

THE STUDY OF RELIGION AS *THEORIENSCHMIEDE*¹
FOR CULTURAL STUDIES: A TEST OF
COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS-ECONOMIC
MODES OF ACCESS

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Abstract

This article proposes understanding an important task of the Study of Religion as a monitoring system in the neuroscience sense, i.e. a higher-order-level of evaluation and reflexivity. The Study of Religion in the context of several specialized cultural studies approaches reflects on these approaches and on how they frame a discourse. These scientific and popular discourses as well form our contemporary world view. By its self-critical dissolution from theology and its intercultural focus the Study of Religion is specialized in differentiability in cultural systems as holistic entities and on how they generate normative attitudes. The fruits of this suggested self-understanding as monitoring are demonstrated in discussing three perspectives from the anthropology of religion, cognitive or aesthetic ritual theory (McCauley & Lawson), and the economics of religion (Alles)—all dealing with the same piece of fieldwork from Harvey Whitehouse.

1. “Theorienschmiede” *methodology*

The title is first of all more an ambitious proposition than a description of the tasks of the Study of Religion. It is first necessary to explain what is meant by *Theorienschmiede* (1), and then a suggestion to fulfil this proposition can be developed in an examination of innovative suppositions (2-5). The result will be a new research perspective for the concepts of cognitive mode and cultural configuration (6). According to the understanding of the Study of Religion which is worked over in terms of Cultural Studies, the Study of Religion then becomes able to illustrate

¹ *Theorienschmiede*, German, derived from *Theorie* = theory and *Schmiede* = a smithy or forge. *Theorienschmiede* describes the place where theories are “forged” together; *Theorienschmiede* is the discipline which gives a comprehensive, systematic explanation of the various academic and scientific disciplines. Philosophy, for example, can act as a *Theorienschmiede* by explaining other disciplines in terms of their truth value, just as economic theory can act as a *Theorienschmiede* giving an account of other disciplines in terms of their utility.

what and how discipline contents in other discourses within Cultural Studies should be interpreted and studied. Scientific assumptions and concept formations belong to the field of research and to the material of the Study of Religion just as much as social interactions.

It is not necessary that the Study of Religion produces definitions of religion in order to possess a field of research. In so far as the Study of Religion describes these sign systems and interpretation schemes of first, second, and third order, it establishes the theory for cultural processes as well as for cultural self-images. The Study of Religion may be appropriately named *Theorienschmiede* on the basis of this activity. *Theorienschmiede* for Cultural Studies is therefore reserved as a designation for the place of scientific reflection, which integrates perspectives and binds them together into a self-reflective interpretation. Such a position must not be necessary and it was not always occupied by the Study of Religion. At previous times the Philosophy of History, Linguistics, and the self-correcting Ethnology have each occupied the position of *Theorienschmiede* of Cultural Studies. Cultural Studies operates trans-disciplinarily, is not to be confused with breaking up the various disciplines, develops a definite perspective, view problems in a similar manner, and has already a long tradition in the Study of Religion (Kippenberg 2001). This happened prominently for the first time and in the manner of historiography in the context of the debate concerning the capitalism thesis of Max Weber. It stands in competition with literary theory, which is considered by many as the definitive *Theorienschmiede* of Cultural Studies because of its reflection on texts, textuality, and interpretation.

Yet the Study of Religion is predisposed to its role as *Theorienschmiede* because of its history. For its history is pervaded by a permanent self-criticism and the withdrawal of more or less concealed religious models. The holy and the numinous, a renewal of religion through science, secularisation or progress, religion as a source of orientation or absolute validity—such models for the Study of Religion have largely been abandoned in favour of studies instead of signs, communication, and media. In addition, the Study of Religion was confronted with the difficult object of “religion, religions, and the religious” (J. Z. Smith), a principally Christian-theological internal perspective, and a religious-philosophical normativity, all of which require that the Study of Religion define itself reflectively. Finally, the challenge of a potential dissolution of religion as an independent research object in an encompassing concept of culture led to a highly reflective relationship between the Study of Religion and its material. Through this history of self-reflection, realigning

confrontations with foreign cultures, and the fast changes of paradigms which all sciences experienced in the twentieth century, the Study of Religion has become prepared for diverging interpretations and for a critical analysis of the interpretive patterns in cultural-scientific debates. As a result of the permanent deconstruction of its object of research, the Study of Religion is prepared to uncover rigid models and classification processes. The Study of Religion investigates the prevailing models, the conflict among various interpretations, and the processes of their success or failure not only in terms of sociological power structures, but also in terms of their aesthetic and pragmatic efficacy.

