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"This book is the book of truth" – Introduction

1 Preliminary remarks

"Dieses Buch ist das Buch der Wahrheit."[1] ["This book is the book of truth."]
With these words, Secretary General of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Walter Ulbricht, begins his foreword to *Weltall Erde Mensch*. The book has a programmatic character and was "meant to pass on the canonical knowledge of socialism."[2] The dissemination of knowledge on the narrative of progress as an essential notion within the materialistic concept of history is one example of processes of knowledge transfer. The encyclopedic *Weltall Erde Mensch* was gifted to every participant of the *Jugendweihe* in GDR times, explaining social progress as follows: Because the development of society follows an objective set of patterns, linear progress in evolution, economics, science and ethics will automatically result in socialism. This concept of history and progress can also be found in party programs, speeches, scientific works, cultural policy publications, propaganda material, teaching materials and school textbooks. Integrating disparate phenomena into a linear storyline serves as a legitimation for a new interpretation of the world.[3] How this storyline of progress is reproduced by non-religious and religious agents during and after the socialist period varies from acceptance right up to rejection or ignorance.

Our aim is to investigate the truth claims of worldviews within contexts shaped by the Soviet socialist system. We seek to extract characteristics of the legitimation processes and changes emerging in religion-related discourses actually operating in these societies before and after 1990.[4] Although atheism is

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1 Walter Ulbricht, "Zum Geleit," in *Weltall Erde Mensch. Ein Sammelwerk zur Entwicklungsgeschichte von Natur und Gesellschaft.* ed. Alfred Kosing, 15th ed. (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1967), 5.
2 See Johann Hafners article in this volume.
3 Peter L. Berger, and Thomas Luckmann, *The social construction of reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1991 [= 1966]), 110–1.
4 See the central results to this volume as well as Berger, and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 421–3.

not the main issue in Marxist theory, it is an essential aspect of it.[5] Against all odds, religion did not dissolve under socialist conditions to the extent that might have been expected. The relation between religious and nonreligious concepts has always been an issue.

Encounters with colleagues at conferences in Zadar, Helsinki, Jerusalem and Tartu[6] drew our attention to research projects focusing on nonreligious and religious organizations, practices, norms and values in countries that used to belong to the Eastern Bloc or were satellite states.[7] Currently, innovative projects deal with secularity and nonreligion, with a focus on Western as well as Asian, African or Middle Eastern contexts.[8] Publications presenting recent research results from different Central and East European countries reflecting on the relation between religion and nonreligion with regard to the socialist period are relatively rare. One project, which emphasized the key role of religion in Cold War times and led the way to discuss this factor more thoroughly, is a volume, edited by Dianne Kirby in 2003. It concentrates on church officials and policy-makers on both sides of the Iron Curtain and reveals the influence of religious ideas and language in propaganda and warfare.[9] By including developments in the first years after the communist era, Sabrina Ramet also offers insights into relations between religious institutions, state and society in Central and Eastern Europe,

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5 See Ulrike Klötzing-Madest, *Der Marxismus-Leninismus in der DDR – eine politische Religion? Eine Analyse anhand der Konzeptionen von Eric Voegelin, Raymond Aron und Emilio Gentile* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2017).

6 12th International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association Conference & European Sociological Association RN34 Mid-Term Conference *Religion and Non-Religion in Contemporary Societies*, Zadar 2016; conference of the European Association for the Study of Religion, Helsinki 2016; conference *500 Years of Reformation. Jews and Protestants – Judaism and Protestantism,* Jerusalem 2017; conference *Old Religion and New Spirituality: Continuity and Changes in the Background of Secularization*, Tartu 2015.

7 The exception is the former Yugoslavia, but due to the ideological similarities with regard to religion with the states of the Eastern Bloc, we also present two examples from the former Yugoslavia.

8 For example, the research projects 'The Diversity of Nonreligion' (University of Zurich), 'Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities' (University of Leipzig); 'Nonreligious Belief' (University College London); 'Understanding Unbelief' (University of Kent); the 'Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network'; the journals *Secularism and Nonreligion* (Ubiquity Press) and *Secular Studies* (Brill), as well as previous volumes of the series *Religion and its Others. Studies in Religion, Nonreligion and Secularity* (DeGruyter). See also the recent publication *A Secular Age beyond the West. Religion, Law and the State in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. John Madeley, Mirjam Künkler, and Shylashri Shankar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

9 See Dianne Kirby, ed. *Religion and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003).

but without including the historiography of science.[10] The volume *Science, Religion and Communism in Cold War Europe* examines the impact of the promotion of science and the official elimination of religion in countries of the so called 'Soviet Bloc' during the time of the Cold War. From a comparative perspective, the contributions show that clear boundaries between the (natural) sciences and religion can hardly be drawn in this context. Considering the cultural traditions and balances of power within these different states, this volume provides a more differentiated view on the adaptation of antireligious policy. By investigating the interpenetration of science and religion in education, the social sciences and cultural heritage, as well as individual beliefs and practice, the authors contribute to a reevaluation of the relation between secularism and religion.[11]

Jan Tesař also chooses a comparative approach when investigating the relevance of scientific atheism as part of knowledge production about religion in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia before 1991.[12] This book is primarily about the developments of scientific atheism as separate 'thought system' in the two states, which directly and indirectly affected the decisions of the power representatives. Tesař understands scientific atheism as "a parallel science, or parallel scholarship, because scientific atheism is not in fact an 'exact science' but rather an aggregate of social sciences and humanities. By the term parallel science is meant the notion of the separation of Western and Eastern knowledge on political, philosophical, and ideological grounds."[13] Tesař criticizes previous (Czech) works on this topic since the breakdown of the Iron Curtain, because they

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10 See Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil obstat. Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

11 In the introduction, Stephen A. Smith criticizes the tendencies of previous scholarly literature to focus on state repression and propaganda, on the leadership of political and religious institutions and on the Soviet Union, while treating religion and science as distinct fields in the context of the Cold War. He lists the respective publications as well as a few works that feature new tendencies, interrupting the established practices in doing historiography. Cf. Stephen A. Smith, "Introduction," in *Science, Religion and Communism in Cold War Europe*, eds. Paul Betts, and Stephen A Smith, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–3. In addition, several volumes include some articles dealing with secularities in post-Communist and Eastern Europe, e.g. *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, volume 7 (2016), *Multiple Secularities beyond the West. Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*, eds. Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Matthias Middell (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) and *Atheist Secularism and Its Discontents. A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia*, eds. Tam T. T. Ngo, and Justine B. Quijada (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

12 Tesař does not give even one explanation for why he chose just these two countries for his study. Jan Tesař, *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019).

