shiner's fifth concept, the world is being desacralized, as man and nature become the object of rational-causal explanation and manipulation. The world is deprived of its sacral character, with the supernatural and even mystery playing no part. This concept corresponds to the disenchantment of Max Weber. Finally, the sixth concept of secularization traces the move from "sacred" to "secular" which

[475] Larry Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6, no. 2 (1967): 207–220.

represents broad social change, resulting in a society in which all decisions are based on rational and utilitarian considerations.

These six forms of secularization, which can currently be traced in certain social processes, can overlap, or as Shiner argues: they do not contradict one other or cancel each other out and are instead complementary. Within this context, Shiner explicitly emphasizes three of the concepts: desacralization, differentiation and transposition. In addition, Shiner foreshadows a discussion which only would occur with great force several decades later with the onset of post-colonial criticism in anthropology and religious studies (e. g. Asad 1993, 2003). As Shiner demonstrates, all the concepts of secularization are built on the sacred-profane or religious-secular polarity, from which is derived the essentialist concept of religion. Together with another prominent secularization theorist of that time, David Martin, Shiner claims that it is impossible to create adequate criteria for a differentiation between the religious and the secular and therefore it is also impossible to postulate "religion" as a separate entity. Shiner also pointed out the three problems of the secular-religious polarity, the first is specific form of differentiation which occurred in the West as generally normative. The second is the misapprehension (already included in this dichotomy) that the increase in activity in the so-called secular sphere must entail a corresponding decline in the religious area. The third problem is consequently the idea that religion is an entity of some kind.[476] It is important to work with these critical concepts, which Larry Shiner presented as early as 1966 at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Chicago, as we further describe the theory of secularization in developing our perspectives on sociology of religion. Most importantly, we should also remain aware that the analytical criticism of these concepts was there from the very beginning of their development.

With an awareness of these critical points, a discussion will now be entered into regarding the most prominent forms of secularization theory: a) secularization as structural differentiation, b) secularization as a decrease in the social importance of religion, c) secularization as privatization of religion.

Secularization theory can be understood as a specific form of the ***general structural differentiation*** theory, and in this form the theory of secularization

[476] Larry Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6, no. 2 (1967): 217–218.

is the closest to general sociological theory. Back in 1893, Émile Durkheim laid out the following foundations:

But, if there is one truth that history teaches us beyond doubt, it is that religion tends to embrace a smaller and smaller portion of social life. Originally, it pervades everything; everything social is religious; the two words are synonymous. Then, little by little, political, economic, scientific functions free themselves from the religious function, constitute themselves apart and take on a more and more acknowledged temporal character.[477]

Durkheim's diagnosis was also in compliance with his emphasis on the division of labor as one of the key factors of social differentiation, this being a result of the growing division of labor as the specification as well as differentiation of individuals occur, including patterns of behavior and the content of collective consciousness. Durkheim points out two levels of social differentiation: the micro level, concerning differentiation of individuals; and macro social differentiation, which takes place on the level of the entire societal system. The first level of differentiation leads in its consequences to individualization and privatization of religion, i.e. the higher significance placed on the individual creation of one's own religion, a decrease in the influence of established religious institutions, and the displacement of religion from the public sphere to the sphere of the personal life of an individual. The second level leads to the elimination of the economic, political and broader social power as well as the authority of religion and the retreat of religion within itself. Both layers, but primarily the second, systemic one, were further elaborated on in the theory of structural and functional differentiation of Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), and even more so in the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998).

Based on the theory of functional differentiation, the process of modernization, whereby complex and highly structured social systems are created, leads to internal segmentation of the society-wide system in which relatively independent subsystems are formed. Each of these subsystems is shaped by different objectives, functions and basic values which are non-transferable between the individual subsystems. Subsystems of economics, politics, education, law, health, art and other institutions, including religion, are therefore formed. Although these create one society-wide system in its entirety, on their own, they are autopoietic, a term that Luhmann adopted from theoretical biology. Based

[477] Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1960), 169.

on this notion, these subsystems are operationally contained within themselves and follow their own principles and objectives (as of course they communicate with their environment). Autopoietic systems are created based on their own elements, which are arranged according to the systemic principles. Not only can new elements be created, but their internal structure can also be rearranged in self-regulation. Along these lines, it is apparent that the objective of the economy is to ensure the general welfare, while the objective of the subsystem of law is to achieve justice, health services are aimed at ensuring public health, etc. Each of these subsystems creates its own institutions and develops its own different functions and ways of operation. In modern, functionally differentiated social systems, the overlap or transfer of values, principles and functions from one subsystem to another should not occur. It is apparent, however, that in modern society, some subsystems are more important than others. No one would question that modern society as such is dominated by the subsystems of economics and politics. Certain subsystems are thus less important, or rather become unimportant, sometimes even completely insignificant, at the level of individual life. This is the case with religion, which was isolated in the process of the functional differentiation of subsystems, closed off within itself, with its influence over other subsystems (such as economics, politics, law, education) somewhat or even completely eliminated. This process of the separation of religion from other spheres of social life, which also encompasses the decrease in the influence of religion over these non-religious spheres, can be labeled as secularization.

It is important to realize, however, that secularization as functional and structural differentiation does not signify the extinction of religion since, even if separated from other societal subsystems, the subsystem of religion can remain functional as a part of the entire system of society. Instead of extinction, this entails the adaptation of religion to a new systemic situation or the adaptation of religion to the conditions of modern society. According to Niklas Luhmann, the theory of structural differentiation as the primary principle of modern society means that all functional systems have an immediate relation to society, religion included. In a modern and therefore secularized society, religion continues, but is not the necessary intermediary authority which interconnects individual activities with the whole and which ensures the general meaning that it once had been.

The perspective of structural and functional differentiation delineates not only the inner structural aspect of society (and from this the derived change in the position of religion in a structuralized society), but also makes it possible to see how the process of secularization is actually structured. It is apparent that secularization can occur in different modes at various levels of society, and that religion can fulfill different functions at various levels of modern society, as innovatively described by Karel Dobbelaere, another important proponent of the secularization theory. Dobbelaere builds on the thought of Mark Chaves, who viewed secularization not as a decline of religion but as the declining scope of religious authority. Both theorists agree on the fact that secularization must be analyzed on three levels (or in three different dimensions), across the entire society, at the level of (religious) organizations as well as at the level of individuals. According to Chaves, secularization at the societal (society-wide) level means the declining capacity of the religious elites to exercise authority over other institutional spheres. Secularization at the organizational level amounts to religious authority's declining control over the organizational resources within the religious sphere. Secularization at the level of individuals indicates a decrease in the extent to which individual actions are subject to religious control. In general, secularization means that the control of religious authorities over all these three spheres is decreasing.[478]

Dobbelaere consequently outlines three dimensions in the secularization process: individual secularization, societal secularization and organizational secularization. These are the forms of secularization which take place at the society-wide level, the level of societal organizations and at the level of the everyday life of individuals. Dobbelaere's division of secularization into three dimensions not only facilitates an analysis of the different forms of secularization at these various levels of society, but also helps achieve a more structured empirical study of relations between societal and organizational secularization, between societal and individual secularization as well as between individual and organizational secularization.[479] This perspective makes it possible, for example, to better understand a situation whereby a society with a high level of societal

[478] Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (1994): 757.

