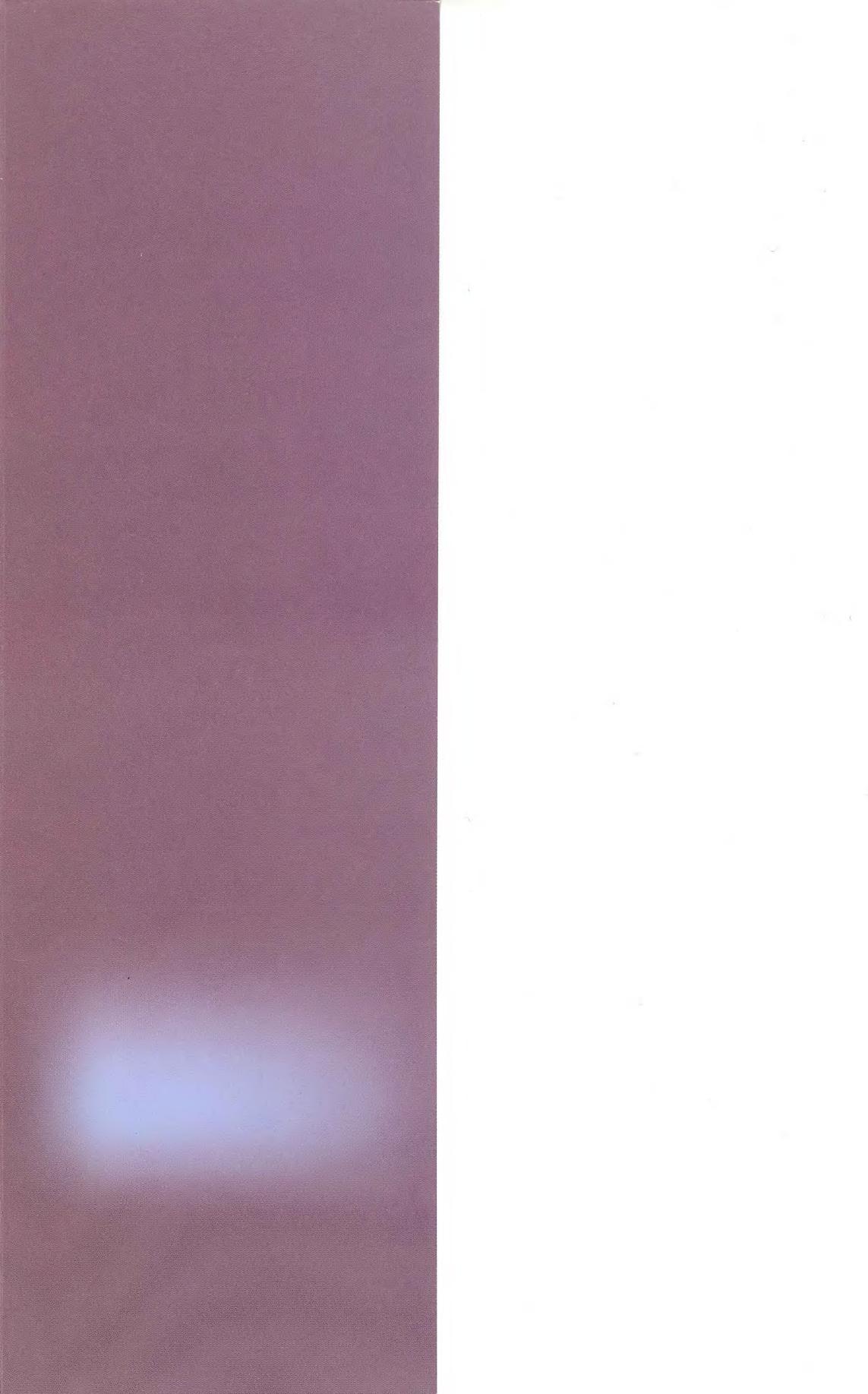


Approaching Religion

Part I

Edited by
Tore Ahlbäck





SCRIPTA INSTITUTI DONNERIANI ABOENSIS

XVII: 1

APPROACHING RELIGION

Part I

*Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on
Methodology in the Study of Religions Held
at Åbo, Finland, on the 4th–7th August 1997*

Edited by
Tore Ahlbäck

Distributed by
ALMQVIST & WIKSELL INTERNATIONAL
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Approaching Religion

Part I

Approaching Religion

Part I

**Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on
Methodology in the Study of Religions Held
at Åbo, Finland, on the 4th–7th August 1997**