13 Tesař, *The History*, 11.

[evaluate] the past development of the esoteric thought style not from the perspective of historical actors but from the current perspective of the dominant discourse, which in the Czech Republic is at least partially in its anti-communist phase.[14]

Interestingly enough, his book reflects exactly the still prevailing tendencies in scholarly works on religion, nonreligion and atheism in the Eastern Bloc between 1945 and 1991 that Smith criticized in his introduction:[15] the exaggeration of religion and scientific atheism as distincted fields, the focus on developments on the political and organizational levels as well as the recurrent reference to the Soviet Union as the decisive framework for comparison in this field of research – if a comparative study is sought, it takes place in relation to the Soviet Union as policymaker for this region and benchmark for research.

That is why we are using a different starting point for our project – taking up the approach of Betts and Smith: We focus on the technologies of knowledge transfer by analyzing discourses about religion, atheism and science in different media and from different viewpoints. Therefore, we assembled colleagues who investigate historical as well as recent phenomena in former socialist nations, testifying the transfer of knowledge regarding religion and atheism. The scope of this volume is thus defined by the historical watershed before and after socialism.

On the methodological level, the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse as a combination of the sociology of knowledge and discourse analysis defines the frame for this project.[16] Theoretical and empirical relationships between atheism and religion, negotiated in contexts where socialism and Marxism are influential factors are examined. We are aware that we cannot offer a satisfying discourse analysis, which is in any case incomplete. At least we aim to demonstrate the complexity of the discourse by including diverse voices on several organizational levels, communicated by various media, coming from different cultural contexts, shaped by different symbol systems and changing power structures. We thereby go beyond the level of everyday knowledge and behavior and their individual interpretations. Hermeneutic approaches to the sociology of knowledge neglect collective stocks of knowledge and the transfer of knowledge

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14 Tesař, *The History*, 26.

15 Smith, "Introduction," 1–3.

16 We will refer primarily to Berger, and Luckmann, *The social construction*; Reiner Keller, Hubert Knoblauch, and Jo Reichertz, eds., *Kommunikativer Konstruktivismus. Theoretische und empirische Arbeiten zu einem neuen wissenssoziologischen Ansatz* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013) and Reiner Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse. Grundlegung eines Forschungsprogramms.* 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2011).

on an institutional level.[17] Reiner Keller argues that the investigation of know-ledge production and institutionalization needs to consider not merely the social micro-level but also macro-social contexts, the institutional mechanisms of knowledge production and transmission.[18] He takes up leads in Berger's and Luckmann's work that refer to the relation between ideas, institutions[19] and so-cial change. Especially in modern societies, theoretical ideas and expert-based interpretations of reality infiltrate into everyday knowledge. Therefore, the collec-tive production, circulation and manifestation of knowledge, as well as their so-cial basis in the form of institutions, has to be considered.[20] This approach ex-plains the focal points of this volume: Agents and organizations, seen as responsible and competent in producing knowledge about atheism and religion, express ideological claims and regulate which 'truths' are published by which media. According to political and social changes, the roles of experts shift from scientists to clerics, from religious to nonreligious agents. Attempts to ach-ieve homogenization meet with tendencies toward pluralization, questioning and withdrawing into the private sphere or internal distancing. The only constant is the necessity of adapting policies and methods of transmitting knowledge and reformulating ideas and principles according to the current balances of power and the reception of beliefs, norms and identity models by individuals.

Religion offers theoretical as well as practical answers to existential questions. It provides a symbolic universe, which integrates and legitimizes every sector of the institutional order and all human experience in an all-embracing frame of ref-erence.[21] As such, it needs to be questioned whether alternative interpretations of the world also occur in a society. Conceptualizations for maintaining a symbolic universe entail continuity between the social and cosmic orders, as well as bet-ween all respective legitimations. Such conceptualizations can be mythological, theological, philosophical or scientific.[22] A competitive situation between symbolic universes with their different bodies of knowledge generates a competition for power – which one will be accepted by (the main segments of) society as plausible

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17 Thereby, we draw upon Reiner Keller, who criticizes this one-sidedness and emphasizes sys-tematized and institutionalized forms of knowledge production. See Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 180 – 5.

18 See ibid.

19 Institutions here are understood as temporary crystallized symbolic structures that regulate action. See Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 190.

20 See Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 180 – 5. Adding discourse analysis to the sociology of knowledge draws attention to the rules of communication, the allocation of meanings, opportunities for ac-tion and resources for the dissemination of knowledge.

21 See Berger, and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 114.

22 Berger, and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 128 – 30.

and relevant for its coordination and development?[23] The establishment of socialist forms of government in the Soviet sphere of influence was not merely an issue of repression, but also of persuasion. An opposition between institutionalized religion and atheist ideology, between religious teachings and modern science was constructed.[24] In the light of the competition between two systems of knowledge, the state had to come up with counter-institutions. Institutions are granted power in order to establish their privileged actions as relevant for the social order.[25] The adherence to institutionalized norms, interpretations, values, roles, expressions, practices or symbols is supported by social control and can additionally be enforced by the imposition of sanctions.[26] Discourse structures are power structures, but the generated schemata for perception, interpretation and action are addressed to the individual, who is not powerless. Agents reproduce, update and change those patterns by using them within the socio-historical frame in which they live. Regarding social agents, the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse is primarily interested in their position and role in organizational settings, as well as their strategies for dealing with given stocks of knowledge and guidelines.[27]

These theoretical reference points help concentrate the focus on the framework conditions, methods and mechanisms by which concepts of atheism and religion were constructed, transmitted, perceived and transformed. Therefore, the negotiation and construction of truths, patterns of action and interpretive frames are always re-bound to the cultural and institutional frame. To investigate

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23 Berger, and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 126 – 7.