[479] Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels* (Brussels: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes and Peter Lang, 2002), 25.

secularization (such as in conditions in which the separation of church and state are in place), has a lively religiosity on the level of individuals and vice versa.

Societal secularization essentially corresponds to the form of secularization focused on in connection with structural and functional differentiation, or rather with the segmentation of society into autonomous subsystems and the elimination of the connection of the subsystem of religion with other subsystems, such as the subsystems of education, health service, law, economics or politics. Dobbelaere mentions the principle of *laïcisation* in this context, developed in the French educational system at the beginning of the twentieth century. This prevention of religion from entering the (public) system of education strongly influenced Durkheim's way of thinking concerning societal differentiation and the place of religion within modern society.[480] For sociology on this level of analysis, the statement that religion can no longer fulfill the social integration function in modern society (for Durkheim, the key function of religion was the integration function) and that its overall societal importance decreases, is extremely important. The question remains, however, as to what keeps a modern society together when traditional religion is unable to. In connection with these reflections, a number of sociologists have stated that this integrative function is played by so-called civil religion within the new conditions of the secular nation state.[481]

Secularization on the mezzo level or level of religious organizations, is a consequence of the general pluralization in all spheres of life in modern societies. As Peter Berger has very convincingly demonstrated how the demonopolization and pluralization of religious life leads to the spread of the market mechanism, even to the sphere of religious life itself. This leads to competition and a weakening of credibility with regard to the universalist claims of individual religious subjects as well as to a decrease in the credibility of religion in general.[482] Organizational secularization changes the operations of those religious groups trying with increasing intensity to conform with the surrounding society, and therefore also with the situation of demonopolization and pluralization. In addition, these groups must also rationalize their operations and depart from

480 Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 19.

481 Compare to e. g. Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975).

482 Peter Berger, *A Far Glory. The Quest for the Faith in an Age of Credulity* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

their "other world" focus towards "this world," i.e. they must secularize their overall orientation and activities. As Dobbelaere points out, this adaptation to the secular values of society (what Luckmann refers to as "internal secularization") is but one of the changes which encroaches on religious organizations. Another change is, in contrast, increased sacralization, i.e. to survive religious groups must ascribe more importance to religious and moral standards, placing a greater emphasis on the role of rituals and on the strength of religious belief.[483]

Secularization at the level of individuals, or individual secularization, is understood as the decreased level of individual involvement in religious matters, which concerns the primary behavior of individuals. This level of secularization is usually measured based on the degree of participation of individuals in the activities of religious groups,[484] and if we also take into account the growing individualization of religion, even the non-institutionalized religious activities of individuals can be included in this study.

A more structured look at secularization, such as the differentiation of secularization at different levels of social life and the realization of various forms and dynamics of secularization in different segments of society, can provide a more detailed view of society and the place of religion within it. The basic starting point remains identical, however, even within this perspective, this being the conviction that with the advancement of modernization, the place and function of religion in the life of the overall society and in the lives of individuals changes, with this change effectively signifying *a decrease in the social importance of religion*. This statement can be understood as the basis of the entire understanding of secularization and can be considered the starting point for the "orthodox paradigm of secularization."[485] This model can take different forms, with varying degrees of strength – from the statement that modern society leads towards the inevitable decline of religion (more or less gradually) to a statement that significant decline concerns only certain forms of religion (such as traditional or institutionalized systems). This thesis was introduced in its classic form by Bryan R. Wilson, who connected it to the foundations of modern sociology as

[483] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 22.

[484] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 18.

[485] For example: German McKenzie, *Interpreting Charles Taylor's Social Theory on Religion and Secularization. A Comparative Study* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 11–14.

well as with the idea of the substitution of traditional society with modern society. Wilson adopts the foundations of modern sociology and, as for example Durkheim, believes that traditional societies were completely pervaded by the supernatural, since people in traditional societies defined themselves, their origin and their position in the world and society with reference to something transcendental, i.e. above the empirical or secular. Wilson bases his theory on a dichotomy which Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) established at the dawn of sociology and which differentiates between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesselschaft*). Wilson claims that religion has its source in community, or rather in local groups. Within these groups, face to face communication prevails, strong interpersonal relationships develop and religion serves to protect these local communities, which are centered around a family or a clan. Religion in modern societies has lost its connection to the local community, since the local has completely lost meaning in modern industrial society. Religion thus has also lost its meaning (and function), since modern society does not need any local gods.[486]

Wilson outlines secularization as a process in which religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance. This process has various forms, from the dispossession and loss of the political powers of political entities, through the reduction of the time and energy that people dedicate to supernatural matters, to the substitution of religious orders with technical requirements. These processes consist of a gradual substitution of a specifically religious consciousness with an empirical, rational and instrumental orientation in the world, which also complies with Weber's idea of rationalization of the world.[487] According to Wilson, secularization is a neutral term in terms of values, one which refers to a genuine shift of wealth, power, activities and functions from institutions with a supernatural reference frame towards institutions which are based on empirical, rational and pragmatic criteria.[488]

Wilson published the foundations of his argumentation in 1966 (including concrete empirical data with which he demonstrates the legitimacy of his findings) in his work *Religion in Secular Society* and thus created the basic struc-

[486] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: C. A. Watts & Co, 1982 [1992]), 151–160.

[487] Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 149.

[488] Bryan Wilson, "Secularization: The Inherited Model," in *The Sacred in a Secular Age*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1985), 11–12.

ture of argumentation in favor of secularization theory. Secularization theory consequently met with fierce criticism (which has already been mentioned and which will be focused on further in the text). After a number of reprints, this essential work was published once again in 2016 under a fitting title: *Religion in Secular Society. Fifty Years On*[489] with an extensive foreword and an appendix with updated data from Steve Bruce, who can be considered not only a follower of Bryan Wilson, but also the most prominent advocate of secularization theory in current sociology of religion. Bruce's position can be clearly seen in the title of one of his works: *Secularization. In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*.[490]

In an explicit continuation of Wilson's thoughts, Steve Bruce claims that several changes occurred within secularization:

- a decay in religious institutions
- religious rules and principles (in matters of behavior) displaced by demands in accordance with strictly technical criteria (in other words: behavioral regulators which were determined earlier by religion or morals are now determined by pragmatics)
- the property and facilities of religious agencies sequestrated by political power
- a specifically religious consciousness replaced by an empirical, rational and instrumental orientation
- various social activities and functions no longer under religious control, but controlled secularly
- a decline in the proportion of time, energy and other resources devoted to religious matters.[491]

Bruce[492] defined twenty-two key elements of the secularization paradigm (or secularization theory), some of which are directly connected to one another.