**Edited by
Tore Ahlbäck**

**Published by The Donner Institute for Research in
Religious and Cultural History
Åbo, Finland**

**Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International
Stockholm, Sweden**

ISSN 0582-3226

ISBN 952-12-0368-4

Printed in Finland by

Åbo Akademi University Printing Press

Turku 1999

Contents

Editorial Note	7
VEIKKO ANTTONEN	
Does the Sacred Make a Difference? Category Formation in Comparative Religion	9
DZIEDZORM REUBEN ASAFO	
Challenges in the Study of Religious Values	25
PASCAL BOYER	
Cognitive Aspects of Religious Ontologies: How Brain Processes Constrain Religious Concepts	53
ARMIN W. GEERTZ	
Ethnohermeneutics in a Postmodern World	73
RENÉ GOTHÓNI	
Misreading and Re-Reading. Interpretation in Comparative Religion	87
PETER JACKSON	
Tracks on the Road-Myth. Indo-European religions beyond Georges Dumezil's <i>moyen d'analyser</i>	99
MORNY JOY	
Beyond the Given and the All-Giving: Extraneous Speculations on Women and the Gift	109
MATTI KAMPPINEN	
From Cultural Domains to Cognitive Models. Inference and Explanation in Cognitive Anthropology	127
E. THOMAS LAWSON	
Keeping Religion in Mind	139
THOMAS LUCKMANN	
Remarks on the Description and Interpretation of Dialogue	151

WILLIAM E. PADEN	
Sacrality and Worldmaking: New Categorical Perspectives	165
JØRGEN PODEMANN SØRENSEN	
On Divination. An Exercise in Comparative Method	181
MICHAEL PYE	
Methodological Integration in the Study of Religions	189
ILKKA PYYSIÄINEN & KIMMO KETOLA	
Rethinking ‘God’. The Concept of ‘God’ as a Category in Comparative Religion	207
HEIKKI RÄISÄNEN	
Tradition, Experience, Interpretation. A Dialectical Model for Describing the Development of Religious Thought	215
TOM SJÖBLOM	
“Bringing it All Back Home”. Mentalities, Models and the Historical Study of Religions	227
EINAR THOMASSEN	
Is Philology Relevant?	243
DONALD WIEBE	
Appropriating Religion. Understanding Religion as an Object of Science	253
JANE WILLAIMS-HOGAN	
Discovering the Two Faces of Religious Charismatic Action — Traditional and Modern: A Model	273
Biographical Notes	305
Information for Authors	

Editorial Note

From the 4th to the 7th of August 1997 the Donner Institute and the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion arranged an IAHR Regional Symposium in Turku/Åbo, Finland. The topic of the symposium was "Methodology of the Study of Religions". I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Nordic Organizing Committee, Jan Bergman (Uppsala), Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus), and Einar Thomassen (Bergen), and to the members of the Board of the Finnish Association for the Study of Comparative Religion, Veikko Anttonen (Turku), Eila Helander (Helsinki), Helena Helve (Helsinki), Nils G. Holm (Turku), Ilkka Pyysiäinen (Helsinki), and Martti Junnonaho (Turku). The practical arrangements were taken care of by Tuija Hovi and Anne Puuronen from the Department of Comparative Religion at Turku University and by Monica Sirén and Björn Dahl from the Donner Institute in Turku. I would like to express my thanks to them.

In 1973, little less than a quarter of a century earlier, the Department of Folklore and Comparative Religion at Turku University had organized an IAHR Study Conference titled "Methodology of the Science of Religion". Certainly you should not arrange conferences on methodology at too short intervals. However, we were of the firm opinion that four conferences in a century is the correct amount.

The main difference between these two conferences is that the latter focused on the Nordic countries whereas the former was genuinely international. As a consequence, comparisons between the two conferences are difficult to make.

The conference publication from the 1973 conference *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*. Ed. by Lauri Honko. The Hague: Mouton, 1979. (*Religion and Reason*, 13) includes the commentaries of the co-referents and the discussion among the audience. The present publication is more "traditional" which means that no commentaries or discussions have been included.

We invited seven key-note speakers to the conference: Pascal Boyer (Lyon), Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Kentucky), Lauri Honko (Turku), Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo), Thomas Luckmann (Konstanz), William E. Paden (Burlington), and Donald Wiebe (Toronto). They repre-

sent various subjects and approaches, such as cognitive analysis, the history of religions, epic studies, the sociology of religion, and the philosophy of religion. Since it was a regional IAHR-conference we circulated a call for papers in all of the Nordic countries.