A systematic examination of the phenomenon of culture shows that it can be more appropriately observed that places of reflection continually emerge. Instead of a differentiation between an object-level and a meta-level, there is rather a hierarchy and division of sectors of levels of first, second, third, *n*th, (*n* + 1)th order.

An example: today, childbirth guides that propagate traditional non-evasive home deliveries are already reflexive. They are mostly written by college graduates, and they take into consideration feminist, intercultural, post-colonial, and other similar contexts. The Study of Religion as *Theorienschmiede* analyzes those places of reflection, which on the one hand conceptually and on the other in practice are most dominant. These are not infrequently two quite different branches of investigation. The appropriateness of such a division of research remains also to be questioned. Among the conceptually unfolded places of reflection are innately the sciences and art. Production in both of these fields is specialized and therefore is only capable of widespread reception through popularization. Sciences, especially the leaders in multidisciplinary debates, are monitoring systems: they help cultural processes achieve a certain visibility. The concept of monitoring is borrowed from the models found in the neurosciences: a disturbance in the cerebrum can result in a "blind person" grabbing a falling pen, since he sees it, though, in so far as he is "blind," he has no monitoring of this seeing in the hierarchically superordinate area (blindsight). Just as the cerebrum in this model provides processes in other regions with consciousness, so is *Theorienschmiede* that place of reflection, which bundles together other cultural and scientific self-evident positions and models of reality, analyzes their value and classifies them according to the methods and concepts of the monitoring discipline. The monitoring is thus not to be understood along the lines of a representation, but rather it forms the model for new combinations and self-interpretations, which can then come into effect and confirm themselves as executed.

Through the task of the Study of Religion as *Theorienschmiede* being introduced here, a vague conception of the object and range of research corresponding to this task has taken place (the classically understood religious-historical material and scientific assumptions). The field of work can only be presented over a sketch of the theory of culture, since "Religion" is viewed religious-scientifically as a configuration which has branched out into many regions and media of cultural manifestations. In so far as the Study of Religion as *Theorienschmiede* acts among the Cultural Sciences, the configurations that become visible are those that are responsible for generating the self-understanding and the action-guiding patterns for a certain population, and for binding them together (from largely diverse elements) into a recognizable pattern. Here, the formal determination is important. Criteria such as "anthropological determinations" that require the configuration to involve forgiveness, transcendence, immortality, cosmic connection or similar experiences, are perhaps "results" when viewed as individual cases, but they are not the conceptual content of a religious-scientific definition for finding an interesting and relevant configuration. *Theorienschmiede* illustrates the closest distanced reflection or the distanced monitoring for the monitoring system being examined. For example: should a religious-scientific analysis of the already reflexive homebirth-guides pay attention to their patterns of interpretation, the valuing of the pains of birth and technological achievements, etc.? The formed theory is then developed further and the knowledge gained is transformed in the moment, when it is publicly taken up and integrated into other configuration descriptions.

The position of *Theorienschmiede* becomes freed anew through their appropriation, and that often becomes recognizable in retrospect, if the *Theorienschmiede* was made up by an even more distanced monitoring. In addition to the already mentioned scientific monitoring systems, the non-reflexive, unfolded place of effective configurations still remains to be described: trends, currents, lifestyles, etc. Their attractiveness, their laws governing their development and complex chaotic phenomena, for example under globalization, must be traced. How must the Study of Religion's scientific language be constituted for this task, in order to be able to speak from each respective form-giving pattern?

This must be discussed by means of categorical explanations. Since Frege, it is no longer adequate that scientific knowledge expresses a meaning. A truth-value (reference) must also be present. Only a judgement is relevant. Frege runs into difficulty, however, with his fundamental concepts, the simple logical signs: they are not verifiable within the system, but rather must revert back to the (metaphorical) colloquial

language as a meta-language. This, however, fails to fulfil the requirements of precision for a logical object language. As a result of this, every scientific piece of knowledge is colloquially contaminated. Carnap remedies this deficiency by introducing a formal meta-language. The task of such a meta-language is to render the scientific object-languages as adequately as possible. It was, however, Frege's aim that the categorical explanations of his meta-language reflect the properties of individual scientific knowledge. The meta-language was therefore completely unable to be exact, since it stood for the incompleteness of the smallest logical elements. Carnap abandons Frege's demand that a meta-language take up the characteristics of the object-language. His fixation on the logical proposition form is a conscious abandonment of the non-propositional dimension of the philosophical reconstruction of science. This derives from Carnap's understanding of philosophy as scientific logic.