[489] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society. Fifty Years On* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[490] Steve Bruce, *Secularization. In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[491] Bruce, *Secularization*, 2.

[492] Bruce, *Secularization*, 26–48; Steve Bruce, *God is Dead. Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2002).

These elements can be assigned within these six spheres: R – Rationalization, RO – Religious organizations, E – Economy, S – Society, P – Polity, CS – Cognitive style. These key elements are grouped in three, respectively four, lines, while all these lines are directly influenced by the Protestant Reformation. In one line (R), the Protestant Reformation in connection to monotheism leads towards development of rationality, science and technology, resulting in technological consciousness (in the sphere of Cognitive style – CS). In another direction, the Protestant Reformation leads towards individualism in the sphere of religious organizations (RO), an inclination towards schisms (internal segmentation and heterogeneousness) and formation of sects, which results in growing literacy and voluntary affiliation. The third line, which continues with the Protestant Reformation, leads towards the sphere of economy (E) and includes Protestant ethics and subsequently industrial capitalism and economic growth. Here the line separates into two which lead to the sphere of society (S), both of these concerning differentiation. Economic growth leads towards social differentiation and subsequently towards social and cultural diversity, towards religious diversity, which (in the environment of the secular state and liberal democracy) leads toward diversification of sects and churches, and towards relativism (as part of cognitive style – CS). Economic growth leads, in contrast, towards structural differentiation, which then (in connection with social differentiation) leads towards egalitarianism and subsequently (in connection with social and cultural diversity) towards the formation of the secular state and liberal democracy. The result is compartmentalization and privatization, whereby compartmentalization can be understood as the creation of specific forms of faith which are limited to specific areas of social life. Finally, according to Bruce, with compartmentalization (i.e. the particularization of religion into an unclear amount of partial application) comes the privatization of religion.[493]

As is apparent, the concepts of Bruce and Wilson include not only the element of structural or functional differentiation, but also the aspect of the privatization of religion. This means that all the above-mentioned theories of secularization are internally connected and do not stand in mutual opposition, instead complementary and reciprocally complementing each another. Possible differences can be detected in the specific emphasis, with some of the theories emphasizing one or more aspects. Secularization theory in the form

493 Bruce, *Secularization*, 38.

of ***the theory of privatization of religion*** emphasizes, for example, the change in the position and functioning in modern society by which religion loses its societal-wide significance (in other words, does not serve the legitimation of society as a whole), and is primarily limited to the private life sphere, the life of individuals. The theory of privatization of religion shares, however, several other elements with other forms of secularization theory, such as the importance of differentiation. This is apparent in the concept of invisible religion described by Thomas Luckmann (1929–2016) at the time of the formation of general secularization theory at the beginning of the 1960s. He introduced the basic frame of his concept at the annual conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and later elaborated on it in 1963 in his book *Das Problem des Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft*, although it became generally known in sociology of religion with its publication in English entitled *The Invisible Religion*.[494] This concept demonstrates that despite the fact that secularization theory is undoubtedly a result of the European tradition of the sociological way of thinking, the basic discussion concerning its origins occurred in the background of North American sociology and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Luckmann speaks of the secularization and privatization of religion as a result of institutional specialization, which occurs in complex societies (and higher civilizations). Luckmann shares the basic foundations of sociology (and sociology of religion) based on which religion penetrated throughout society as a whole in "simple societies" (pre-modern types of societies). In "complex" societies (modern ones), however, control over the behavior of its members was taken over by a specialized social class, the class of religious specialists. These do not control all aspects of human behavior, but only religious ones. The specialization of members of this class leads towards the differentiation of religious roles (mainly towards the formation of religious specialists who focus entirely and solely on religion) and towards the formation (and also separation) of a specialized institution, or the creation of a specialized religious organization.

Religion is a general and universal human character trait involving the need for transcendence of a biological nature.[495] Throughout history, however, three specific social forms of religion have been created. In the first form, which corresponded with the conditions of archaic communities (societies of hunters,

[494] Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1967).

[495] Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 49.

gatherers and early farmers), religion spread through the entire social structure. It legitimized social behavior in the absolute majority of situations and provided ultimate meaning to the entire life of an individual. In the second social form, which developed in the environment of ancient city states and early empires (such as ancient Egypt or the Middle East), a certain differentiation of social functions occurred, although significant religious functions which were institutionalized relatively independently were connected with institutions of power. The situation changed radically in the following phase of development in Early Modern Western societies, in which the monopolization of religious functioned through a specific religious organization which had previously obtained exclusive rights in maintaining and handing the social constructs of transcendent reality. This social form appeared in societies with a relatively high level of structural complexity.

Religion has, therefore, been isolated from other social institutions and the contradiction between religion and society has become fully developed. Luckmann refers to the long-lasting consequences of this development as secularization, claiming as well that the structural instability of the institutionalized specialization of religion leads towards the formation of another, fourth, social form of religion, which reflects the altered position of religion in society. Luckmann refers to the privatization of religion in this context as part of the general process of privatization of individual life in modern societies.[496]

The most important element in the new situation is the predominance of a free, demonopolized, religious market in which various bodies offer their specific forms of transcendence. The most important protagonists in this context are the mass media, various churches and sects, propagators of the relics of secular ideologies of the nineteenth century and new religious communities created around various (minor) charismatic leaders, or operating as commercial enterprises propagating astrology, expansion of consciousness, etc. A typical example of this type of privatized religion is what is known as the New Age movement,[497] which most clearly emphasizes the main themes of the privatized form of religion, the value of autonomy, self-expression and self-realization.[498] In general, the basic religious themes relate to the (autonomous) individual

496 Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 174–176.

497 Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 178.

498 Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 107–114.

and the sphere of privacy, or rather to the private life of individuals. Religion becomes "a private matter" without broader social functions and the individual believers become individualized consumers who choose various specific themes from the offerings on the religious free market and build their own, strictly private, system of the highest importance.[499] The content, form, as well as function of religion, have changed.

All three of the above mentioned forms of secularization theories (secularization theory as structural differentiation, secularization theory as a decrease in the social importance of religion, and secularization theory as privatization of religion) are interconnected and share certain features, starting points as well as conclusions. Secularization theory has met from its very beginnings, however, with clear criticism within sociology of religion represented by a clear effort to create a different analytical frame of interpretation with regard to the place religion occupies in modern society.

Criticism of Secularization Theory

More than thirty years after Larry Shiner formulated his critical comments towards the burgeoning secularization theory, this critique was recollected by William H. Swatos and Kevin J. Christiano, who reiterated the North American reproof towards the proponents of secularization, which had emerged during this interim period. Swatos and Christiano pointed out that the main representatives of secularization theory Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann and Karel Dobbelaere, are of European origin and therefore their ideas are the progeny of the European Christian heritage and European educational system, which tend to romanticize the religious past.[500] This also brings to mind the critique of Jefferey Hadden,[501] based on which the core of secularization theory is more of a doctrine than a theory with ideological roots, and through the concept secularization became sacralized. In their view, the theory of secularization is a specific type of myth.

