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Capital, Forms of

Forms of capital are an important immaterial reservoir of means of social self-positioning and instruments for attaining goals. Financial, cultural, and social kinds of capital are distinguished and applied to religion. These may well be embodied in agents, institutionalized in titles or organizations, or materialized in goods and objects. The well-known neo-classical concept of human capital refers to skills, knowledge, and competence, and makes them quantifiable for better allocation and creation of profit. Bourdieu's approach, on the other hand, stresses the role of symbolic capital in winning competitions and establishing power relations. The production of capital, its transferability to other domains, exchange rates of forms of capital, and its influence on attitudes towards work and happiness are widely discussed. Most of the discussions are concerned with the question whether social capital is an individual capacity or an organizational characteristic, and how this helps to better understand societies.

In recent decades, the discussion of forms of capital, especially human capital, has gained in importance. As immaterial resources, often also in symbolic value-creating chains, they play a role in the humanities, the social sciences, and economics. They promise to take into consideration degrees of individual knowledge and mastery, as well as collective cooperation levels and network effects for the reconstruction of action. In *The Wealth of Nations* (Vol. II) Adam Smith introduced the notion of capital in connection with an educated worker for whose formation real costs are involved, which from then are fixed in his person. This workforce beside material capital (financial capital, resources and other forms of fixed capital, such as buildings or machines) was later called human capital in neoclassical economics. The economist Gary Becker introduced human capital, by which he understood skills, knowledge, and habits, into his micro economic household production model (*Human Capital*, 1964). The concept helps to quantify the non-market production of goods for one's own consumption in relation to other measurable factors, such as time and money allocation. Sociological approaches other than rational choice regularly criticize this objectification of humans, and instead favor the concepts of symbolic, cultural and social capital. As a capital form on its own, physical or body capital as a resource of health, health prevention, relaxation, sportiness, and emotional control may be considered in contrast to the overall possibility of embodied forms of cultural capital. For the context of yoga, the production of a reflexive belief system and a bodily mediated self-identity have been described as providing the public good of a more attentive attitude towards the human and natural environment, and as influencing work attitudes (Koch 2012). Another recently coined form of capital is the 'natural' capital of the environmental system, beside the 'institutional' capital of the social system and the 'produced' capital in economics. To protect natural capital in today's crucial situation of over-exploitation of nature, Dobell has demanded a free market environmentalism which he calls religion of the market (Dobell 1995, 240). Some neoclassical sociologists even talk of religious capital. However, the terminology used in theories of capital is very heterogeneous. Here we will discuss only those theory strands that have been adopted in the study of religion.

Neoclassical economics of religion

Becker's approach was applied to religion early on by Azzi and Ehrenberg (1975), Neuman (1986), and Becker's student Iannaccone (1990, 1995). Religious capital is the "degree of mastery of and attachment to a particular religious culture" (Stark/Finke 2000, 120). This attachment is of an emotional and cognitive nature. Participation in religious activities is said

to increase the stock of religious capital (which is even opposed to “secular human capital”, Lehrer 2010). The use of the term stock implies the storage of capital as a resource for future use. The more religious capital I have, the more successfully will I produce the good of religious satisfaction (Iannaccone 1990). The religious capital approach claims to predict interreligious and interdenominational mobility and marriage, age of conversion, and consumer behavior. Religiously active individuals will tend to consume more group-specific goods like church services than less active members, because this maximizes their mastery of the particular religious culture and thus their religious satisfaction. According to an empirical survey by Finke and Dougherty, Christian seminaries fulfill the task of producing distinct religious capital by creating a firm professional boundary between the clergy and the laity (2002). Those seminaries that give more attention to spiritual training will lead to higher commitment and piety (measured in time of prayer). The social capital produced in this context consists of two components: network capital that is larger than the local congregation and emotional attachment.