24 Such a dualistic construction was not only part of the former Soviet system. It is also shaping recent conflicts between religious and nonreligious people. See Anthony Carroll, and Richard Norman, eds. *Religion and Atheism. Beyond the Divide* (London: Routledge, 2017); Lori G. Beaman, and Steven Tomlins, eds. *Atheist Identities – Spaces and Social Contexts* (New York: Springer, 2015) ; Petra Klug, *Anti-Atheism in the United States* (PhD diss., Universität Bremen 2018). For the subjective acceptance and logics of forced secularization see Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Uta Karstein, and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, *Forcierte Säkularität. Religiöser Wandel und Generationendynamik im Osten Deutschlands* (Frankfurt, Campus-Verlag 2009), 13 – 28.

25 See Hubert Knoblauch, "Über die kommunikative Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit," in *Zur kommunikativen Konstruktion von Räumen. Theoretische Konzepte und empirische Analysen*, ed. Gabriela B. Christmann (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 37 – 8.

26 Berger, and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, 72 – 3.

27 For the discussion around the concept of the subject in discourse analysis, see Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 204 – 23 and 253 – 5. Dealing with actions of social agents includes looking at different materials: In newspaper articles, promotional material, speeches, websites, schoolbooks, laws, artefacts, etc., discourse structures are realized, reproduced and adapted and have consequences. See Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 236 – 7.

examples of the respective religion-and-atheism discourse, we focus on the following questions:

– What was/is said about religion and atheism and what should have been said according to the ideological claims?[28]
– Where are the distinctions between religious and atheist worldviews, and are there compromises or blendings, combining different traditions?
– Which educational norms and ideals are derived from the specific concepts of religion and atheism?
– Which phenomena can be interpreted as the result of national or individual developments of a Marxist heritage?
– Do atheists understand religion in primarily theistic terms?[29]

2 A historical watershed – 100 years since the October Revolution

With the takeover of power in Russia by the Bolsheviks in 1917, a state structure emerged for the first time in which Marxism, complemented by Leninism, became the decisive ideological framework for a nation.[30] As a result of the Second World War and the expansion of power in the Soviet sphere of influence, a system was established in large parts of Eastern and Central Europe, which placed Marxism-Leninism at the center of the social systems of nation states. Repressive actions accompanying the expansion of power also had a direct impact on the position and power of institutionalized religion, on the majority of the denominations, and on the possibilities and forms of religious practice.[31]

Fundamental for these dynamics in the religious field was the functionalist interpretation of religion by Karl Marx.[32] According to his theory, institutional-

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28 Thereby, individual as well as collective agents are considered, because the construction, maintenance and transformation of symbolic universes did and does take place at the individual as well as institutional levels.

29 The last question is based on a suggestion by Lois Lee, "Research Note: Talking about a Revolution: Terminology for the New Field of Non-religion Studies," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 1 (2012): 135.

30 See, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: University Press, 2017); China Miéville, *October. The Story of the Russian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2017); Manfred Hildermeier, *Die Sowjetunion 1917–1991* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001).

31 See Nadezhda Beljakova, Thomas Bremer, and Katharina Kunter, *"Es gibt keinen Gott!" Kirchen und Kommunismus. Eine Konfliktgeschichte* (Freiburg/B.: Herder, 2016).

32 Marx's interpretation of religion found further recognition in religion-related studies. One example is Bourdieu's concept of the religious field which is based upon Marx's concept. See

ized religion served the exploitation and oppression of the poor by the ruling class. Its alleged central functions were the negation of human dignity and capabilities, as well as the creation of an illusory fantasy in order to keep people servile and amenable to accepting the status quo. This was characterized by suffering due to their alienation from the products of their labor and from themselves as human beings. With the propagated aim of abolishing class distinctions in socialism, religion would lose these functions and would disappear over the medium term in a process of erosion.

Since religion did not immediately disappear with the takeover and consolidation of power by communist parties in Soviet-influenced states, the new rulers not only put pressure on institutionalized religions, but also relied on the dissemination of knowledge. Forms of atheistic propaganda were based on the assumption that religion is an

> anachronism, namely [...] something that is still present at the present time, but actually comes from the past and has no future. [...] Once science and, with it, the enlightenment of society as a whole has progressed far enough, there is no longer a need for that backwardness which is offered as religion.[33]

Hence, a primary concern for the socialist rulers was imparting a scientific interpretation of the world.[34] Science was seen as the only rational possibility to explain all events and developments. In the socialist perception, Scientism was meant to be a totalitarian worldview, which, in "explicit competition with [...] religion, raises the exclusive claim to manuals and world interpretations."[35] One task of scientific atheism was the deconstruction of religion.[36]

Bryan Turner, "Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion," in *The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical Essays*, eds. Simon Susan, and Bryan Turner (London; New York: Anthem Press, 2011), 239–40.

33 André Kieserling, *Selbstbeschreibung und Fremdbeschreibung. Beiträge zur Soziologie soziologischen Wissens* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 160–1. [translated into English by Alexandra Gentner].

34 Since the late 1940s, the interest in science in the Eastern Bloc increased sharply, especially since science was no longer understood only as a tool in the class struggle, but scientific results should also serve the general technical and social progress. Cf. Smith, "Introduction," 13.

35 Thomas Schmidt-Lux, *Wissenschaft als Religion. Szientismus im ostdeutschen Säkularisierungsprozess*, (Würzburg: Ergon, 2008), 125 [translated into English by Alexandra Gentner].

36 Tesař denies such a general understanding of scientific atheism as "a form of scholarship, pseudo- or quasi-science or rather a form of ideological doctrine, completely detached from the scientific method of any scholarly discipline." He wants to dissociate scientific atheism from these categorizations of Western and Eastern scholars and would like to understand scientific atheism instead as a 'parallel science.' However, apart from the reference to those catego-

On the political level, Soviet prescriptions made it hard for national government policies in the Eastern Bloc to create individual concepts. However, especially in the field of religious policy, national representatives had a certain scope within which to establish their own concepts of religion and atheism, and to react to social developments in religious discourses and fields of action.[37] Two examples should be mentioned here: The communist rulers in Poland saw themselves compelled to make concessions to the Catholic Church in order to weaken social pressure on the basis of their anti-church policy. The historically conditioned close relationship between Polish national identity and the Catholic Church did not lead to a decline in vital religiosity during the second half of the 20th century.[38] By contrast, the distancing of Bohemian society from the church in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the context of the national movement, which was accompanied by anticlerical propaganda, was a decisive factor in the persistent nonreligiosity of large parts of the Czech population.[39] Klaus Buchenau has shown the heterogeneity of political approaches to religion and atheism within the Soviet satellite states, as well as in the former Yugoslavia, in his overview.[40]

Therefore, this book has two main foci in terms of content: first, the theoretical and practical claims made by organizations, which tried to spread knowledge about religion and atheism in order to construct and maintain a taken-for-granted reality; and second, the organization, implementation and reception of those claims on a pragmatic level. This level can be further separated into two

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rizations of scientific atheism which he rejects, it remains completely unclear on what his classification as a 'parallel science' should be based. The explanation of a 'parallel science' as "the notion of the separation of Western and Eastern knowledge on political, philosophical and ideological grounds" provides no answer for this. Tesař, *History*, 11.