“Methodology of the study of religions” as a conference topic is vague. In the call for papers covering letter we tried to limit the theme to the science of religion, including the history, phenomenology, anthropology, sociology and psychology of religions. Nevertheless, the theme remains extensive if you want to produce a coherent and well integrated conference publication. To elucidate the problem I cite from my Editorial Note in an earlier volume of this series, *Dance, Music, Art, and Religion* (Åbo 1996): “The organizers of a symposium such as this seem to face a problem that is impossible to solve: either they choose a very specific and regional theme, in which case they end up with a comprehensive and homogeneous volume but the specific theme excludes far too many from delivering a paper and attending the symposium, or they choose a very broad and woolly theme that results in a disparate, heterogeneous volume but gives almost every historian of religion in the Nordic countries a chance to deliver a relevant paper”.

We can at least say that the theme of this conference was “broad enough by all standards”.

What can be done to minimize the disadvantages of a broad topic when it comes to a publication? We have proceeded in the following way: The 37 papers – all of them relevant to the topic but very heterogeneous – have been formed into two main groups. The first group consists of papers dealing with method in an abstract or purely theoretical way. In the second group papers discussing method in a practical or applied way are included. These two groups complement each other: the papers in the first group are reflections on methods as tools for doing research whereas the papers in the second group can be considered demonstrations of how to use methods as tools in “real life”. We have decided to publish the papers in two parts – the papers concerned with theory in part 1 and the case studies in part 2. Both volumes will be published during 1999.

I am grateful to Ann-Mari Dahlström for having prepared this manuscript. Without her effort there would be no conference publication whatsoever from the 1997 IAHR Regional Conference in Turku.

For more information on *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* or to view a complete listing of contents, please visit us at our World Wide Web site at: <http://www.abo.fi/instut/di/scripta.htm>.

Tore Ahlbäck

Does the Sacred Make a Difference?

Category Formation in Comparative Religion

1. Interrelatedness of 'sacred' and religion

When taken at face value, the sacred seems to be an unproblematic concept. Times, places, persons, animals and objects are classified as 'sacred', because they have or have had a religious or spiritual significance for people in specific historical and social contexts. Religious traditions and their systems of signification are taken to explain why people have set aside specific things and considered them qualitatively different from other things. Deeming something as sacred means that it is disconnected from the category in social life in which similar things are classified and bestowed with special meaning and value. Sacredness of an object means that it stands in direct relationship to specific power-laden super-human entity by which members in a given culture mirror their self-consciousness or some aspects of it. A sanctuary for instance is a place that is set apart from the rest of the social space, because it is valued as a point of contact between man and the super-human agent worshipped by the local community.

The category of experience has had a prominent role in explaining the sacrality things, times and places. They are consecrated because they represent and commemorate special events and experiences of personages sanctified by the religious tradition. It is generally thought that experience constitutes the sacred or the holy because religious experience transforms the cultural schema by which — as William Paden has put it — the world and its processes of categorial selection are shaped (Paden 1992: 7; for the 'reference to experience' see Dawson 1996).

There has been an insistent tendency among scholars of comparative religion to approach religion with the help of the category of the sacred and treat it as a dependent variable of religious experience. But which explains which? Does religion explain sacrality or does

sacrality explain religion? Is the boundary that is set up to draw lines of demarcation between sacred things and non-sacred things a minimum criterion for the religious, as Émile Durkheim suggested? If so, then we have to know what is distinctive in the social and cognitive processes by which sacred things are perceived and represented in relation to the perception and cultural representation of non-sacred things. Are there universal attributes and properties in human cognition and behavior which govern the representation of sacred things? If so, what are they: devoutness, solemnity, awe-inspiringness, compellingness of the norm of non-violation, a perception of 'an entirely different order and perhaps a sensation of 'a power or force quite different from the forces of nature' (see e.g. Eliade and Sullivan 1987, 313). On what premises we base our scholarly characterisations: are the scholars of comparative religion *emicists* who mediate the culture-dependent thought-worlds and its categories into wider academic and popular audience or are we *eticists* who transform *emic* categories into scholarly ones in order to explain their semantics? What kind of cultural category is the sacred? Can it be considered a special mode of performative genre (see Turner 1992: 100–101) the forms of which vary with culture, but which can be known after becoming acquainted with its both universal and culture-dependent characteristics? And how are the ideas of setting something apart as 'sacred' and a super-human agent related to each other? Does the norm of non-violation presuppose a super-human agent as a sanctioning authority before a thing will be established and represented as sacred? Or should we follow Nathan Söderblom's advice and consider the notion of God methodologically less important than the culture-dependent forms of classification by which the sacred things are set apart from the profane things (see Söderblom 1913: 731).