499 Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 102.

500 William H. Swatos and Kevin J. Christiano, "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 209–228.

501 Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Social Forces* 65, no. 3 (1987): 588.

According to Hadden, sociology emerged amidst a deep tension between religion and the liberal culture of Europe, and as such it is a clear heir to the European Enlightenment, which rejected all types of superstitions and attempted to replace religion with reason and science. The tension between church authority and the newly created (sociocultural) order had three sources according to Hadden. First, there was the new evolutionist worldview, which not only viewed the development as gradual progress but also perceived religion as an archaic form of thinking, i.e. an obstacle to progress. The second source was the power struggle that arose in Europe after the Reformation. During the formation of nation states, religious authorities gradually began to lose their monopoly over the legitimation of power as well as over the power itself. A clear-cut manifestation of this battle was the French Revolution, which was not only a struggle against the throne, but also against the religious authority which legitimized the monarchy. The third source of tension was the burgeoning conception of the human mind and consciousness, based on which the human mind should serve to develop humankind and therefore not be bound by any ideas or practices. In all three of these events, a clear anticlericalism is apparent which became the basis of not only European liberalism but also part of sociological thinking, including conceptualizations of religion. According to Hadden, the idea of a society free of religion was much more acceptable for a number of European sociologists than the notion of a society under religious dominance.[502] The first generation of American sociologists, on the other hand, did not have such an antagonistic relation towards religion.[503]

Hadden summarized secularization theory into four points which still form the basis of contra-secularization argumentation. First, secularization theory is not a systematic theory but instead a chaotic hodgepodge (Hadden's exact term) of loosely-connected and employed ideas. Second, the existing data do not support this theory. Third, the creation of new religious movements within modern societies proves that religion might in fact be ubiquitous in human cultures. Fourth, the number of countries in which religion is significantly involved in political reform, rebellion and revolution is ever-expanding.[504]

502 Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," 590.

503 Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," 591.

504 Hadden, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," 598.

Hadden here introduced an argumentation which is frequent in the environment of North American sociology of religion and which was perhaps most expressively explained in the works of Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, who formulated their own theory of religion centered around rational choice theory.

Based on methodological individualism, ***rational choice theory*** introduces a more specific form of action theory. Rational choice theory views humans as rational decision-making beings who through their behavior and actions strive to achieve maximum satisfaction. To achieve this goal, they must make decisions, which they do based on a comparison of the costs and rewards and also in light of the context of the values in localities where the decision-making process is taking place. Each individual is *homo economicus* in this point of view, and tries to maximize his or her benefits and minimize the costs leading to these rewards. For a proper understanding of this approach, it is vital to emphasize that the costs and rewards can be of a material as well as non-material nature (i.e. also individual feelings or psychological states). People tend to therefore make decisions which comply with their priorities and which provide them with maximum benefit or the potential to achieve it.[505]

The first reading of rational choice theory in sociology of religion was introduced in *A Theory of Religion* (1987) by Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge. The first version of Stark and Bainbridge's theory did not yet include the strict and irreconcilable rejection of the concept of secularization, but used it in a modified form. They connected secularization with pluralization, claiming that the plural situation ("the market" in the language of rational choice theory) does not lead towards a decline in religion. They argued that the plural situation could decrease the power of established traditional religious groups (religious "firms") but this fact may in fact be helpful for smaller and more dynamic religious groups.

This approach was consequently developed by Stark and Roger Finke in *Act of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (2000) and *The Churching of America 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (2005), works in which they formulated the basic foundations of rational choice theory, which related not only to the position of the individual and his or her choices but also to the operation of the macrostructure ("religious market"). These foundations can

[505] Charles H. Powers, *Making Sense of Social Theory: A Practical Introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 21.

be summarized as follows: a) the past has never been as religious as we often assume (the assumption of a religious past being the basis of secularization theory); b) certain religious groups grow (become "winners") over time, while others decrease ("losers") and after some time begin to decline as well; c) the religious mainstream has a tendency to lose momentum, while religious innovation tends to gain it; d) the deregulated religious market supports religious life while, in contrast, a religious monopoly has a negative impact on religious life.

One distinct sign of the macrosociological level of rational choice theory is its emphasis on the offerings of religious exchange, since it is exactly the offerings of religious products (or the lack of attractive religious products on offer) through which one can see the failure of particular religions and religious agencies, or religious firms.[506] This represents a situation which one might call an overall decline in religion from the perspective of secularization theory. Rational choice theory does not perceive the main cause of this decreased success rate of the religious offering in particular religious "firms," but in the setting of the religious economy as a whole. The inability to meet a religious demand by offering religious products which do not satisfy this demand is caused by the non-functionality of the religious market, termed here as the regulation of this market. The main point of departure for Stark, Iannaccone and Finke's concept is the ideal of a completely unregulated religious market. The less the religious market is regulated, the more religious pluralism develops and individual religious agencies can compete freely for customers.[507] A non-regulated religious market is full of great plurality as well as competitiveness, since the individual religious firms are under pressure, this being the result of the option of free choice from the side of individuals, who can change their religion as well as the extent of their religious participation. Rational choice theory claims that religious plurality and competition lead towards the overall strengthening of religious participation.[508] A problem does lie, however, in a situation of the regulated market in which one religious group connected to the state achieves a dominant or monopoly position.

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506 Rodney Stark and Laurence Iannaccone, "Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the 'Secularization' of Europe," *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 33, no. 3 (1994): 230–252.

507 Compare, for example, Laurence Iannaccone, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "Deregulating Religion: The Economics of Church and State," *Economic Inquiry* 35 (1997): 350–364.

508 See, for example, Mark Chaves and Philip Gorski, "Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 261–281.

The main criticism of secularization theory by rational choice theorists draws clear attention to the Eurocentric frame of the dominant tradition of the sociological definition of secularization. Rational choice theory thus enables investigators to critique the various analyses of the position of religion in current society in a truly inspiring way. Both basic approaches, however, the theory of secularization (reflecting the dominant development in the European cultural tradition) and rational choice theory (reflecting the dominant development in the North American cultural tradition), have their pros and cons. José Casanova pointed this out aptly in his observation that traditional secularization theory works relatively well for Europe, but not for the USA and that the North American paradigm works effectively for the USA, but not for Europe.[509] A comprehensive overview can obviously only be obtained not only by examining and comparing the various cultural traditions of Europe and North America, but also to confront theories, concepts and analytical approaches from other parts of the world. Through this process the sociology of religion can also globalize itself in the global world.

Globalization, Secularization and Multiple Modernities

It is apparent that practitioners of sociology need to break free from both European and American ethnocentrism. Sociology today, and consequently also current sociological theory of religion, cannot be other than global. Investigators and theorists must reflect and analytically process the global character of the present day as well as the diversity of cultures and social structures. Mention should be made of two approaches here which attempt to undertake this work while at the same time not completely rejecting the existing tradition of sociological thinking about religion and modernity. These are the concepts of public religion, or rather deprivatization of religion, introduced by José Casanova, and the concept of individualization of religion formulated by Ulrich Beck.