37 Klaus Buchenau, "Socialist Secularities: The Diversity of a Universalist Model," in *Multiple secularities beyond the West. Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*, eds. Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Matthias Middell, (Berlin; Boston: DeGruyter, 2015), 269. The contributions of this volume can draw on the already accomplished research to which Buchenau refers in order to contextualize our empirical data from different countries. Other publications that can be used for this purpose are, for example, Beljakova, Bremer and Kunter, *"Es gibt keinen Gott"* and Ramet, *Nihil obstat* or John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), who focus mainly on the party politics of the Soviet Union since the era of Khrushchev.

38 Regarding Poland and East Germany, see Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, *Religion in der Moderne. Ein internationaler Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Main; New York: Campus, 2015), 289–312.

39 See f. e. Zdeněk R. Nešpor, "Der Wandel der tschechischen (Nicht-)Religiosität im 20. Jahrhundert im Lichte soziologischer Forschungen," *Debatte und Kritik. Historisches Jahrbuch* 129 (2009): 501–32.

40 Buchenau, "Socialist Secularities".

realms of experience: the public and the private sphere. Thereby, both forms of discourse, specialized discourses (e. g. political, scientific, educational, economic) as well as public discourses (mass media, interaction) are investigated with regard to their regulations and effects.[41] Institutions and/or single agents are identified as transmitters of the objectified knowledge. The evaluation of (some of) the research questions posed above (see Section 1) helps to pinpoint their philosophical and ideological position within the discourse, which negotiates the relation between religion and atheism and/or religion and science.

Pieces of the discourse-puzzle include the role of atheists and their religious knowledge in Polish Catholic online forums, scientific atheism as an academic discipline in the Soviet Union and the GDR, Croatian textbooks for religious education in public schools, and GDR dictionaries dealing with religion-related vocabulary. The broad range of sources investigated in this anthology gives the reader an impression of the different communicative levels that were and are involved in the establishment or questioning of the institutionalized opposition between religion and atheism. This approach opens up the view to the repetitive and multidimensional nature of the transfer of knowledge on the two concepts, as well as to the negotiation involved in legitimations, which are partially accepted as given by recipients. The positions of the individual agents within the religion-atheism discourse show the plurality, complexity and sometimes ambiguity of their relationship to religious and nonreligious worldviews.[42] Johannes Gleixner has shown in his research that there have been attempts to combine these worldviews.[43] Such blurred lines are also present in the contributions of Alexandra Coțofană, Zdeněk R. Nešpor and Ksenia Kolkunova to this volume. By contrast, the articles of Nikolina Hazdovac Bajić, Johann Ev. Hafner and Daniela

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41 On the demand by the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse for a connection between the perspective of institutional, specialized discourses and that of public discourses, see Keller, *Diskursanalyse*, 189 and 232.

42 As has been emphasized by Smith, the Bolsheviks never had a coherent plan for dealing with religions, or a unified strategy for antireligious propaganda – especially as the religious policy in the Soviet Union changed under the rule of the Secretary General. See Smith, "Introduction," 6 – 9. Taking into account the fact that the individual states of the Eastern Bloc enjoyed relative autonomy in terms of their religious policies, it is indispensable to trace the respective discourses by investigating the empirical data which are relevant for the specific context. To interpret (anti-)religious acts and worldviews for the entire sphere of Soviet influence only on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory is misleading, as the book by Alfred Hoffmann illustrates: Alfred Hoffmann, "*Mit Gott einfach fertig.*" *Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 2000).

43 Johannes Gleixner, "*Menschheitsreligionen*". *T.G. Masaryk, A.V. Lunačarskij und die religiöse Herausforderung revolutionärer Staaten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

Schmidt show typical examples of counter-narratives in which one worldview has been positioned to confront other worldviews, such as religion.

3 Religion-related terms

To ensure transparency regarding the heterogenous material and contexts, a consistent set of definitions of the terms 'nonreligion,' 'secular,' 'atheism,' 'religion' and 'worldview' is essential.

The approaches of Lois Lee and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr paved the way for our understanding of 'nonreligion,' 'secular' and 'secularity.' We will try to synthesize them by adding a distinction with regard to our topic, since they require elaboration and cannot simply be juxtaposed: According to Lee, 'nonreligion' is the master concept for studying different phenomena which are "*primarily* defined by a relationship of difference to religion."[44] She emphasizes that not only negatively connoted, hostile or negatory orientations are included in this, but also positive ones, such as the appreciation of religion even though the individual does not accept religious belief systems for his or her own worldview.[45] Consequently, atheist, agnostic, antireligious and indifferent positions are examples of subcategories of nonreligiosity, while phenomena such as 'rationalism' or 'humanism' do not fit into this definition if they can be described without reference to religion.[46]

Lee is mainly interested in investigating nonreligion at an individual or group level, reflecting the emic perspective. She refuses to incorporate 'secular' or 'secularity' in her model, understood as "everything, which is not religious or primarily religious."[47] This broad definition is surely not useful for analyzing and differentiating phenomena. Such a blurry notion can mean (almost) anything.

Yet, we aim to retrieve the notion of the 'secular' as a category, which is related to the religious field and is also a subcategory of nonreligion. It is a term for the results of the differentiation between the religious and other spheres outside the religious. It refers to socio-historical processes and can therefore be described as postreligious. 'Secular' is needed as the appropriate ascription not for describing attitudes of individuals, but for institutionalized action and interpre-

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44 Lee, "Research Note," 131. For Lee's vocabulary for the study of nonreligion, see: Lois Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious. Reimagining the Secular* (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 21–48.
45 See Lee, "Research Note," 132.
46 See Lee, "Research Note," 131 and 133.
47 Lee, "Research Note," 134. See also p. 136: "Non-religion is primarily defined here in reference to religion, whereas the secular is primarily defined by something other than religion."

tation patterns, for organizations, norms, and further issues which are shaped by secularization processes. Soviet communism promoted secularization processes in every aspect of social life. Religious motifs, practices and interpretations were selected, adapted, transformed and reinterpreted.[48] Such a state-enforced secularization had various effects on the individual. However, the institutional and public secularization created the frame for the secularization of consciousness. Therefore, the term 'secular' is especially necessary for describing phenomena within the context which is decisive in this book.