2. How to conceptualize the sacred?

In the following I shall make an attempt at clarifying the methodological choices that we have to make in order to specify the interrelatedness or separateness of the categories of 'sacred' and 'religion', and to reach some sort of theoretical understanding of the epistemological status of the sacred as a cultural category.

Conceptualizing the sacred is not an easy thing to do when it is not taken at face value as a religious category. Sacredness is a worldwide phenomenon, and there are categories of things in any culture which are qualitatively different from others and which include the norm of non-violation. But because of its transcultural distribution

and its intracultural comprehension, the sacred is an important concept and needs to be evaluated as a methodological tool both in the history and anthropology of religion. In addition to Émile Durkheim and Nathan Söderblom many distinguished phenomenologists of religion such as Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade held sacredness (or holiness) to be not only the hallmark of religion, but its very essence. According to these theorists cultural systems of belief and practice cannot be given the title 'religion' if nothing is deemed sacred by their adherents. In the methodology developed by the afore-mentioned phenomenologists sacredness has been treated as a special quality in human consciousness. The idea of the sacred entails that things, persons, places, times etc. are separated for a ritual purpose, because they are experienced as points of contact between humans and the transcendent reality. For this school of thought the sacred is a dynamic force that is manifested on the social level of spatial divisions, where religious persons can have their share of the force, hold communion with the sacred (see Eliade 1959: 367–369). Sacred space serves as a center which gives orientation and moral direction to the religious person. Eliade wrote that

"(w)hatever the historical context in which he is placed, homo religiosus always believes that there is an absolute reality, the sacred, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real. He further believes that life has a sacred origin and that human existence realizes all of its potentialities in proportion as it is religious — that is, participates in reality." (Eliade 1959: 202)

It is largely agreed today that the phenomenologists' notion of the sacred as a dynamic force originating in another world blurs the boundaries of religious and scientific discourses. By emphasizing an introspective understanding of emotions and numenal structures in subjective religious experience, the phenomenologists have detached the sacred from the social matrix in which all human experience, including religious experience, takes place. By keeping the notion of the sacred reality intact from the cultural and cognitive processes constraining human thought and action and socially transmitted systems of meaning, these scholars can be criticized for taking part in the very cultural process that they were supposed to study.

As William Paden points out, there is no reason to equate 'sacred' with religion. The sacred is not a uniquely religious category, although its religious meanings and history of use dominate its popular as well as scholarly discourse. As Paden emphasizes, this is due to

the so-called prototype effect. (Paden 1996: 16). Hebrew, Greek and Latin terms denoting ‘sacred’ that appear in various religio-cultural texts and scriptures of Judaism and Christianity have exercised their influence also on the scholarly discourse in comparative religion.

I also agree with Paden when he states that sacrality is a distinctive factor in the logic of human behavior (Paden 1996: 16). I would add that not only in behavior, but also in human cognition that guides behavior. Students of comparative religion should not be out hunting only for the religious sacred according to prototypes given by Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious traditions. My own interest in this category is based on the idea of creating scholarly debate that has its point of departure in the semantic analysis of emic terms denoting sacred in various languages and in an attempt to explain their cultural logic with the help of the ethnographic texts in which the terms appear (see Anttonen 1996a; Anttonen 1996b). The use of the terms as specific concepts in the theologies of different religions should be approached with the same methodological attitude and seen as instances of specific cultural logic that has directed the formation of religious ideas in the contexts of their location. In this attempt we need to go beyond the category-formation of the phenomenologists of religion.

3. Evidencies from the past: the Finnish case

The word *pyhä* denotes ‘sacred’ in Finnish language. Before the term was adopted into the Christian vocabulary in the 12th and 13th centuries when Christianity was established in Finland, it was used in vernacular as an attribute in conjunction with prominent and exceptional natural places such as lakes, rivers, rapids, ponds, mountains, larger hills, capes, bays and fells. There are place names all over the Baltic Sea Culture Area, especially in Finland and in Estonia where the term occurs in a compound word as an appellative designation for a place.

Pyhä is a Germanic loan word. Its proto-Indo-European root is *ueik- denoting ‘to separate’. In proto-Germanic the root is *vik- which has given the adjective *wīha- which the speakers of early proto-Finnic language turned into *pušä (> proto-Finnic *pyhä*). As a geographical term *pyhä*-designations in the Baltic Sea Culture area date back to the cultures of Bronze and Iron Age populations.