The Study of Religion stands before an analogous decision, Frege or Carnap, in so far as it views its object as a part of culture. As a cultural phenomenon the object then contains namely non-propositional contents such as ambiguous, ambivalent, culturally dynamic systems of interpretation and geographical factors, physical conditions, economic processes, and resources. Does the Study of Religion make use of a constantly fluid conceptual language capable of adapting to its contexts or can it employ a comparatively universal tool which, although considering different societal types, prefers rather in small contexts generalizations and unitary applications of rules? More likely, the Carnap or Frege question with regard to the humanities and cultural studies cannot be viewed as a strict "either-or."

On account of the religious-productive repercussions of the Study of Religion and the constitution of cultural processes I tend more towards Frege and the view that the inconclusivity of the "fundamental concepts" of the Study of Religion reflects the reception of an important property of cultural practice: namely, that the practice takes place within action contexts where it is typical that it select out of possible relations only a handful of relevant relations. Therefore one must not reconstruct the ideally completed environment of the action meta-linguistically, but rather the relevant environment of the participants, whether they be understood individually or generalized as tokens of the type of their religious, cultural, and social community. Scholars of the Study of Religion describe the fragmentary nature of observed scenes all the way to their characteristic singularity: their one-time only occurrence. The term singularity should be understood to exclude any subjective

connotations. Many actions and societal communications take place only one time and only as we comprehend and experience them. These retrospective references to the action, the environment of the action, and the singularity are only some of several characteristics of a religious-scientific meta-language, which integrates and makes use of non-propositionality. A further retrospective reference occurs at the somato-sensual processes of the human body and at the religious-rhetorical processes of becoming plausible (which often take place among modern recipients based on experience: inconspicuously, secretively, in a suspended state, as well as reflectively).

J. Z. Smith characterizes the object of research for the Study of Religion in a similar manner: he views religion as a “second-order, generic concept,” a meta-concept (Smith 1998, 281). However, Smith relies more on the explicit side, the research interest of the researcher (“it is theirs to define”). Thus the openness of the meta-linguistic concept is referred back to the pragmatics and power-structure of the scientific pursuit rather than esteemed as a positive display and as a meta-linguistic reception of any quality of the object, i.e. the religious phenomena as cultural phenomena. This must not be misunderstood to the effect that the sacred and possibly even the experience thereof should be taken up into the meta-language. Rather, the kind of knowledge of the object should be reflected in the meta-language (such as corporal, technical, or practical knowledge, etc.). The type of knowledge is a cultural knowledge, in the relations and sub-classifications from individual, mid-sized to collective knowledge, and from dominant, sub-cultural, or subversive knowledge, etc. At stake are conditions of the transmission and memory loss functions of knowledge, as well as corporal knowledge, various communicative channels, as well as the conditions of production and reception.

With this theoretical background as a plane of reflection of a possible religious-scientific perspective in mind, I will now demonstrate, how framing perspectives from quite various directions work toward cognitive conditions of a cultural phenomenon and show what theses and conclusions result. As a matter of practicality, all of the following relate to the same material which their framing perspectives address. That material is the field-study and religious theory of Harvey Whitehouse from *Inside the Cult*. A religious-ethnological, a religious-aesthetic/ritual-theoretical, and a religious-economic perspective will be compared. These perspectives must be characterized and assessed to see how they change the classical research object of religion, how they widen the canon of methods and the meta-language (“categorical explanations”) for investigation of

the phenomenon of religion, and how they thus become the *Theorien-schmiede* of contemporary Cultural Studies.

2. *Harvey Whitehouse: Religion as a central "mode" of cultural coding*

The Ethnologist Whitehouse and his wife lived from 1987 to 1989 in Papua New Guinea and studied the Pomio-Kivung movement, a mixture of millenarianism, Christianity, nationalism, and Cargo Cult-ideas. This involves regular care for ancestors, daily meetings to read aloud the "Ten Laws," as well as conceptions of the forgiveness of sins and a return of ancestors in the indefinite future. A few weeks before Whitehouse arrived, a small village group led by a pair of leaders separated from the mainstream of the Pomio-Kivung and formed their own local cult, in which a ring-form functions as the pervasive symbol realized for example through circular buried bottles and especially through the naked members forming a circle, who alternate between motionless states and states in which they move around with their bodies decorated. The leader and his brother proclaimed the return of their ancestors in the near future. The arrival of the pair of ethnologists was even interpreted as a sign thereof. With time the off-shoot group increased their activity. The frequency of their meetings increased and their sensually staged activities were intensified, for example, by means of nakedness and longer duration. Some slaughtered their cattle, neglected the harvest, and assembled for entire nights in expectation of the return of their ancestors. The government ended this state of affairs, whose hygienic conditions they found to be questionable, and sent them all back to their village.