This implies that we differentiate between different levels of secularization and its 'products', just as others have before. While Charles Taylor uses the terms 'secular' and 'secularity' quite synonymously, he distinguishes between three meanings of secularity: First, there is no longer any reference to an ultimate reality or religious beliefs in public spheres. The various areas of society are instead determined by their own rationality. The second meaning consists of the decline of religious belief and practice on the individual level. The third meaning refers to the conditions of belief: Taylor calls a society secular if belief (in God) no longer remains unchallenged, but becomes simply one embattled option among others.[49]

'Secularity' in the multiple-secularities concept of Wohlrab-Sahr and colleagues serves as an analytical framework on the institutional level, which can also be used for contextualizing individual statements. Their explanation of secularity partially echoes Lee's definition of nonreligion:

> *Secularity* refers to the forms of *differentiation or distinction between religion and other societal spheres and practices* that define a relevant framework for religious and non-religious attitudes and behavior.[50]

As a meaningful configuration that "shapes the relation between religion and non-religion", for Wohlrab-Sahr secularity is a societal framework, while nonre-

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48 For examples, see the contributions of Jenny Vorpahl and Manuela Möbius-Andre in this book.
49 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3. Also for different levels of the secularization process and their interrelatedness, see Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization. An Analysis at Three Levels* (Bruxelles: Lang, 2002); Steve Bruce, *God is Dead. Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) and Steve Bruce, *Secularization. In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: University Press, 2002).
50 Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity, Non-religiosity, Atheism: Boundaries between Religion and Its Other," in *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion* 7 (2016): 251. See also p. 255: "When I use the term *secularity*, I mean the culturally – symbolically as well as institutionally – anchored forms and arrangements of differentiation between religion and other social spheres."

ligiosity is placed on the individual or collective level as an attitude or habit, realized within such a framework.[51] It is hard to imagine a secularity which is not at least partially a result of secularization processes, although there are always different factors, interests and powers involved, depending on the specific cultural contexts. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine such a secularity which is not shaped by religion. Often, this goes along with a dispute about ideas, values and functions related to religion.[52] Therefore, secularity and secular institutions and practices are part of nonreligion as a field of study. From this point of view, sports or consumption are neither secular nor nonreligious but merely not religious, if there are no relations to religion. But, civil marriage, for example, has to be seen as secular if this institution is explicitly constructed within a secularization framework of the struggle for power between state and church, between religious and nonreligious ideologies and/or as a compensation for a religious marriage ceremony.

As a third relevant term, we will use 'atheism' for "indicating God-centred outlooks."[53] A high sensibility to this term is essential regarding the sources and their specific historical and cultural contexts, shaped by socialism. That includes differentiating between the term 'atheism,' as it is used in the sources, and 'atheism' as an analytical tool. Atheism within the scope of this volume is an active denial of transcendent ideas, such as a God.[54] By always relating somehow to God, atheism remains dependent on a concept of God for its own ideological survival.[55] This constant transcendent point of reference qualifies atheism

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51 See Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity," 251–2.

52 See Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity," 252.

53 Lee, "Research Note," 130.

54 Michael Martin differentiates between the exclusive negative atheism, if a person does not believe in God, and the inclusive positive atheism, labeling somebody without a belief in God. Michael Martin, "Atheism and Religion," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 217–32. In our understanding, the latter orientation would not be atheism, but rather another subcategory of nonreligiosity like indifference. On the terminological differentiation between 'atheism' as an active negation of the existence of a God and 'religious indifference' as an attitude of indecision and disinterest regarding the question of the existence of a transcendent power, see Detlef Pollack, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Christel Gärtner, "Einleitung," in *Atheismus und religiöse Indifferenz*, eds. Detlef Pollack, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Christel Gärtner (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2003), 12–3.

55 See Jon Elster, "Aktive und passive Negation. Essay zur ibanskischen Soziologie," in *Die erfundene Wirklichkeit. Wie wissen wir, was wir zu wissen glauben? Beiträge zum Konstruktivismus*, ed. Paul Watzlawick, 5th ed. (Munich: Piper, 1988), 172.

as an object of study in the field of nonreligion, while also including a sense of otherness separate from religious phenomena.[56]

> Its role in society also depends on the configuration of secularity, and – in an organized form – atheism itself can influence the dominant mode of drawing boundaries towards the religious.[57]

There are possibilities for further characterization of 'atheism', such as 'illusional', 'realistic', 'rational' or 'scientific', but those attributions support dualisms, which exclude cases in which 'atheism' is an emotionally highly charged category or does not go hand in hand with a distinct support of scientific ideas.[58]

Wohlrab-Sahr postulates a strong connection between "secularity for the sake of social integration/national development" and "guiding ideas of progress, enlightenment, and modernity – in which atheist convictions find the strongest support."[59] According to Martin, there must be a reason for not believing in a deity in order to construct the atheist idea of the non-existence of transcendent worlds, beings or powers.[60] Therefore, some form of knowledge is required in order to prove this non-existence. This reasoning is part of the theory of Marxism-Leninism.[61] It is this secularist ideology that served as the legitimization for the institutional separation of politics/the state and religion.[62]

As the categories 'nonreligion', 'secular', and 'atheism' are related to religion as their root concept, we also have to decide on a working definition of 'religion'

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56 See the special issue "Sociology of Atheism" by the *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion* 7 (2016).

57 Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity," 252.

58 An example is the differentiation of atheism into scientific, philosophical, tragic and humanistic atheism by Olli-Pekka Vainio, and Aku Visala, "Varieties of Unbelief: A Taxonomy of Atheistic Positions," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 57, no. 4 (2015), 483 – 500.

59 Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity," 266.

60 Michael Martin, "General Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1 – 2. See further Martin, "Atheism and Religion," 217 – 32 and Bill Cooke, *Dictionary of Atheism, Skepticism and Humanism*, (New York: Prometheus, 2006), 49 – 50.