José Casanova introduced a revised secularization theory which maintains the basic principles of the existing concepts of secularization but also responds to changes that occurred in the world at the end of the twentieth century which brought higher social importance to religion in numerous countries in

[509] José Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization," *The Hedgehog Review* 8, no. 1–2 (2006): 9.

the world, including the USA and Europe. According to Casanova, the core of secularization theory remains valid. This core consists of differentiation theory, based on which religion is separate from other secular spheres in modern societies (secular spheres, mainly the state, economics and science, separated and emancipated from the influence of religious institutions and norms), but with the presumption that modern differentiation necessarily leads toward marginalization and that privatization of religion can no longer remain defensible.[510] Since the 1980s we have been witness to deprivatization of religion in the modern world, which means that individual religions in different parts of the world refuse to accept their own marginalization and the privatization which has been assigned to them by both modernization and secularization as well as the theories that attempt to describe these processes.[511]

Casanova does not reject the option of the authentic fulfillment of the postulates of the decline of religion and the privatization of religion which can occur in some countries, with these two processes also sometimes connected. He does, however, refuse to consider the process of privatization of religion as a structural process of modernity. He views privatization only as one option, although it seems within the conditions of modern society to be a significantly preferred one.[512] Using concrete examples of the operations of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, Poland, Brazil and the development of Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism in the United States (with another such example the role liberation theology has played in Latin America), he demonstrates the modernization of these religions and their deprivatization, thanks to which these religious traditions may well become significant protagonists in the public and therefore also the political life in these countries. The United States, where three forms of deprivatization of religion are clearly manifested, represents an illustrative example. The first form is religious mobilization for the protection of traditional lifestyles against various interventions of the state and the market, by which the mass mobilization of Protestant Fundamentalism occurred, but also that of Catholicism against the legalization of abortion. The second form is, in contrast, the effort to influence the two main societal

510 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 7, 19.

511 Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 5.

512 Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 215.

systems of the state and the market in a way which would respect traditional moral norms and take into consideration the "joint benefit" of cooperation. Here, the efforts to project moral questions into areas such as national security and the politics of nuclear security or the questioning of the self-regulatory impersonal principles of the free market can serve as illustrations. The third form of deprivatization is based on religious criticisms of individualistic liberal approaches which limit the joint benefit merely to the sum of possible choices of individuals. In this case, religion (re)enters the public space and influences it by emphasizing general interpersonal and inter-subjective norms, that is norms which are superordinate to individuals.[513]

Casanova, like various other current sociologists, asks the question as to whether the global spread of the European concept of modernization, a view inherently connected to the idea of secularization, necessarily means that modernization in different parts of the world takes place in the same way based on the same patterns and with the same results, e.g. as assumed by Max Weber. The author of the concept of *multiple modernities* Samuel N. Eisenstadt rejects the universality of the Western version of modernity and, as has been shown above, he also denies the close connection between modernization, secularization and privatization of religion. He also emphasizes that, for example, it is extremely problematic to apply the category of secularization to Confucianism or Taoism,[514] and that it also cannot be assumed or required in different cultural contexts in which the separation of state and religion is instituted (as in the classic version of secularization theory).

Reflections on globalization and changes to modernity are also key themes for Ulrich Beck, who reflected the power of sociological tradition in his admission: "As a sociologist with a firm belief in the redemptive powers of sociological enlightenment, I have the idiom of secularism in my blood. The premise of secularism – more specifically, the idea that with the advance of modernization, religion will automatically disappear – cannot simply be expunged from sociological thinking, not even if that prognosis, were to be refuted by history."[515]

513 Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 128–129.

514 Casanova, "Rethinking Secularization," 13.

515 Ulrich Beck, *A God of One's Own. Religion's Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 1.

Ulrich Beck is well aware, however, of the global character of the present world, and has examined it for twenty years in works such as *Risk Society* (1986), *What is Globalization?* (1997), *Power in the Global Age* (2005), and *Cosmopolitan Vision* (2014). His search "towards a new modernity," the subtitle of his most well-known book, suggests a quest for a second modernity with the basic characteristic trait of reflexivity. This concept of reflexive modernization includes the notion of modernity as an unfinished project, or an Enlightenment which remains unfulfilled. This new phase of modernization includes the view that its reflexive character along with individualization, detraditionalism, risk awareness and mainly the decay of the bond between the market economy, social state and democracy are symptomatic of a new phase. In other words, current modern societies are going through a significant change in their functioning and direction.

Beck labels the existing development of modern societies as "simple modernization," with one typical sign being industrialization. The sociological reflection of this type of modernization was founded on three preconditions. The first is an idea based on which the life situations of people and the course of their lives are determined by their affiliation with a social class. The foundation of the class division is their position in the process of industrial production, while the sociology of simple modernization arises from the conviction that the position of an individual in his or her occupation (system of production) conditions the entire life of the individual, such as for example their way of spending free time, political views and consumer behavior.

The second precondition of sociological theories of simple modernization, according to Beck, is the notion that with the onset of modern society traditional order disintegrated and a new industrial social order was created, one based on the functional differentiation of subsystems, while each of the subsystems (politics, economics, religion, culture, etc.) develops its own rules which are not transferable to other subsystems.

The third precondition of sociological theories of modernization is the idea of the linear escalation of rationality, which works in two forms: firstly, as a description of the process of growing rationalization, and, secondly, as a norm of modernization. The connection of these two forms has serious consequences, mainly the loss of any alternatives to this development. One cannot at present even imagine a solution to the current problems that might break away from the beaten track. Within the paradigm of this way of thinking, problems of market

dysfunction are dealt with by employing "more market" solutions, issues of the technology-filled world are resolved by "more technology," ecological problems arising from current technologies solved by "more (new) technologies," etc. In other words, problems arising from progress can only be solved with further progress.

These three prerequisites of sociological reflection of modernization, class determination, functional differentiation of subsystems, and rationalization, served as responses to the initial phases of modernization. It is now, however, increasingly clear that modernization is taking on a new form, or rather entering another phase. After the phase of simple modernization comes the phase of reflexive modernization, in which the first modernity is dethroned by the second modernity.

A key feature of the entire modernization process, and especially with regard to the second, reflexive modernization, is the principle of individualization. Individualization means both fulfillment of the enlightened ideal of freedom (emancipation) but also submission to this principle. The individual is forced to "freely" decide between various solutions in each particular situation. The life of a free individual in a modern society involves an ongoing process of decision-making and dealing with the consequences of these decisions (which basically entail more decision-making processes). If the individual is continuously pushed to choose between different decisions and consider the consequences of these decisions, his or her life, thinking and actions become permanently reflexive. Individualization in this context means that the standard biography becomes an elective biography, a so-called do-it-yourself biography or reflexive biography.[516] The life of an individual is liberated from fixed determination, it is open, dependent on his or her own decisions and represents; for each individual a task must constantly be dealt with. Biography is opened up to previously unexpected possibilities and the amount of "unreal" or "unimaginable" life paths decreases. Since individuals are forced to create their own narratives, their biographies become "autoreflexive." This reflexive character of modern culture can also be applied to religion.