Whitehouse presents his theory of religion in Chapter VIII after his ethnography of the above movement (Chapters I-VII). He interprets the increased frequency of meetings in the off-shoot group as necessary for feeding the episodic memory with strongly sensual and eruptive emotional executions. For the separatists from the main group are not bound together by the regularity and the routinized-standardized form of meeting involving slight sensual input as prevailed in the mainstream movement, but rather were bound together by the sporadic and intensive cult-like assemblies. In need of explanation are the reasons for the increased frequency of meetings and the increase in sensory stimulations.

The theory of religion is based on the distinction between two different types of forms of memory according to E. Tulving: the semantic and the episodic memory. The doctrinal mode of religiosity corresponds to

the first, the imagistic mode to the latter. This means that the doctrinal coding of religiosity involves memorization of a script of automatic procedures, whereas the imagistic mode of religiosity involves single episodes which have made their mark due to their sensual impact and thus are remembered. The religious off-shoot group is therefore interpreted in terms of the imagistic religious type. Whitehouse expressively portrays these two modes as ideal types, which in practice appear in many overlapping ways within a single religion.

The two modes of religiosity as described by Whitehouse are definable over thirteen binary oppositional pairs. The doctrinal mode, for example, is verbally coded; the imagistic mode is non-verbal. The doctrinal mode is lasting, a form of routine and rigid, whereas the imagistic mode is correspondingly sporadic, chaotic-emotional, and innovative (Whitehouse 1995: 197; Whitehouse 2004). Gregory Alles' criticism of the vague definition of these characteristics is justified (see below). The pairs are therefore only concerned with an understanding of the mode. Each mode of religiosity reveals itself as an interwoven fabric of interacting cultural factors: it determines the style in which solidarity is organized just as much as the kind of ideological superstructure and the manner of dissemination of the religiosity. Thus, "mode of religiosity" is a meta-concept for the interpretation of the manner of living of the community. Examined diachronically, there are communities which are "stable" and "doctrinal" and from time to time generate "episodic" coding subgroups.

The mode denotes for Whitehouse also social, institutional-political, transmissional, and moral actions. It continues the conceptual tradition of Ruth Benedict's Dionysian and Apollonian mode and the tradition of Victor Turners' *fertility rituals* and *political rituals*: "What is suggested by the notion of an imagistic mode of religiosity is that emotion and codification are linked with political potentialities, *via* specific processes of cognition and transmission" (Whitehouse 1995: 211). This also holds true for the doctrinal mode, which acts less through emotionality and more through the intellect. Rituals are only a medium in which a certain mode is expressed.

The characterisation of the doctrinal and the imagistic mode of religious practice, his starting-point concerning the psychological and sociological strands of research are expanded with the ambitious aim of being able to postulate causally understood, cultural laws. These laws, he admits, must be substantiated in detail with further empirical research. The interaction of the rationalistic, psychological, and sociological descriptions (the economic perspective is unfortunately lacking) is reflected, for example, in that the imagistic type of religion is connected to high

social cohesion of a smaller group and the doctrinal type to social universalism and expansion. Events and occurrences are stored in the doctrinal type as script, in the imagistic episodic as a special single event, etc. Religions are not expressly systems of perfection, which means in this context that the modes of religiosity overlap in many ways. One must criticise Whitehouse's application of causality to social communication. This stands in the tradition of Comte, which denies any gap between biological and social behavior.

Whitehouse addresses those cultural modes of religiosity, which play an explanatory role for human existence. In connection to this is a "revelatory experience," an "uncovering, revealing experience" (Whitehouse 1995, 218), which are defined as those representations, regardless of whether they are symbolized doctrinally or pictorially, which are able to discard old convictions. Whitehouse justifies this access to religion with his starting-point of intellectual ethnology, which seeks the explanatory and ordering roles within a group. The definition of the religion concept according to function and content as revealing sensual experience is however problematic for the suitability of the mode concept, because it is normative.

The functionalist maxim that the effect of something determines its contents is also not universally valid. Effects and functions always depends on their context. A functional context therefore is not described, but rather the historically concrete and in this sense incidental formation of the event. McCauley/Lawson will state regarding their demonstration that not a revealing experience, but rather a supply of sensory stimulation enables the dynamics of the events to be understood. Whitehouse has presented a mental model to describe the phenomenal aspect of religion with his theory of religion, which operates with the mode-concept on the cultural-scientific level of theory. The operating region of this interaction of categories as terms for explanation is the uniquely codifying human mind.