61 The imparting of such knowledge was not meant to be a one-time act from the Marxist-Leninist perspective. Atheistic propaganda was intended to accompany people permanently in order to spread scientific, socialist ideology and to overcome the bourgeois culture which was seen as irrational, including its religious manifestations. See Olof Klohr, and Gottfried Handel, "Der atheistische Charakter der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie und Weltanschauung," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 22 (1974): 503.

62 See the definition of 'secularism' in Wohlrab-Sahr, "Secularity," 255.

for our project.[63] Therefore, we refer mainly to the approach of Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta, since it encompasses a variety of features which are constitutive of the identification of phenomena as religion. They combine substantial and functional perspectives, where the former is seen as indispensable, while the latter is variable.[64] Following the argument by Niklas Luhmann and others, they state that the main problem posed by religion is the problem of contingency – the negation of necessity and impossibility.[65] The awareness that every structure and occurrence is just one realized possibility among others and that the agency of the individual is quite limited can produce a feeling of insecurity. Religion is one kind of communication that tries to solve the problem of contingency by relating it to another reality. Yet, religious ideas can be doubted as being contingent themselves, and only represent one possibility among others of dealing with this issue. The difference in comparison to other solutions leads to the substantial part of the definition, referring to the differentiation between immanence and an unreachable, indisputable transcendence.[66]

The approachability of the transcendent within the immanent is ensured by religions. This re-entry into the immanent produces a unity between religious

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63 While it is usually routine for scholars of religious studies to deal critically with understandings of 'religion,' Dianne Kirby criticizes the unreflected and one-sided usage of the term by many historians and political scientists, who "too often refer to religion as if everyone knows what it is. For many it is synonymous with 'culture'. Discussion of religion and politics tends to be dominated by a Protestant model of religion as individual, chosen and believed, with little attention given to religion that is communal, given and enacted. [...] Religion is as intricately intertwined with the political as it is with the social and the cultural." Unfortunately, this important recognition of the problem is not followed by a clarification of her definition of religion. Dianne Kirby, "An Introduction," in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7.

64 Pollack, and Rosta, *Religion*, 62–72. Although the scientific, metalinguistic term 'religion' is always under suspicion of being based on a European prototype, it is not necessarily a Eurocentric concept if scholars differentiate between object language and meta-language and are aware of culture-specific codes, ideas and norms. It is always an open working definition, which has to be seen as contingent and must be adjusted according to the sources investigated.

65 See also on this topic Detlef Pollack, "Was ist Religion? Probleme der Definition," Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft 3 (1995): 184–190.

66 Similarly, Christoph Kleine and other scholars of religious studies stick to the guiding difference transcendence/immanence. It allows a structuring of the world according to the ordering principle religious/secular, while it has to be detached from European/Western concepts and contents in order to open it up to non-European and premodern concepts. Decisive is that the boundary lines between transcendence and immanence, the terms used to describe it and the contents of these spheres of reality have to be investigated in the individual cases. Cf. Christoph Kleine, "Zur Universalität der Unterscheidung religiös/säkular. Eine systemtheoretische Betrachtung," in *Religionswissenschaft,* ed. Michael Stausberg (Berlin: De Gruyter 2012), 65–80.

symbol and signified reality. Different religious acts and objects serve as mediation between transcendence and immanence (for instance, rituals, scriptures, icons, shrines, preaching). Those forms are classified by Pollack and Rosta into three dimensions, based on Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, as well as Robert Kecskes and Christof Wolf: the dimension of identification (with a religious group or organization), the dimension of religious practice, and the dimension of religious belief in religious ideas as well as religious experience. The distribution of the dimensions and the relations between them differ according to the setting and the situation. What can be identified as transcendence and immanent forms and content, in contact with the transcendent, depends on the specific historical, cultural and individual context.[67] But, the adherence to the guiding difference transcendent/immanent allows the distinction to be made between religious and nonreligious phenomena.

The term 'Weltanschauung' (worldview), as the Soviet-style socialism called itself, first of all describes (as does religion) all kinds of communication, "which [refer] to the totality (*Weltganzes* – whole of the world) of the human self and world relation."[68] Worldviews claim to provide explanations and directions for action in all areas of society in the past, present and future. However, such a claim to absoluteness does not necessarily imply a totalitarian claim. In spite of the conviction that worldviews know the true interpretation of the world and how to implement this absolute truth, they can include tolerance and respect for other worldviews. But, if the sense of mission held by one's own worldview is linked to "the unconditional will for the realization of what is recognized as right, and also against the will of those who must be helped to the right consciousness," we can speak of absolutist worldviews.[69] Classical examples of such

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67 See Pollack, and Rosta, *Religion*, 63 – 72. In his presentation of different definitions, Klaus Hock also prefers a multidimensional approach in order to avoid the concentration on one criterion and too-abstract conceptions. He as well as Pollack and Rosta emphasize that such a definition is always a scientific construct, which has to be proven and corrected by empirical studies. See Pollack, and Rosta, *Religion*, 72 and Klaus Hock, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2002), 19 – 21.
68 Johann Hafner, Helga Völkening, and Irene Becci, "Einleitung," in *Glaube in Potsdam. Band 1: Religiöse, spirituelle und weltanschauliche Gemeinschaften. Beschreibungen und Analysen*, eds. Johann Hafner, Helga Völkening, and Irene Becci (Würzburg: Ergon, 2018), 17 [translated into English by Alexandra Gentner]. See also Eilert Herms, "Weltanschauung. I. Begriffsgeschichtlich," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th ed., vol. 8, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1401 – 3.
69 Angelika Senge, *Marxismus als atheistische Weltanschauung. Zum Stellenwert des Atheismus im Gefüge marxistischen Denkens* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1983), 85 [translated into English by Alexandra Gentner].

absolutist or totalitarian worldviews are Marxism-Leninism or socialism/communism, fascist ideologies such as National Socialism, and fundamentalist groups. Accordingly, it is necessary to distinguish the extent to which the claim of absoluteness is actually enforced against non-adherents of the worldview in question.[70]

4 Overview

First, Dirk Schuster sketches out the central principles of communicative constructivism, focusing on the role of experts in modern societies. He shows how researchers were dependent on the goodwill of the political elite in the GDR. Schuster makes clear that discrepancies between the interests of scientists and those of political patrons existed almost from the very beginning. Their original research program entailed empirical studies, which were supposed to be used for propaganda as well as to prove the thesis that religion would die out in a socialist society. Eventually, scientists of the Marxist Sociology of Religion lost their function and authorization to generate and spread knowledge. Schuster's example explains a lot about the ambiguous attitude of a socialist state towards science – it demonstrates the ideologization of science as an infallible source of truth, but also the selectivity of appraising scientific work.