Religion in terms of the second modernity is based on complete religious freedom, with Beck even labeling it "radical" religious freedom, as well as in-

[516] Ulrich Beck, "The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization," in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 15.

dividualization. The result of this is the creation or location of "a God of one's own." This is not a God assigned to a person based on their social background, nor a collective God that all members of a religion are "forced" to venerate, it is a God that one can choose, a personal God, who resides and manifests itself in the intimacy of a personal life. The individualized religiosity of the second modernity is a fulfillment of individual freedom, since the individual is relieved of the power of religious authority and of the power of tradition. The foundation is an uninhibited (and therefore also inwardly personal) relationship to God.

Reflexive modernity leads towards one of the paradoxes of secularization, this being the revitalization of religion which is taking place in the twenty-first century. According to Beck, the forced secularization of religion (or the fact that the religions themselves chose to secularize) laid the foundations for the revitalization of religiosity and spirituality in the twenty-first century. This is also given by the fact that the deprivation of religion by secular powers (or the fulfillment of the secularization principle) enables religion to no longer be anything else than simply religion. It does not need to concern itself with matters that do not pertain to it, thus it can fully develop its base. It can thus "foster, cultivate, practice, celebrate and reflect the indestructible spirituality of the human condition, human beings' need for and consciousness of transcendence, and to help to bring about its triumph in the public arena."[517]

Conclusion: From a Reflection on Religion under Global Conditions Towards a Revision of Modernization Theory

This story of secularization (as an idea and theory as well as an actual sociocultural process) described in this text is symbolically brought to a close by the concepts of Ulrich Beck. Beck, however, is not the only sociologist who has pointed out the fact that the process of modernization under global conditions leads towards ambivalent situations. Beck emphasizes the importance of the new form of religion, one individualized and cosmopolitan, but which also identifies additional forms of religions in the globalized world, such as growing religious conservatism, fundamentalism and traditionalism. It is more than evident that religion under the conditions of globalization has

[517] Beck, *A God of One's Own*, 25.

not only been weakened in some ways, but is also transforming and in other ways even growing stronger. The "legend" of the sociology of religion Peter Berger, the first to develop the theory of secularization, admitted as much several years ago.

The aim of this text is to demonstrate the mutual connections between basic sociological theory (such as modernization theory) and the general sociological theory of religion (such as secularization theory). It is apparent that throughout the existence of sociology the discipline has developed based on the foundations and preconditions of the Enlightenment which materialized in the field of religious studies in the form of the secularization thesis concerning the incompatibility of modern society with religion as well as in assumptions about the gradual decrease in the social significance of religion. Critical reflections on the status of different societies in various parts of the world (including in Europe and North America) have demonstrated the limitations of this perspective, its at times smothering ideological character and its ethnocentrism. If the statement is valid in the global context that the separation of local forms of modernity from religion need not necessarily occur, then it is definitely pertinent to ask once again what the basis of modernity itself is. These questions are addressed in various forms of new theories of modernity, from the multiple modernity theory of Samuel N. Eisenstadt to the theory of the second, reflexive modernity of Ulrich Beck.

What seems to be the most significant for sociology of religion in these new ways of thinking about modernity theories as the foundation of sociological theory in general, however, is the newly discovered importance of religion. Secularization theory necessarily led towards a decrease in the importance of the topic of religion in sociology, with sociology of religion becoming marginal for a long time within general sociology as such. Through its marginalization of the importance of religion in the lives of modern societies, sociology of religion also marginalized itself. New reflections on the global importance of religion and the significance of religion in regional or local societies and communities opens up a new opportunity for sociology of religion. This new opportunity need not amount to a repudiation of the existing traditions of sociological thought, but should consist of a critical coming to terms with it. There is a definite need to understand the existing tradition of thought, including various forms of secularization theories in order to be able to carry out their critical reassessment. This text represents a brief attempt to outline this tradition. I hope that the

present readers will view it as an invitation for further study and as a needed critical evaluation of existing sociological theory of religion, as well as an invitation to develop new elaborations of the theory of modernity in which religion plays a more significant role.

Conclusion

The authors of this book have attempted to focus specifically on those theoretical and methodological approaches in secular research on religion we consider the most developed and the most promising for the future. These cognitive, anthropological and sociological approaches are those we have established as the basis of our curriculum in the field of study of religions at the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University in Olomouc.

Study of religions research has never had its own set of methodological tools at its disposal, which has often seemed to be a considerable handicap over the course of its history. Along with the continuing challenges, however, this lack of a rigid and established methodology has today become a great advantage. The fact that study of religions was once forced to find and define its own original toolkits has now created a situation in which the discipline is now free to pick and choose among various theoretical and methodological strategies from traditionally related disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology and now cognitive sciences. In today's interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary era of scientific inquiry, study of religions now finds itself at the vanguard of new combinations of disciplines, and, as alluded to in chapter 2, is now in some ways positioned to possibly even transcend disciplinarity itself.

It is not all that surprising that study of religions has gradually expanded the range of its methodological tools in recent decades to include areas more typical of the natural as well as (other) social sciences. The methodical interdisciplinarity of study of religions was thus also underlined by the emergence of cognitive science of religion, which introduced not only extremely promising theoretical concepts, but also a whole new investigational paradigm. The experiment became the key tool which allowed researchers for the first time to move beyond mere correlative relationships, enabling it to directly infer causal relationships among the phenomena studied.[518]

Basic theoretical assumptions have been formulated since the 1990s which have facilitated a cognitive turn in study of religions research. The human mind and cognition is now investigated as the source of religious thought and be-

[518] Justin L. Barrett, "Experiment," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London: Routledge, 2011), 161–177, 162.

havior, a strategy which is well expressed in the metaphorical statement by Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley that "Dionysus dances not in heaven but in our heads."[519] Further, cognitive science of religion has now decidedly refused to view religion as a completely specific and distinct cultural category sui generis. Theorists and researchers have come to emphasize a reductionist approach in the research of religion that seeks to explain religious behavior and thought in program-like fashion. They have also proclaimed allegiance to an evolutionary perspective, to the methodological integration of the humanities with the natural sciences, and, perhaps more gradually, to an ultimate emphasis on experimental forms of research.

Despite the fact that experimental research was not a (significant) part of the development of cognitive science of religion from its beginnings, experimentation quickly proved to be an essential component. The most diverse and interdisciplinary combinations of methods have emerged, often resulting in innovative and novel findings, some of which even create feedback loops towards research in areas outside of what has traditionally been called study of religions.