3. *The mode becomes the cognitive form of ritual: McCauley and Lawson*

McCauley and Lawson extend Whitehouse's analyses of ritual frequency to a universal theory of ritual form (McCauley & Lawson 2002). A form of ritual can be defined by cognitive variables and is independent from the specific religious history. The inadequacy of this to form a universal theory can be seen in two axioms, which the authors develop out of their theory of ritual competence (*Rethinking Religion* 1990):

1. The ordinary psychological act-theory does not differentiate between religious actions and non-religious actions. Viewed cognitively-scientifically, this amounts to the employment of the same processing mechanisms and representations.

2. The difference between religious and non-religious actions is introduced by the appearance of a definite representation: the idea of a culturally-formed and superhuman bearer or performer of the action.

Whereas the first thesis simply rejects the special role of religious experience and action and makes religion a research object for the cognitive sciences, the second thesis introduces a limitation known to the authors of their area of research and leads to the difficult decision not to start from empirically observed actions but rather to analyse and evaluate the actions through the mentality and doctrines of the participants. From this moment on many rituals are excluded (immantentic actions for example in Chinese religions, so-called audience-cults such as football games, etc.), and in addition their own ideological contents enter into the interpretation, which either extracts from theological or scientific sources.

The popular theory of evolution can be invoked from science. This happens freely according to the motto: it was an advantage of survival to place the cause of a wavering branch in a single hostile person in order to then protect oneself. From this grows the tendency to deem a superhuman being the agent cause for various actions. Likewise, the anthropomorphism-thesis (S. Guthrie) is questionable as a scientific resource, often together with the evolution theory, when a change or situation which cannot be explained is ascribed to a superhuman agent. This agent acts anthropomorphically as a human, and yet possesses superhuman qualities such as not being seen (cf. Boyer 2003). Common to all such theories is the result, that the investigated religious actions all are viewed as erroneous.

McCauley and Lawson's typology of religious actions is dependent upon the theological inner-perspective of the people being observed rather than observable factors, or through participant interviews for significant data and variables regarding the truly experienced inner-perspective (cf. Whitehouse critique, chapter 8: 2004). The central point of this form theory is an insufficient, simplified description of an action-sequence: an agent (a), acts (b), on a participant or by means of an instrument (c), whereby previous actions of this kind also play a role (d). It does not include elements on the action-theoretical level such as the occupied roles of opponent and helper, the registration of open, closed, or double sequences, decisions as narrative crosspoints, etc.

In this case two types of ritual forms are portrayed: (1) “the action type of the religious actor” and (2) “the type of the religious participant” or the “type of the religious medium/instrument.” The basis for such determination is where the most direct presence of the superhuman being occurs in the action-sequence. This typology suffers from the fact that it deals with the question: At which place in the action sequence, viewed from the religious doctrine, should the superhuman being be imagined? Whether the participants of the inner-perspective experience it at other places is not addressed. It could happen that a participant hypnotized by the charisma of the religious agent localises the presence of the superhuman being in this agent himself rather than in the ritual instrument, even if according to the doctrine of the religion or according to religious experts it should be otherwise. It is also possible that a participant experiences the superhuman being on account of an exceptional taste for the religious medium (such as a feast) and not as is prescribed by the religious agent. The real, and special, inner-perspective and its cognitive representation remain therefore externally open. Thus McCauley and Lawson bring a theology in disguise in through the backdoor.

The assertion that the form of a ritual is not carried by memory (Whitehouse) and therefore not by frequency, but rather by a tacit knowledge, is not a convincing solution to the problem of this semantic determination. The common sense psychology which McCauley and Lawson employ may depict similar act-processing cognitive mechanisms for most members of a group, yet the assertion that this common sense psychology reflects a 1:1 relationship to theology is objectionable. Therefore the very intuitive representations of stimulation adaption and frequency are thoroughly useful and informative, not however those more complex representations that integrate a ritual typology.

McCauley and Lawson employ a reduction in the concept of mode, as far as they truncate it to an act-form. They neglect the week-long process of legitimation and the linguistic-cognitive analyses of the Pomio-Kivung in Dadul concerning the real ancestry-message of Tanotka, the recognition from the prayer leader and the village-assembly, and concerning the interpretation of the cryptic sentences of Tanotka by his brother (Whitehouse 1995: 90).

Much risk is averted through the built-up charisma of the leader Tanotka: his image in place of an image of possible loss is produced in the common imagination. Tanotka conforms in all cognitive categories with the exception of having a special contact to the ancestors. The work of McCauley and Lawson is to be recognised. Without their problematic introduction of the representation of a CPS agent the concentration

on cognitive-sensory connections can bring much insightful knowledge. McCauley and Lawson are not consistent enough to discard the classical cognitive-scientific representation model and the difficult tacit-knowledge theory and to concentrate fully on the non-representational laws of sensualism. The concept of mode is extended by McCauley and Lawson to actions and is enriched with sensual-somatic-motologic parameters, by way of which it becomes useable and useful for the *Theorienschmiede*.