The question is why these places were designated as *pyhä*, i.e. sacred? Should we understand the prehistoric term *pyhä* meaning something altogether different from what it does today? Did it, per-

haps, have none of the religious connotation that it has in Christian parlance and in popular discourse in today's Finland? What the sacrality of the places actually entailed?

According to my findings, the term was used only when all of the following conditions obtained:

- 1) The place was situated outside in an uninhabited area in the wilderness.
- 2) There were no previous names in this area. The attribute *pyhä* is the first name to be given in the place. The place or the area designated by the term *pyhä* was newly occupied land; the first people ever in the area had just taken the land into their possession.
- 3) The place had a special function for the people whose territory it belonged to and who had the right to use its natural resources. A "*pyhä*-place" was used as boundary marking the limits of the occupied territory and of the right of exploitation.
- 4) The "*pyhä*-place" as a boundary point was chosen from among the topographically exceptional or anomalous places in the region, or from places where routes intersected. Since the term *pyhä* appeared in similar places all over the geographical area where Finnish was spoken, it became an established term for marking places and boundaries in the landscape.

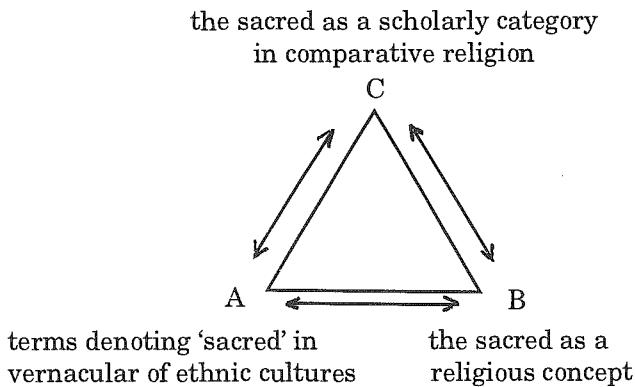
The adjective *pyhä* had a religious referent only to the extent as the category of 'religion' can be equated with the categories of 'the social' and 'the territorial'. According to methodologies of both Émile Durkheim and Arnold van Gennep religion as a category can be used in connection with popular traditions of hunting and agricultural societies in the meaning of its comparative use. It does not mean that religion actually has an autonomous ontological existence, but forms of cultural representation in local settings are theoretically conceptualized as such (see e.g. McCutcheon 1997: viii). According to this comparative methodology linguistic expressions in vernacular, oral narratives in folklore and other forms of cultural representation forming the nucleus of performances conceptualized as 'religious' are part and parcel of the overall social and spatial categories by which the members of ethnic communities comprehend and communicate the structures of meaning of their life-worlds. As Arnold van Gennep has emphasized spatial boundaries are not only legal and economic in nature, but also magico-religious. The boundaries marked by natural features such as rocks, trees, rivers and lakes or by natural objects such as stakes, portals or upright rocks are known by local people through collective tradition: as van Gennep writes "the inhabitants and their neighbors know well within what territorial limits their

rights and prerogatives extend" (Gennep 1960: 15). The boundary points cannot be crossed or passed without the risk of supernatural dangers and sanctions. The boundary point is most often accompanied with interdictions, behavioral norms, rules of avoidance and prohibitions. Depending on the cultural value of situation when boundaries are crossed, socially prescribed rituals are considered as only proper ways to deal with the crossing (Gennep 1960: 15–17).

For the population groups of prehistoric Finland, *pyhä* represented a boundary between two conceptual spheres of sociocultural processes, i.e. those taken place within the inside and outside of the inhabited territory and the human body. Such a categorization is a major cognitive element on which various population groups have traditionally based their symbolic cultural behavior. The symbolism of the boundary crossing from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside have become manifest both in hunting and agricultural rituals, but also symbolically in so-called crisis rituals and in rites of passage.

The majority of the Finnish place-names beginning with *pyhä* are the product of the concepts guiding the categorization of space and the customary law tradition by which groups of settlers sought either to separate themselves from one another and to mark off the territory claimed by them from the shared inner domain or the outer domain. In place-names *pyhä* signified the outer border of the inhabited area. As a temporal category *pyhä* was used to denote times that are, as it were, on the border and 'fall between' temporal categories. It thus became a basic term in the reckoning of time according to the lunar calendar. Among the Baltic Finns it was used to mark off times into periods by virtue of its meaning of prohibition and non-violation. *Pyhä* meant forbidden, something to be avoided, dangerous, so that the behavioral norms prescribed by society had to be observed during the time marked off as sacred. In addition to territorial and temporal borders, the notion of *pyhä* was used as an adjective to mark off an object, a phenomenon, a time, an animal or a person that was to be avoided and held as forbidden because of its dangerousness or impurity and to separate it from the sphere of everyday social life.