Early research was characterized by the *standard paradigm* of cognitive sciences, which involved explaining social and cultural phenomena by means of cognitive processes and mechanisms.[520] This foundational research made it possible to examine mechanisms which are beyond our conscious control through work which allows the functions of non-reflective religious thought and ritual behavior to be observed.[521] Some of the methods frequently used include, measurement of different physiological responses, measurement of reaction time as well as behavioral measurement. The most frequently used method is called *priming*, which is, however, currently closely linked to the so-called replication crisis. The use of priming has been challenged in some ways with regard to issues related to the quality of some studies.[522] Despite these

519 Thomas *Lawson* and Robert McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*: Connecting Cognition and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990): 184.

520 Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Religion As the Unintended Product of Brain Functions in the 'Standard Cognitive Science of Religion Model'," in Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained* (2001) and Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "How Religion Works (2003)," in *Contemporary Theories of Religion: A Critical Companion*, ed. Michael Stausberg (London: Routledge, 2009), 129–155, 136.

521 Uffe Schjoedt, and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 63.

522 In recent decades, the results of many important priming studies have repeatedly failed to be replicated. See Fiona Fidler, and John Wilcox, "Reproducibility of Scientific Results," in *The*

issues, this type of research remains extremely important for extending the various levels of phenomena studied on the unconscious level.

Other kinds of research studies include those that investigate religious behavior and thought using indirect observation by proxy. The main idea here is to observe religious behavior in an indirect form by studying psychological phenomena that are similar to those found in religious systems. These include phenomena such as trances, out-of-body experiences, revelations, possession, anthropomorphism, mind reading, etc.[523] Research questions in these types of studies include: What is the perceptual basis of out-of-body experiences? What cognitive processes induce states of trance? Under what conditions do people experience revelation?[524] What mechanisms lie behind ritual behavior?

A third equally important category of research is *authentic studies*, which take a researcher from laboratory conditions directly into the field. This research lacks, however, high levels of control over the environment and it sometimes produces undesirable variables.

In recent decades fully experimental research has sprung up within cognitive science of religion. These studies can categorized as above can even represent a combination of different researches. Examples include combining ethnographic work with physiological measurements,[525] using experimental design to research ritualized behavior,[526] neuroscience tools for prayer research,[527]

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, (Winter 2018), accessed 15 December 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/scientific-reproducibility/.

523 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 63– 64.

524 Uffe Schjoedt and Armin W. Geertz, "The Beautiful Butterfly," 64.

525 Dimitris Xygalatas, *The Burning Saints: Cognition and Culture in the Firewalking Rituals of the Anaste Naria*. (London: Acumen, 2012).

526 Martin Lang, Jan Krátký, John H Shaver, Danijela Jerotijević, Dimitris Xygalatas, "Effects of Anxiety on Spontaneous Ritualized Behavior," *Current Biology* 25, no. 14 (July 2015): 1892–1897.

527 Uffe Schjoedt et al., "The Power of Charisma: Perceived Charisma Inhibits the Frontal Executive Network of Believers in Intercessory Prayer," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 6, (2011): 119–127.

computer simulations in ritualized behavior research,[528] and using biological analysis to interpret the evolution of global religions.[529]

The section of the book devoted to anthropological research on religion attempts to answer the question as to whether and how the anthropological study of religiosity is specific in comparison with other approaches such as the sociological or religionist approaches to religion. It attempts to define what theoretical-methodological approaches and other characteristics form the basis of anthropology of religion as a self-contained branch of cultural anthropology. It also defines the epistemological principles of anthropological exploration of religiosity, these being based on the key themes of the anthropological study of religion contained in the work of the anthropologist Jack David Eller.[530] The chapter develops, comments on and illustrates these key themes with specific field examples, focusing more closely on the historical context of anthropological research into religion.

The text also builds on the paradigm concept in cultural anthropology formulated by the anthropologist Alan Barnard,[531] who distinguishes among synchronous, diachronous and interactive paradigms. In the formative period of cultural anthropology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, two basic approaches can be identified which the later research deals with critically, and which at the same time later shaped and further influenced it: the theological or theologizing approach and the secularizing approach. The theological approach highlights Christianity, or so-called Western monotheisms, as the pinnacle of the putative unilinear evolution of human thought, while the secularizing approach emphasizes the concept of progress of civilization based on the scientific, rational recognition of reality. Both of these perspectives, which can be placed in the context of Western colonialism, contributed significantly to shaping the

528 Kristoffer L. Nielbo and Jesper Sørensen. "Prediction Error During Functional and Non-functional Action Sequences: A Computational Exploration of Ritual and Ritualized Event Processing," *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 13, no. 3–4 (2012): 347–365.

529 Anastasia Ejova et al., "Evolution of Global Religions," Paper presented at the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), University of Tartu (25-19 June 2019).

530 Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion. Culture to the Ultimate* (New York: Routledge, 2007), XIII–XIV.

531 Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

cultural-anthropological study of religion, which must be reflexively dealt with in further development. A legitimate question therefore arises as to whether and to what extent religion (as it developed) can only be understood as a product of a Western or Euro-American environment. Can religion only be treated as a colonial import or an invented tradition? The chapter addresses this issue with the example of Hinduism. The inclusion of a reflexive aspect provides the basis for possibilities of defining religion for the purposes of anthropological study. The chapter therefore also addresses the prototypical approach to defining religion as proposed by Benson Saler.[532] Using anthropological paradigms, the chapter discusses evolutionism in more detail as an example of the diachronous perspective, making use of Edward B. Tylor. As an example of the synchronous approach, it discusses in more detail the relativistic paradigm in the work of Franz Boas, the functionalist approach of Bronislaw C. Malinowski, and the structural-functionalistic approach of Edward E. Evans-Pritchard. Among the so-called interactive approaches, it focuses on the research of Mary Douglas which deals with ritual purity.

In the section dealing with cultural-ecological approaches to the study of religion, a chronologically arranged selection is presented of the most important representatives of this "subdiscipline," one located in the liminal areas among ecology, cultural anthropology and study of religions. In addition to the introduction of individual researchers, an outline of the historical-scientific evolution of the ecology of religion is provided and the most problematic theoretical and methodological moments are delineated.

This cultural-ecological chapter opens with the introduction of two representatives of early cultural ecology, namely Julian Steward and Åke Hultkrantz. Steward, considered the founder of cultural ecology itself, viewed culture as a form of adaptation to given natural conditions. He divided cultural elements into a cultural core (closely linked to the basic form of subsistence) and highly variable "peripheral" cultural elements. Using a comparison of cultural cores, Steward created a typology of cultures. The Swedish cultural anthropologist and study of religions scholar Åke Hultkrantz, who attempted to formulate an analogous typology of religious systems by defining the key classification attributes of individual

[532] Benson Saler, *Conceptualising Religion. Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

historical religions, elaborated directly on Steward's typology. One example of a Hultkrantz-defined type of religion is the "Arctic hunting religion."