4. *The economics of religion and ritual according to Gregory Alles*

Gregory Alles takes up those premises of contemporary economic theory, which are influenced by cognitive and behavioral psychology. In this he departs from the religious-sociological theory of rational choice, which deduces religious behavior from the premises of a utility/reward maximisation, from the stability of choice preferences, and from market equilibrium (L. R. Iannaccone, R. Stark, R. Finke). Alles' major point of criticism of Whitehouse is his lack of evidence. He refers, for example, to Whitehouse's statement that the afternoon readings of Pomio-Kivung regarding their Ten Instructions are boring in order to help justify the separation or secession of a more stimulating cultic group. Alles asks, as has already the ethnologist B. Douglas, whether it was the ethnologist rather than the Melanesians who became bored during the readings. They suppose indeed a literary formula in the religious ethnography of Melanesia, which combines boredom and impatience in the account of daily religious practices. Alles is able to refute by means of differentiated market laws the conviction of inevitability that assumes boredom leads to secession.

The economic theory has the advantage of imitating the normal perspective of those who act. Alles has no intention of making a statement with his religion-economy concerning the rationality of economic behavior. The descriptive power of the theory stands in the foreground; whether the observed regularities are to be interpreted as an expression of rational acting remains an unimportant question not necessary to be answered for this starting point. Alles introduces a theory (formed from diverse macroeconomic and microeconomic theories) that does not assume "utility" (drive in the pursuit of acquisition) as a premise. In addition, religion is supposed to be conceived as a replacement of economic acts or as compensation through economic operations. His concept of religion is not economic-reductionist. His supplementary hypothesis states that religious action can be well described in many

aspects with a theory that was developed to describe economic behavior, especially for predictions which he gives as the aim of the religion economy fitting his empirical conviction.

Instead of beginning with the romantic tradition's description of religious action as the longing desire for a diffuse, infinite "religion," Alles begins with the demand for religious products. One must appreciate that Alles' cognitive economics of religion is extended by empirical economic psychology and so breaks free from the Boyer model otherwise strongly received by J. Barrett and McCauley/Lawson and others, which has specialized itself on cognitive limitations considered as factors of formation of religious practice and doctrine.

5. *How economics of religion help describe a cultural configuration*

Allles is interested in the ethnography of an eschatological movement in order to suggest by this means the descriptive power of economic theory. Whitehouse' theory of religion of the modes "doctrinal" and "imagistic" is ignored, since statistical evidence for the correlation among the extremely vague descriptive pairs regarding both codings is absent. In addition to this empirical concern, the economic-theoretical perspective exerts an enormous effect regarding theory criticism. The two central observations of Whitehouse of boredom and impatience can be translated and deconstructed in economic theory.

Whitehouse's theoretical plausibility rests for a large part on the intuitive agreement to the postulate that something which is to be expected in the far future can unleash impatience. Now if "repeated action" is understood as "repeated exchange" and if an expected event in the future is understood as "term exchange," then it can be compared with examples from everyday life, which are associated with a counter-intuition, so that at least the inevitable deductions based on boredom due to regularity and from impatience based on a distant future can be refuted. Alles gives as an example of "repeated exchange" his weekly gasoline fill-up for his automobile, which does not generate boredom and as an example of "term exchange" the maturation of a life insurance which he does not look forward to with impatience.

McCauley and Lawson proceed however differently with the central observation of Alles. As evidence regarding the connection between repetition and boredom they give the compensation or counterstrategy of increased sense-stimulations. Until this point, a counter-intuition against Whitehouse stemming from the economic action and experience perspective could be invoked. This is however insufficient to refute the

connection as such. For Whitehouse could then simply introduce a case distinction: in some cases repetition leads to boredom, in others it does not.

The interpretation from the economics of religion calls into question the deduced conclusion as such. Alles takes up Whitehouse's "observation" regarding boredom from the daily hour-long prayer as a hypothesis. The acceleration of ritual and its sensual intensification even in this case of routinization is not yet necessary, since perhaps such daily assemblies bring other benefits not found in a more varied experience (for example, social cohesion, informal exchange of information). Seldom is only one exclusive good at hand. Secondly, boredom cannot explain what it professes to explain: the secession/separation of only *a few*. For according to such an explanation all of the participants would be bored. Economic theory can also in this case provide a finely differentiated tool: that only a few secede could be due to the fact that they are not addressing the additional benefits.