Most of the work on religious capital notes the gain of social capital: members benefit from integrative and supportive networks, identity enforcement, and further psychological benefits like consolation, far-reaching promises, and encouragement. In general, human capital is seen as a competence and an economic growth factor. Numerous studies ascertain the correlation between denomination-specific religious capital and the wealth of a society (Lehrer 2010). Religious human capital can also be described in terms of its specificity. Economic rent or quasi-rent is the excess return from more than one user context or the symbolic surplus. To have learned to meditate or to calm down by breathing is useful in more than the religious situation and produces a rent above the production costs.

The highly ambitious Spiritual Capital Research Program 2005-08 carried out by the US-American Templeton Foundation spent some millions of dollars to establish the spiritual capital as a brand. Some substantialize religious human capital as a form of capital that relies on a “spiritual resource” and it is said to be more than just social capital. Protestantism and protestant missionaries are said to have massively influenced human capital building in Europe and in the global South through mass education and mass printing, as well as through the institutional development of colonial rules of law, civil society and market economics (Woodberry 2010).

New institutional economics of religion

Whereas neoclassical economics focuses on the production side, and therefore correlates with capital as produced by work, new institutional economics (NIE) is concerned with governance and organizational structure, so that the transaction is more important than the form of capital. As a consequence, NIE in the field of religion is about things like cooperation, coordination, or network externalities, and less about a special religious form of capital. Institutionalized capital and the variety of sorts of cultural capital in general solve coordination problems that arise from the plurality of religious market participants. Cultural capital is a way of reducing risk, of signaling quality and trustworthiness by embedding the exchange in social relations that endure at least in the medium run. Cultural capital is also institutionalized in brands and names, such as Consciousness Academy, Prana Clinic, pulsar energy therapist. This is a means of gaining authority and integrity. This process indicates the consequences of highly competitive religious markets: the pressure to innovate new products, to follow trends, to standardize qualifications, to protect trade marks, and so on.

The value of capital must always be estimated with regard to path dependency. Exit costs, especially if they are high, have to be taken into the calculation of future outcomes of capital production. The strategy, for instance, of the monopolized production of religious capital by the Catholic Church is costly in terms of control and the maintenance of an infrastructure of its own. On the other hand, the pure size and tight-knittedness of the organization might make

up for these losses, and limit optimal use of this specific capital to Catholic contexts, thus keeping its benefits within the bounds of the organization. Missing reform opportunities may give attractiveness to the organization in some countries, while making it less attractive in others. So long as this tension can be mastered, the organization remains stable. According to the diagnosis of Heelas and Woodhead, the contemporary holistic milieu still profits from capital acquired by people in their Christian socialization (2005, 133). Because of this path dependency of human capital in alternative and diffuse religions, they expect a decline of the holistic milieu to the same extent that Christian socialization in associational forms declines.

Bourdieu's symbolic capital

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu distanced himself vigorously from the neo-classical way of speaking of human capital. Culture is instead a field of practice with symbolic manipulation of meaning. Capital is “accumulated labor” (1986). Everything that enables power and influence functions as capital. There is permanent rivalry over legitimation of the social order in religious fields, with suppliers, kinds of capital, products and demand. This order includes the sanctioning of wealth and power, consolation and the sense of meaning in life. Embodied capital, the so-called *habitus*, is also a source of inequality. Parents can bequeath particular kinds of cultural capital to children. This, Bourdieu says, is the most concealed form of inheriting capital. Forms of capital are embodied, institutionalized or formal, as in exclusive membership. Symbolic capital includes cultural and social capital. Social capital, according to Bourdieu, is the utility that can be drawn from a social network. To keep this going, permanent relationship building is necessary in the form of visits, presents, and favors. Social capital can be transferred to representatives. There are lots of rules on how this may be done, as it heavily affects the collective. Cultural capital may be objectified in paintings, demonstrating a certain taste in art, it may be incorporated, as in a certain way of moving, or it may be institutionalized as in academic or noble titles. This institutionalization of cultural capital works through “collective magic” (1986): a superior may command in his absence and stir a whole group of subordinates into activity. Bourdieu introduces the concept of symbolic capital to denote “more precisely” the Weberian *charisma* and Durkheimian *mana* (1998). The potency of symbolic capital is very similar to the effectiveness of magical powers. But he explains symbolic capital and its force as the result of concealing the work of power relations. Forms of capital are partly interchangeable, the exchange rate depending on the context. In some contexts it might work that the pop-artist Madonna, for instance, changes the cultural capital of being a Cabbalist into the social capital of a higher reputation or the financial capital of greater media attention. These transferability relations cause benefits, losses, and dependencies. The similarity of kinds of capital produced by priests, martial arts teachers, and therapists in caring for souls and promoting higher aims dissolves the boundaries of the religious field.