4. From vernacular to scholarly construct: baby steps in category-formation



The scholars in comparative religion have lacked a theoretical appraisal of the conceptual frames of reference suitable for comprehending and explaining the terms and concepts of the sacred in different cultures and religions, i.e. the religious and vernacular 'sacred', and the ritual systems of representation surrounding them. My attempt to create a new theoretical model for operationalizing the sacred as a methodological tool in comparative religion is founded on the mutual incompatibility of notions of the sacred in the discourse of theologically and anthropologically trained scholars of religion. The sociologists of religion are usually located somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.

Steps in this methodology are three-fold. First, one has to collect the linguistic and ethnographic evidence of the terms denoting 'sacred' in different cultural traditions. The scholar has to examine the words in vernacular denoting 'sacred' in contexts of their appearance. While taking the second step one has to pay attention to how agents in cultural systems perceive attributes and properties in places, times, persons, animals, actions and objects and categorize them in regard to attributes and properties that define members in the same category. The final and most important step from the point of view of comparative studies is to analyze the cultural and religious meanings conveyed by the context-specific usages of these terms. The scholar has to delineate the context-specific structures of knowledge and explain the cultural logic which underlies the sacred-making behavior within the symbolic system in question. This last step transforms the sacred from an emic category into an etic one.

5. Grounding the sacred in human cognition

In order to clarify how human disposition to sacralize is connected to human cognition, I have to call linguistics and symbolic anthropology for assistance. The concept of the sacred has been adopted into the theoretical language of various arenas of scientific specialties which cannot be ignored when theorizing it. It is basically in the Kantian tradition of the sociology of knowledge where the sacred has been treated as a fundamental category of human mind. Psychoanalysts, structuralists, students of cybernetics and cultural geographers have utilized the concept as a cognitive structure in human thought and behavior. Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss were first to suggest in their book Primitive Classification that the sacred should be dealt with in reference to the culturally dependent classificatory systems and theorized in connection to the social constraints that bring about collective conscience. Durkheim and Mauss treated the sacred as a collective representation that is set apart as a symbol that unites divisions, distinctions and oppositions into a meaningful whole and gives legitimacy to the behavioral norms connected with the symbol. Things set apart as 'sacred' transcend individual consciousness and act as a divinely legitimated source for sentiments that bind members of the social group together. Any category within the social systems of classification which has a specific value for the local community needs to be dealt with in relation to sacred things, times and places when its taxonomical status is about to change or needs to be changed. Ritual is the only proper context for category transformations since ritual creates an in-between boundary space within the social system of categories (see Leach 1976). Since ritual is the social system of behavior that makes a difference in showing the flexibility of distinctions and oppositions between social categories, it is the prime locus that in the final analysis also creates the sacred (see e.g. Smith 1987; Bell 1992).

In my own study referred to above I have argued along the Durkheimian lines that the sacred and the ritual can be treated as corresponding scholarly categories and they can be used to analyze the logic of behavior in liminal spaces that people create in order to make a difference in their cultural systems of categorization. The semantics of both categories can be approached with ethnographic data on cultural and religious symbols that represent cognitive boundaries by which ethnic or other social groups maintain, secure and reorder their social edifice. Both categories are cognitively connected to the ideas of placeness and placelessness and corporeality and non-corporeality. Although Durkheim failed to understand human mind

and its cognitive faculties separately from social organizations, his contribution has been nevertheless of prime importance in conceptualizing and operationalizing the sacred as an anthropological category (see e.g. Paden 1991; Paden 1996; Parkin 1991; Anttonen 1996a). Durkheim went wrong, however, in assuming that the opposition of the sacred and the profane stems from social sentiments. There are far greater cognitive operations behind the categories of 'sacred' and 'profane' and their opposition. In Rodney Needham's words "if the mind is taken to be a system of cognitive faculties, it is absurd to say that the categories originate in social organization...the notion of class necessarily precedes the apprehension that social groups, in concordance with which natural phenomena are classed, are themselves classified" (Needham 1963: xxvii).

6. The sacred stems from the systemic character of human thought

Claude Lévi-Strauss, who took structural linguistics as his point of departure, developed Durkheimian ideas into a more general theory of the human mind. While Durkheim had a social deterministic conception of the opposition between the sacred and the profane, Lévi-Strauss converted the idea of oppositions into a more semiological and symbolic approach. Cultural symbolic structures and models are not grounded in specific forms of social organization, but vice versa: all social categories have a symbolic origin.