The *eschaton* is characterised in a further series of arguments as a low good: an absent prosperity becomes substituted with the expectation of prosperity. If I substitute one good which I cannot afford with another, more affordable good, the latter can then be considered an inferior good. The following principle holds: the worse I am doing, the more likely I am to buy an inferior good. Alles favors economic-psychological results instead of this substitution thesis commonly found in criticism of religion: people just like pigeons prefer a short-term rather than a long-term consumption, even when the latter is more valuable. One could name this the "principle of economic impatience." Applying this to the *eschaton*, one must make a simplifying decision between a short-term and a longer-term end or good. Both of these goods, the definite and the indefinite, can be explained with respect to their attractiveness and their risk. Investigations show that the value of a good more than proportionally declines the longer it cannot be reached. That would mean for the end expectation that it would lose its attractiveness extremely fast the more indefinite and out-of-reach it is conceived. On the other hand a short-term, exactly determined *eschaton* is very risky. According to the results of empirical tests which Alles gives showing that it is doubly painful to lose a euro, as it is joyful to gain one, the *eschaton* risks a short-term greatest loss, if it never arrives. It requires special conditions in order that such a risk be taken as that taken by the separatist group in Dadul. It has positive effects if the potential loss is not envisioned, if a charismatic figure or events interpreted as omens are present. The overestimation of the probability of the occurrence of an

event and the group dynamics increase the effect. Alles makes precise the fundamental difference between the value of a good and the absolute value of the *eschaton*, which is without correspondence to the economic value. Nevertheless, this fails to destroy the applicability of the economic theory.

6. *The gain for the Study of Religion derived from an economic description*

It remains to supply a missing link in Alles' argumentation for an economic model of description in the Study of Religion. This model may function because we are culturally, on an everyday basis, schooled in our economic paradigm and are well acquainted with the laws of exchange, debt, and purchases. This pragmatism helps color our religious life and influences the sphere of religious actions. One must simultaneously keep in mind that perhaps many religious practices can be described economically with fruitful results, but this involves having religious action make use on the object level of economic action (though some religious action defines itself in delineation, contrast, or exception from the world of economic gain). The economics of religion must pay attention to the extent in which the investigated religious discourse already interacts with the economic discourse: whether it be as a place in which the selection becomes manifest by success in economic performance (Calvinism), in the complete refrain from economic acquisition (beggar monks), or in the stress on mercy and gifts in contrast to "everything has its price" (the early Christian "society of contrast," in the words of the theologian), years of the Sabbath, etc.

Economic activity must hardly be underestimated in its fundamental importance, since it regulates the provisions of humans that are necessary for survival. It is therefore associated with symbolic activity. Economic activity is a "household/*oikos*" activity. An entire social form is described in its supply relationships and intertwining. Concerning a concept of culture, which views culture as organized through modes, it becomes clear that the economy has an object of research very close to and even similarly structured to the Study of Religion.

The economics of religion can demonstrate how an interpretational system (here: economic activity) can have a formative influence in the sphere of another (here: religious behavior). It must not, however, be overlooked that it often leads to essential transformations if a characteristic becomes lost, which it should possess, due to it belonging to the religious sphere. For example, the drawing for a pilgrimage lottery might

predict not ethical recognition or happy beneficiaries, but rather the chance for material gain of a house, whose worth can grow in four steps each according to the initial investment. This is shown by the brochure optically regarding the growing size of the house. The connectedness of the mentality of religious and domestic feeling of safety are also relevant to a tradition's background of common beliefs, in which the form of representation however plays a more implicit role compared with the economic opportunity.

Each model of description confronts an experiential foundation, even if it is not expressly stated. For example, the motto "For that amount I can't buy anything" or "too risky investment" each demonstrate a type of religious activity understood in an economic manner. A similar definable experience situation is the cognitive-scientific reconstruction: sensuality, frequency, rhythm are all variables of every action, which make it attractive or unattractive. The economics of religion in this form, connected with empirical economic psychology, is informative for our concept of mode, since it develops further categories and characteristics of these categories.

By means of this concept of mode the description of the oscillating processes between everyday experience and charismatic eruptions by Max Weber opens itself up to criticism. The modes cannot simply be viewed as two different types of reception, since then both would always have to appear simultaneously. In a criticism of Max Weber, a charismatic group is less fixed on the leading figure than focussed on a pictorially coding group of people. The charismatic person is an epiphenomenon, to whom one must not attribute what in reality is the psychically much more complex factor interaction of a social unit. The specific aspect of mode is that it is defined in cognitive and sociological categories.