Scientific Atheism and the study of religion at research institutions are also at the center of Johannes Gleixner's and Ksenia Kolkunova's contributions – both working with material from a Russian context. Gleixner emphasizes an anticlerical European tradition as an important basis for the religious policy of the Bolsheviks. Their focus on the fight against ecclesiastical institutions and their representatives provoked the emergence of other religious movements. This failed attempt to erase religion from the public sphere in the 1920s led to the question of what religion actually is. The resulting scientific approach to religion eventually turned out to be antireligious studies, a utilitarian discipline with the task of developing tools for overcoming religion. In the second part of his article, Gleixner sheds light on the underlying assumptions behind a survey of Moscow workers' religiosity, conducted between 1928 and 1930. Gleixner mentions the sociological skills and expertise developed by Russian scholars in examining the religiosity of the population, noticeable in later projects which revealed that

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70 Thomas Schmidt-Lux assumes that all worldviews represent "a totalizing view of the world." Schmidt-Lux, *Wissenschaft*, 77 [translated into English by Alexandra Gentner]. In our opinion, however, a distinction must be made in this respect between a theoretical claim to absoluteness and an absolutist or totalitarian claim to enforce it by means of coercion.

the majority were still believers. However, the results were left unpublished, just like works by their colleagues in the GDR.

Starting with an overview of the history of Scientific Atheism in Soviet Russia, Ksenia Kolkunova presents examples which illustrate how patterns and terms developed by scholars of Scientific Atheism shaped recent discourses about religion in Russia. Based on Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, Scientific Atheism was aimed at the extinction of all religious convictions. Kolkunova identifies two main approaches to understanding Scientific Atheism: Regard it as a pure, ideologically loaded atheism, not worthy of retaining or studying, or consider it as a 'normal science'. According to Kolkunova, traces of continuity are especially evident in the reference to believers' religious feelings and the image of Jehovah's Witnesses in recent public discussions. Again, the work of a religion-related academic discipline testifies the strong connection between scholars and the socialist party apparatus, the ideological load of the research programs and its use in antireligious agitation as well as for legislative regulations. The transfer of stereotypes from the Soviet view to contemporary expressions of politicians and journalists show that a position developed in a nonreligious context is reproduced even by religious people later on.

All of the contributors to this volume are aware of the power of words and the connotations and associations that are conveyed by a specific vocabulary. To investigate the connections between knowledge and language in a socialist context, Daniela Schmidt has chosen some quite obvious material: She follows traces of religion-related vocabulary from GDR dictionaries in other texts, which played a normative role in the discourse around the definition of religion. She works with different levels of contextualization in order to extract information about conceptual changes, agents and organizations. By comparing definitions from several dictionaries, Schmidt identifies interdependencies between the entries, different strategies for dealing with religion, as well as phases of intensification and relaxation. Schmidt's work testifies to partiality as an integral part of scientific work and provability as indispensable for credibility. The selected religious vocabulary suggests that the concept of religion was shaped by Christian tradition. The political background becomes especially tangible in a dictionary for employees of the Ministry of State Security. The dictionaries are another instance of ranking knowledge above faith, but Schmidt emphasizes that this is not just a phenomenon within the socialist sphere. She also notes a gradual departure from the linguistic context of the churches due to a progressive secularization in West German works.

Zdeněk Nešpor investigates the effects of the public discourse on religion during the first two decades of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. For this, he analyzes opinion-leading newspapers and journals as mirrors of changes

in the party's ideology. Theological questions and the impact of religiosity were neglected, and churches were condemned for their interest in power. An exception was the period of political liberalization in the mid-1960s, when a quite open discussion of different forms of religion was possible. By highlighting the frequency and extent of articles published on religion, Nešpor reveals that there were also several periods when religious issues received little attention. He identifies this withholding of information as one cause of the religious illiteracy in Czech society. By examining the proportion of books published on topics related to religion, he notices a predominance of anti-clerical publications. He completes this appraisal by looking at the churches' responses, which ranged from (forced) opportunism to the strong reinforcement of traditional elements, fostering mistrust in churches and their representatives. By noting the relevance of hidden forms of religiosity as well as the relevance of de-traditionalized religiosity, the author offers a nuanced perspective on the well-known phenomenon of Czech atheism, or religious illiteracy.

The sources Johann Hafner consults for his investigation are associated with a well-known ritual act in East Germany – the Jugendweihe. He offers an exposition of all the books that were and are distributed to the participants as gifts. After laying out three positions concerning the Jugendweihe as a remnant of the socialist past, Hafner identifies two types of Jugendweihe after the transition: one based on reformed socialist structures and another returning to the free thinkers' tradition. In his search for the continuation of socialist and humanist ideas, he chronologically introduces several books and considers their structure, style, success, revisions and ambitions, and identifies the different uses of Marxist-Leninist semantics, especially when it comes to religion and the meaning of life. While socialist examples present a history of progress and humanity's ability to explain simply everything, the later ones distributed by humanist organizations deny that humanity can know all the answers to ultimate questions. Others simply ignore ethical and metaphysical questions altogether. It becomes clear that the nonreligious Jugendweihe ritual no longer has any transitional character or integrative function. Hafner therefore asks why it is still popular and accepted although its ideological foundation has already disintegrated.

Jenny Vorpahl similarly ascertains a stability of ritual framing processes as opposed to a change in content regarding ritual traditions in the GDR. She analyzes brochures and leaflets presenting wedding ideals that were supported by the state. Remarkable parallels and differences between ceremonies shaped by Christian traditions and those of a socialist, nonreligious character are highlighted and questioned. Vorpahl embeds the publications within the scientific and political discourses around the evaluation and adaptation of traditions. She examines five levels of legitimation, making plausible the institutionalization of

festive, nonreligious weddings. Her work demonstrates the society's flexibility in dealing with cultural heritage. Secularization means here adapting the form of popular customs while exchanging or adjusting the interpretation of the actions according to the ruling ideology. The interweaving of scientific research, politics and cultural work is demonstrated by the reconstruction of a discourse coalition, which is traceable through chief elements in the texts as well as the careers of the agents. Lastly, the article reflects on the reception of socialist wedding ideals and identity models.