Salvation goods (*biens de salut*) in this context are chiefly religious membership and sacraments. In seeking these forms of capital, the agents are subjected to a delusion. Instead of revolting against an unjust order of classes and submission to religious narratives and authorities, they play a role in a religious economy. Social family capital is typically glorified as brother- and sisterhood in a spiritual community, and often leads to relationships of exploitation, as well as the idealization of human capital in honorary offices. With this thesis of false consciousness or concealment, Bourdieu steps in the footprints of Marx and his analysis of religious institutions in economy and capital production. Capital suggests a position and the option of access within a network of power, and is therefore often connected with property rights.

Bourdieu's field of practice and symbolic capital theory have been refined by relating religious capital to other fields and laypersons that are also recognized as producing religious capital (Urban 2003, Verter 2003). Verter introduces variants of spiritual capital to map

current traditional and diffuse religion (mystical / popular traditional religion, esoteric / popular alternative spirituality) and draws attention to the pluralism of value hierarchies of these variants.

The neo-capital discussion of forms of social capital

In recent discussions there has been some convergence of positions relating to rational choice, institutionalism and new economic sociology. Here, we will therefore focus on certain key concepts instead of conventional traditions. One key concept is autonomy and heteronomy: capital can be controlled and produced by an individual, or it may exist as general social capital stored in norms, rules, and traditional procedures. As a feature of organization in the sense suggested by the sociologist James Coleman, social capital is heteronymous: individuals cannot control it.

Social capital has been discussed as a personal resource, as a more general medium of enabling and facilitating action, and as generalized trust. In all these regards, forms of capital might be evaluated as positive or negative, depending on what consequences they have on personal and social well-being. We might ask what purpose capital serves as a resource: religious satisfaction, political participation or economic involvement. Also interesting is how religiously produced capital affects the capital of the wider society and politics. Taking the example of Islamic Morocco, Willis and Maarouf (2010) point out that religious social capital generated in the master-disciple relationship or saint-suppliant/sorcerer-believer affiliation serves as a reservoir for capitalist wage labor. It explains the submissive attitude of workers that makes poverty and wealth appear as a consequence of socio-religious relations rather than economic exploitation. Here, the concept of social capital denotes an attitude that is deeply imprinted by traditional religious everyday life customs and social hierarchies.

The sociologist Robert Putnam's diagnosis of America's declining social capital in respect of associations, volunteer work, and charitable trusts from the 1960ies onwards (*Bowling alone*, 2002) touched a sensitive nerve of mainly Christian self-understanding in the United States. Christians think of themselves as contributing essentially to trust and charity in their society. In response to Putnam's diagnosis, associationally produced religious capital was demonstrated (Smidt 2003, Berger/Redding 2010). Some authors have developed an alternative explanation of US-American religious pluralism from capital theories, instead of using the thesis of unregulated market competition: the reason for growth from 1860-1930 is seen in the high utility of social capital (Blau/ Land/ Redding 1992). In this line of argument, social capital as a network and club good is a powerful way of maintaining a central market position.