Lévi-Strauss thought that human beings process information on three categorial levels: the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. He treated culture as a system of communication in which language carries thought back and forth across these three structural levels (see Morris 1987: 266; Sullivan 1984: 152–153). But as Brian Morris writes, one is never too sure as to which level of reality or experience the symbolic systems are based upon (Morris 1987: 204) and what is the cognitive mechanism by which they are fabricated. In analyzing the work of Lévi-Strauss Lawrence E. Sullivan says "that processes of thought transform elementary structures of the mind by building symbolic bridges between contradictions. These symbolic bridges become in turn the focus of the same unceasing formal processes and are recycled as images which, in their turn, become object (or victim) of processes which reorder their relations in the attempt to give them meaning" (Sullivan 1984, 152–153). Things, animals, persons, times and spaces set apart as sacred are in Lévi-Straussian terms symbolic

bridges that carry thought back and forth on these three structural levels and become represented not only in ritual, but also in myth, epic and fiction.

In Lévi-Straussian terms the idea of the sacred is like the numerical value zero. In itself it signifies nothing, but when joined to another number it is filled with differential significance (see Smith 1987: 108). In religious systems the idea of the sacred as the numerical value zero becomes evident when we for example think of the symbolism in Christian rituals. Jesus Christ can be paralleled to a numerical value zero: in itself it signifies nothing, but acquires meaning and acts as a source of meaning when joined to different aspects of value in the category systems of Christian individuals and communities. We only have to think of Christian rites of passage. The idea of Jesus as an embodiment of sacrality becomes represented in liminal boundary states such as in birth and the baptizing ritual, in the ritual of confirmation and also in rituals of marriage and death. Jesus is a culturally established symbolic bridge by which oppositions such as male/female, life/death, pure/impure, inside and outside sanctuary, inside and outside of the human body are brought into differential relationships. Let me here quote how Jonathan Z. Smith has described the logic of the sacred: "Here (in the world) blood is a major source for impurity; there (in the ritual) blood removes impurity. Here (in the world) water is the central agent by which impurity is transmitted; there (in the ritual) washing with water carries away impurity. Neither the blood nor the water has changed; what has changed is their location" (Smith 1987: 110) Ritual exhibits the religious system and its differences by focusing attention on one or several aspects of the systemic elements. Arnold van Gennep had a special expression for this: he called it the pivoting of the sacred.

Unlike Eliade Lévi-Strauss did not think that the sacred is a structure in human consciousness which refers to specific symbols in religious narratives in order to display their divine origin. Just like the concept of value, the sacred is a differentiating device that emerge from the systemic character of human thought. For Lévi-Strauss the sacred is at the same time an order of universe and a transformational situation when things are removed from places allocated to them; as Lévi-Strauss writes "being in their place is what makes them sacred for if they were taken out of their place, even in thought, the entire order of the universe would be destroyed" (Lévi-Strauss 1968: 10).

Along the Lévi-Straussian lines it can be argued that the idea of the sacred as it appears in the reports written by ethnologists and anthropologists and also in literary sources of established religions,

displays a primordial structure of human cognition that takes different forms and contents according to the master narratives in the symbolic-cultural systems. The sacred is a socially constructed meta-category by which metaphoric and metonymic relations between other cultural categories are established and mediated, e.g. between categories of person, gender, kinship, marriage, nation, or between moral categories such as justice, liberty, purity, propriety.

7. Cognitive categories and their boundaries

In the cultural anthropology of Mary Douglas, just as well as in recent scholarship in cognitive anthropology, linguistics and philosophy the operation of human mind has received more serious attention (see Boyer 1993; Boyer 1994; Lawson 1993; Lawson and McCauley 1990; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff 1989; Johnson 1987; Johnson 1991; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Religious and other social concepts and categories that comprise and organize knowledge do not float in the air as abstract entities, but are inseparably connected to the corporeality and territoriality of human beings. For example George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that the structures of human understanding have their origin in the human body. Our conceptions of reality cannot be separated from what we experience in our embodied interactions. The idea of the sacred does not have an autonomy of its own as a religious category, but is inevitably linked with corporeality and territoriality as the structures of knowledge that constrain human thought and behavior.