7. Religion as cognitive mode and cultural configuration

As a result of Alles' consideration in terms of the economics of religion, the following is clear: religion cannot be identical with cognitive categories, because that fails to explain individual cultural formation and diversity (the separation or secession of a group). Additional explanatory factors must be brought in that are capable of making clear why, for example, some expect the return of their ancestors in the near, others in an indefinite future. The cognitive apparatus with respect to its functioning remains the same. Here the view of an integration of cognitive units such as scripts, perceptions, daily rhythms, etc., must be applied to cultural

configuration, to be understood as the interweaving of the various societal sub-areas. This exists in power ascriptions, plausibilities, styles of communication and preferred channels of communication, possibilities for realisation, relevance to real practice, etc. For the configuration of healing, for example, it is relevant whether this is connected to medicine or rather to “spiritual providers” or to both. It is relevant what type of anthropology it adopts: one or several, western or Asian, viewing the mind, body, and soul as a totality pervaded by Chi, or whether one adopts the view that one with an athletic body with normal blood values is healthy and “healed.” It furthermore belongs to a description of the configuration “healing” an understanding of the specialised manner for providing security systems, the specialised manner for accommodating those seeking healing, and much more. Only when the configuration is considered does it become apparent why it is meaningful for some to meet daily and others to assemble monthly. It could be that not every token of a religion can be reconstructed by science and the Study of Religion—even if aesthetic units and outer-cognitive factors and their configurations are brought in to supplement cognitive categories.

Considering the same example: it is plausible that one of the groups meets only once monthly, instead of weekly, because of outer-cognitive factors (such as the required distance to be travelled or a work week lacking free weekends). This is connected with the imagined product value of the event. Alternatively, perhaps there is a narrative or religious-reflexive statement in the named group concerning the frequency of meetings.

Essential, for this religious-scientific problem, is the interaction of elements, which the cognitive mode and the cultural configuration yield: geographic-social factors that work with cognitive categories (of the corresponding subgroup) and with the style of action (body and movement) in other fields of communication. This correlation in mode and in configuration is—as the thesis goes—typical and from this we can generate rules and explanation maxims.

For the description of a mode and a configuration according to this understanding one can integrate empirical results concerning economic risk-behavior: important data regarding the division of the phases of life, behavior towards levels of monetary value, formation of inventory supplies, way and extent of collective reserves, etc. Whether there are collective reserves provides information concerning a collective imagination: What types of reserves are there? Are they natural, precious metals, art or sacred objects? How are they formed? Who makes them?

Is it on a volunteer basis? Does this happen regularly? When are the reserves employed?

A cultural configuration sets a number of cultural factors together into a definite relationship and thus affects a large part of the cultural interactive structure. The description of such patterns is a meaningful area of investigation for the Study of Religion. The mode is not completely described by the concept “code”; since, in addition to semiotic factors, cognitive, economic, or sensory factors (such as temperature, brightness, bodily motion, or the surroundings of the activity) also belong to the phenomenon. Religious communication is only partly the imparting and the learning of a religion. Cultural communication happens to a large extent in that we independently produce the relationships between the cognitive modules of information-processing for the first time and thanks to the cognitive rules. This happens without requiring us to learn every individual classification, generalization, or interconnection. A child that becomes, for example, newly acquainted with an animal knows that, if it is named “bird,” it probably also flies, builds nests, has feathers, lays eggs, will die someday, etc. The situation is similar with religious cognitive categories: we learn less content than is generally accepted and generate many “elements of tradition” by means of cognitive processes. It is standard because of individual learning contexts that religious conceptions vary considerably among individual participants of a religion (Boyer 2000: 97). This variation can be well comprehended by means of the mode concept of religion. These pieces of knowledge from cognitive science lessen the singular explanation of transmission over a concept of collective memory, as is often claimed in many cultural-studies debates, especially if an independent area of research should be formed by means of these “key concepts” of Cultural Studies. One must therefore not underestimate the effects on religious-historical representations.

As the cultural-scientifically deconstructed concept of religion from the Study of Religion, or rather as its area of research, the combination of the concepts of *mode* and *configuration* are proposed from the preceding considerations. The Study of Religion acts with these concepts as *Theorienschmiede* and generates then an integrative perspective. We can thus approach the task from a micro-level as well as macro-level:

1. The Study of Religion perspective views on the macro-level the cultural configuration of the involved societal partial systems, including their specializations, social and political interactions, collective value systems, aesthetic canons, economic considerations, etc.

2. On the micro-level the Study of Religion views the cognitive mode, for example the formation of cognitive domains, transmissions, narrative patterns (way of learning, biography, neuronal processing, recollection, utility, etc.). The micro-reconstruction is however not identical with a cognitive-science oriented study of religion, but rather integrates sensory media, medializing processes, forms of presentation of information, and unspectacular regions of experience.

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