Apart from his more sophisticated method and more elaborate methodology, the French anthropologist Phillip Descola can be seen as a modern representative of a comparative approach in culturally-ecologically-minded research on religion (presented here as a comparative of various "ontologies"). Descola, a student of C. L. Strauss, described four "modes of identification" and six "modes of relationships" towards the outside world (the environment). He names the basic modes of identification as animism, totemism, naturalism and analogism, while exchange, predation, gift, production, protection and transmission are presented as the six basic modes of relationships. As Descola argues, the mutual combinations among the modes of identification with the six modes of relationships are sufficient to explain the underlying principles of known ontology and cosmology.

In addition to researchers with a comparative approach (e.g. Hultkrantz), the work of Julian Steward was followed up by scholars who placed a direct emphasis on the ecology of religion in the narrower sense of the word. Their most prominent representative was Roy Rappaport, a student of Steward who conducted his key research in the New Guinean Maring tribe environment. The core of this research and his later monograph *Pigs for the Ancestors* is a description of the socially and, in turn, ecologically regulatory importance of a religious cycle, which in this case consists of cyclic breeding of an ever-increasing number of pigs, their subsequent mass sacrifice to the spirits of the ancestors and their consumption. This is explained in the context of relatively ritualized denunciation of hostility towards certain neighboring tribes. Toward the end of his scholarly career, Rappaport turned to a more theoretical, abstract and comparative study of ritual, which he described as the cornerstone of religious systems in his work *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*.

The British anthropologist Tim Ingold is arguably the most important representative of cultural ecology, a field which attempts to overcome the dichotomy of man as a social being with his culture, and man as an organism in his environment. The structured, thematically coherent essays in Ingold's monograph go beyond ethnographic studies, with the work as a whole encompassing a certain theoretical overlap among themes, which is the usual structure of cultural-anthropological monographs. Ingold formulates his theoretical conclusions with an ongoing regard to the real-life reality of specific

(usually circumpolar) ethnic groups inhabiting a particular environment. Ingold's scholarly career was to some extent similar to that of Rappaport apart from the fact that the scientific community particularly valued with Ingold's later, theoretical monographs (e.g. *The Perception of the Environment; Being Alive*), as opposed to his early work based more on his own field research (*The Skolt Lapps Today*). Ingold was not specifically devoted to the anthropology of religion in the strict sense. His studies on issues of animism and totemism, which he viewed from the "dwelling perspective," were formulated on the basis of critical reflections on the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the psychology of perception of James J. Gibson, and the epistemology of Gregory Bateson.

At least in terms of the significant theoretical overlap among some leading authors, cultural-ecological approaches to the study of religion are an integral part of study of religions. This is especially true with regard to its sub-disciplines, for example, those devoted to animism and totemism, or to the religious systems of nature-close cultures, including indigenous and prehistoric "ways of knowing, being and doing"[533]. A typical attribute of many of these theories is a certain restraint and lack of separation of the world of religious phenomena from other parts of culture within a given environment. The real-life experiences of authors with practical research, often several-years with one particular culture, come into play here. Work in the field along with theoretical inspiration from the natural sciences (including psychology) frequently takes precedence over, for example, philosophy or theology – the traditional associations of early study of religions. Cognitive anthropology and cognitive science of religion also have roots in ecologically-oriented cultural anthropology.

In connection with another social science discipline – sociology – the topic of religion was also undoubtedly central from its beginnings, and is still so today. Religion took a notable place in the new science through the work of Auguste Comte, one of the founders of sociology. It was also prominent for all the major figures who laid the foundations of sociological thought and who remain an inspiration for a number of sociological directions, traditions and schools.

We have focused on three of these pioneers of sociological thought in our text, namely Karl Marx, Emil Durkheim and Max Weber, in order to demonstrate

[533] Karen Martin and Booran Mirraboopa, "Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for indigenous and indigenist research," *Journal of Australian Studies* 76, Volume 27 (2003).

the diversity of perspectives and paradigms within the discipline. Despite the differences in their perspectives on the nature of religion in general and of the place of religion in modern society in particular, all three of these thinkers reflected on the changing nature of sociocultural arrangements and the emergence of what we refer to as the modern style or modern society. They all pondered the ways religion had played a key role in society thus far, as well as the situation in the mid-19th to early 20th century in which under new, modern conditions the place of religion was changing, growing weaker rather than stronger. This general view of the loss of power and influence of religion in modern society was, on the one hand, a legacy of the intellectual tradition of the European Enlightenment, while on the other it reflected the processes taking place in the modernizing societies of Europe. The belief that in modern society the importance of religion is diminishing when compared to the past has become part of the general sociological theory of modernization, and has led to the theory of secularization within the sociology of religion. This theory represents the belief that the overall setting of modern society necessarily leads to a reduction in the social importance of religion, although by no means does it signify the ultimate extinction of religion.

By the time secularization theory came to full fruition in the 1950s and 1960s, its credibility had already weakened considerably, as a number of events cast a certain doubt on this perspective. First and foremost, within advanced Western societies a religious revival was occurring by the mid-20th century, a rebirth of sorts related both to the emergence of new religions and non-traditional religiosity. The influence of the religiously conservative right-wing political groups was also on the rise in different parts of the world, for example through movements linking religion to national and ethnic identity. Political Islam became stronger, but political Hinduism and Buddhism also emerged. Around the world new forms of Christianity also intensified, from politically committed Catholicism, for instance liberation theology in the Latin American context, to the mass emergence of Pentecostal Christianity in South and East Asia and Africa. As the 20th century turned into the 21st, it became clear that religion is not as weak as secularization theory had assumed.

The rival sociological theory of rational choice also developed, a perspective which took quite a different view of religion, especially in the USA. This approach not only argued that religion as a whole is not weakening in modern societies but that on the contrary it remains extremely powerful. This approach

also criticized the theory of secularization as an inappropriate generalization of specific developments within European societies.

Globalization along with responses to these processes has also brought additional reasons and justifications for emphasizing the study of religion within sociology as well as in other academic and scientific disciplines. One of the consequences of and responses to globalization has been the strengthening of local and ethnic identities, which religion has almost always played a significant part in. Reflections on the contemporary state of advanced economies and nations that have demonstrated certain characteristics of modernity, but where religion continues to play an important role, has always been crucial to sociology. Tracing these kinds of changes – huge ones and minuscule ones – eventually led to the disintegration of the universalism of the theory of secularization, but also brought doubts regarding the theory of modernization. The result is a state where current sociological theory refers to a multiplicity of modernities, i.e. a need has emerged to rethink what modernity entails and what its constituent characteristics are. In doing so, sociology necessarily returns to its very beginnings and foundations, as it can be said that sociology is essentially the study of modernity. At the same time, this state of rethinking starting points and, in fact, the entire basis for the discipline presents a unique opportunity for sociology to incorporate into its perspective impulses provided by other sciences, in particular anthropology of religion and cognitive science of religion.

Thus ends our journey into the study of religions as the discipline stands today. We have high hopes that this book will find readers among our students at Palacký University in Olomouc and among students and colleagues from other scholarly disciplines who are engaged in the academic study of religions and its current trends. We also welcome members of the general public who are interested in religious issues and we trust that they can also find interesting perspectives in this volume.

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