Alexandra Möbius-Andre also considers the selective adaptation of heritage and tradition as part of the socialist propaganda program when she investigates the reception of religious motifs in the works of GDR artists. She stresses the educational functions of art in constructing a collective identity according to the state ideology. Art constituted an important addition to science at the time, because of its potential to affect and appeal more to all the senses. The recourse to specific traditions was allowed if they could be integrated into a storyline proclaiming the mission of the proletariat. It was therefore useful for the legitimation of the 'workers' and farmers' state' as rightful heir. Religious motifs were removed from their often Christian context and used as metaphors or allegories within the new ideology. Möbius-Andre also asserts that the recourse to familiar Christian iconography was necessary for the legibility of images.

The compatibility of religiosity and Marxism/communism is considered by Alexandra Coțofană, who questions the binary thinking prevalent in the social sciences and humanities. The basis for Coțofană's research is her examination of epistemological theories and the approach of political theology, helping her not only to analyze how religious identity and values shape politics in Romania, but also to encourage readers to see their own categories in a critical light. She points to the degradation of religious ways of seeing, dealing with and interpreting the world to become second-rate knowledge compared to scientifically based information in Western epistemic culture. Coțofană argues for the acceptance of equally legitimate institutions of knowledge. Her interviews with Romanian left-wing politicians employed before and after 1989 proved that socialist and religious identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Connections can be found in moral claims such as equality, social justice or helping the poor. In order to interpret this data, Coțofană looks at the leadership histories of the political left.

Anna Vancsó illustrates the interpenetration of Christianity and politics in Hungary before and after 1989 by examining a blessing prayer for the Hungarian Prime Minister. She emphasizes that religion is generated by social, communicative actions and also legitimizes social institutions by relating them to an ultimate, sacred reality. This legitimating force was used on the public and political

levels before 1945 and has been reinforced since 2011. Vancsó asks what happens when religious communities and institutions as transmitters of knowledge are destroyed, their legitimacy is marginalized and their possibilities to communicate about religious reality are reduced – such as happened in Hungary in socialist times. She sees this as one important factor in creating a kind of frozen religious knowledge. The image of the churches changed from a space for resistance to a collaborator with the ruling system, and consequently a less faith-centered discourse around religion emerged. Vancsó enquires about the long-term effects of the socialist period with regard to the influence of churches on questions of private morality, their legitimacy in defining norms and their involvement in political matters. The development towards pluralism encountered the homogenization of the public discourse on religion after the political turn in 2011. In recapitulating the changing role of religion in the Hungarian public and private spheres since the socialist system, Vancsó identifies different processes of secularization and modernization taking place successively and parallel at different levels.

Ankica Marinović investigates the characteristics of knowledge transference about religion and atheism in Croatian schoolbooks used for religious education since the 1990s. She highlights the double reality in the former socialist country: Nonreligiosity has a normative character and dominates the public sphere, while churches offer space for counterculture and traditional religiosity is transmitted within families. Marinović shows the changes in education as an indicator for the de-secularization and homogenization of Croatian society. Analyzing legal documents and textbooks, she finds a contradictory attitude towards religion ranging from tolerance to defamation. Atheism is seen as a kind of hubris – glorifying the power of humans and uncritically accepting science. Religiosity is understood as the anthropological absolute and Catholic Christianity is promoted as the only genuine religion. Other religious and nonreligious concepts like superstition, idolatry, magic, blasphemy, atheism and indifference are colored with the same brush: Their adherents are depicted as immoral, abnormal, dangerous and misguided. This perspective offers legitimation for Catholic education. Another legitimating force is the reference to the Catholic Church as the preserver of national culture and values. Marinović's thesis states that parallels exist between the socialist school subject of Marxism and the religious instruction in schools today. She thereby emphasizes Croatia's double heritage of socialist ideology on the one hand and a Catholic-feudal past on the other – both shaping reactions to several radical changes within a few decades.

Complementing Marinović's article on Croatia's religious homogenization, Nikolina Hazdovac Bajić tackles another aspect of Croatian society: its nonreligious minorities. Her method is a combination of content analysis and inter-

views. Like Marinović, she draws attention to the discrepancy between the constitution, guaranteeing freedom of religion, and the repression of religion by the Communist party. A similar double reality occurred after the transition, when the separation of church and state was undermined. Hazdovac Bajić reflects on the different levels of identification by individuals. She estimates that Croatian Christian identity is not only important for the transmission of values and the need for consolidation, but also as a form of dissociation from communism. Because nonreligiosity is labeled as a suspicious remnant of the previous system, organizations now try to get rid of this stigma, for example by drawing connections to movements like New Atheism. The glorification of scientific discoveries and scientists embodying secular sacred values becomes visible in products of the public relations work of these organizations. By appropriating the aesthetics of familiar religious artifacts and connecting them with opposing content, the legitimation of the dominant culture is thereby questioned. Statements from interviewees reveal parallels to narratives of Marxism-Leninism and a kind of intuitive conviction of the incompatibility of science and religion, while biographical paths to nonreligiosity are described as an intellectual process.

The opportunity to practice critical thinking and ask questions is not only of great value for members of Croatian nonreligious organizations, but also for participants of Polish Catholic online forums. Marta Kołodziejska starts by elucidating the institutional setting of the forums and the status of nonreligious people in Poland. While the forums are approved by the Catholic Church, it is remarkable that atheists are quite prominent in the discussions. Kołodziejska asks why atheist participants are able to gain their status as experts in religious knowledge within this context. They obviously have not lost their interest in debating about religion. Nonreligiosity here is not a matter of indifference, but often goes hand in hand with anticlericalism, materialism and a rational-scientific way of understanding the world. Religiosity is tolerated in privatized forms. In contrast, religious disputants see institutionalized forms as complementary to religious affects and define religion as reality sui generis. Different interpretations are often the basis for conflicts and the opposition thus created allows participants to identify with a particular group. The interviews reveal that they all appreciate the free engagement with different worldviews and respect the equality of all users. The most important motivation is curiosity and the dissemination of knowledge through the discussions. Kołodziejska notes that while the forums are not an idyllic space, they do allow heterogeneity and a democratic atmosphere.

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