Others stress the dense and often informal countercultures of the new social and religious movements from the 1960ies on. This brings us to the difficulty of defining religious capital in a civil society, and its effects on and connection with political engagement. How can religious capital influence politics if – as critics claim – the political realm is narrowed down to daily soap operas and the reign of corporationalism and big money? Whatever one answers, the power and strength of neo-capital debates comes from a causal understanding of the effectiveness of forms of capital for social life.

Aside from that, capital production implies investments. A stock of capital can serve as a resource for coping, reciprocity, and further tasks. Thus, it is also an economic factor that can be used for societal use. The Stark-Finke thesis states that religious people will tend to keep their religious capital. This also influences religious consumption behavior (Baker/Park 2007). As a consequence, Christians more often consume Christian-theme products, whereas on the basis of the current data the contrary cannot be said for secular products and secular consumers. Religious economies of secrecy as in secret societies and the esoteric discourse transform knowledge to a scarce good. As such it is a symbolic as well as social capital of the adepts (von Stuckrad 2010, 54-59).

Some questions touch on economics and law: How much financial capital can be stored or earned while keeping the status of a charitable organization? How much financial capital is it morally legitimate for a religious organization to hold in the form of real estate and firms?

Conclusion

Forms of capital are precious and highly influential reservoirs of immaterial resources in a society; they serve to attain goals and express a social position. The forms of capital only have value and only make sense in an interpretive frame. Capital in the economics of religion is therefore an important symbolic production. Innumerable applications to religion are imaginable. As we have outlined, competition, exchange rates between forms of capital and domains, conversion, attractivity, reputation, and governance are some of them. An important question is the interchangeability of forms of capital. With regard to religious fundamentalist movements, for instance, the question of how this capital might be converted to political capital will be of relevance to estimate the force and speed with which such groups take root in the political realm. The term capital is also closely linked with the activities of capital building and investment, and the calculation of a desired pay-off from this stock of capital. Capital is conceived of as (a) a prerequisite for realizing aims, (b) a side-effect of learning, and (c) a feature of organization. Because of this variety there will always be several mechanisms by which capital acquired in the context of religion deeply affects social practices and economic outcomes. Especially insofar as forms of capital cause externalities (like changed attitudes towards work and wealth, perceived benefits and costs and choices made on this basis), the consequences are more than short-term and unforeseeable. Always depending on the particular religious group, historical time, and country, the respective cultural sphere might provide the economic and social benefits of a longer life-expectancy, stricter rule-obeying, lower crime rates, or motivation for hard work, or the opposite. A general type of religious capital is therefore not necessary, a proposition that surely does not deny that there are regularities in the context-specific activity of capital building. The effects of particular kinds of capital in the context of religion do not go across religious affiliations and capital is always path dependent. Cross correlations should not be underestimated, like the repeal of blue laws and an increase of drug taking, rather than greater church participation (Lehrer 2010, 44). Further research on capital in religious contexts should examine its influence on general behavior, like violence, abuse, health, choice of professions, and so on, in order to specify the peculiarity of this capital. Capital as a competence will have to be de-aggregated into an array of variables including the knowledge component, participation, and commitment. A challenge is that so-called religious human capital within a group is dependent on the intensity of commitment of individuals. An average level of commitment may have minimal effects, whereas high commitment eradicates the effects of other factors. Thus, there are not a few problems to be solved in respect of measuring human capital. The employment of capital and investment terminology outside the scholarly field, in everyday life, can affect the way religion is understood: the religiously coded cultural sphere is seen from the perspective of looking for pay-offs. This change is part of a more general commercialization of modern life. Societies are often described according to their form of capital production as materialistic, consumerist or post materialistic. But in any historic circumstances the picture is more complex; for instance, in the post materialism of the wealthy and global yoga elites, post materialist aims such as autonomy and self-realization widely interfere with wealthy life styles (Koch 2012).

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