The idea of the sacred as a category-boundary that at the same time contradicts and unites all the other cultural categories has been developed implicitly by Mary Douglas. I say implicitly because Douglas refused to accept that the idea of the sacred and the idea of impurity had something to do with each other. Sacrality does not only mean that all members shall confirm to the class which they belong to, so that order, unity and integrity will be maintained (see Douglas 1989; Sperber 1996). There is also another side to the idea of the sacred as exemplified by the French sociologists Roger Caillois and Georges Battaille and to which Douglas's own studies on the taxonomic status of anomalous animals also bear witness. Impurity, forbiddenness and dangerousness are also characteristics of things classified as sacred. By the term 'sacred' I refer here to a more general semantic content of the term that comprises both its positive and negative, its right hand and its left hand dimensions (see Burnside 1991).

The analysis by Douglas of the pangolin cult of the Lele can be taken as an example which demonstrates how taxonomic anomaly is one of the characteristics on the basis of which animals are classified as sacred. This can be done in spite of the fact that her theory of animal symbolism has been criticized e.g. by Dan Sperber in his recently published article (1996). According to Douglas it is probable that species of animals will have symbolic value if they are perceived anomalous in regard to the attributes and properties defining the animals in the same category. With his findings concerning the taxonomic status of Cassowary among the Karams in New Guinea, Ralph Bulmer corrected Douglas's imprecise formulation. Bulmer showed that it is not only the taxonomic anomaly that makes the animal 'sacred', but its relation to human beings (Bulmer 1973). Anomalous character is not a sufficient criterion by which sacredness is defined, but its ability to serve as a vehicle for negotiating and reconceptualizing categorial boundaries by which difference is made e.g. between male and female and between kinship and territorial divisions. Persons, animals and objects that are chosen as sacred symbols do not only reflect the idea of making a difference, but also the idea of transcending the difference in order to produce growth of social values across the boundaries that differentiate categories. The sacred as a categorial boundary is universal cognitive property which is represented in various sorts of symbolism, not only in the symbolism of so-called folk religions, but also in the symbolism of major world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (see Pyysiäinen 1996). As long as there are categorial divisions in the world, there will always be some sort of symbolism of the sacred according to which people make differences in thought and action and create boundaries that at the same time separate and unite.

8. Recipe for scholars of religion to differentiate sacred-making characteristics

Pay attention to how agents in cultural systems

- perceive attributes and properties in times, places, persons, animals, actions and categorize them in regard to attributes and properties that define members in the same category (possible options: taxonomic anomaly/ taxonomic completeness or wholeness)
- signify properties in relation to systems of value in culture, society and in personal lives of individuals (by creating metaphoric and metonymic linkages)

- set them apart
- idealize them as cultural models for guiding behavior and establish normative boundaries against transgression and violation (pure/impure and licit/forbidden)
- create systems of symbols and forms of cultural representation (embodiment and spatiality as central structures of knowledge in the process of symbolization and ritualization)

References

Anttonen, Veikko

1996a Ihmisen ja maan rajat: 'pyhä' kulttuurisena kategoriana. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 646)

1996b Rethinking the Sacred: The Notions of 'Human Body' and 'Territory' in Conceptualizing Religion. In Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A. Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and Its Scholars. Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data*, pp. 36–64. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Bell, Catherine

1992 *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Boyer, Pascal

1993 Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism. In: Pascal Boyer (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*; pp. 4–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1994 *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas. A Cognitive Theory of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bulmer, R.

1973 Why the Cassowary is not a Bird. In: Mary Douglas (ed.), *Rules and Meanings. The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge*; pp. 167–193. Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.

Burnside, Carol E.

1991 The Left Hand of the Sacred. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 3: 3–9.

Dawson, Lorne L.

1996 Giving Voice to the Sacred: Collaborative Representations in the Study of Living Religious Traditions. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and Its Scholars. Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data*; pp. 65–88. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Douglas, Mary

1989 *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Ark Paperbacks. [1966]

Gennep, Arnold van

1960 *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eliade, Mircea

1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Eliade, Mircea, and Lawrence E. Sullivan

1987 *Hierophany*. In: Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*; vol. 6: 313–317. New York: Macmillans.

Johnson, Mark

1987 *The Body in the Mind. The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1991 *Knowing through the body*. *Philosophical Psychology* 4: 3–18.

Lakoff, George

1987 *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1989 *Cognitive Semantics*. In: Umberto Eco, Marco Santambrogio and Pa-trizia Violi (eds.), *Meaning and Mental Representations*; pp. 119–154. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson

1980 *Metaphors we Live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lawson, E. Thomas

1993 Cognitive categories, cultural forms and ritual structures. In: Pascal Boyer (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*; pp. 188–206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley

1990 *Rethinking Religion. Connecting Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leach, Edmund

1976 *Culture & Communication. The Logic by which Symbols are Connected*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

1968 *The Savage Mind*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

McCutcheon, Russell T.

1997 *Manufacturing Religion. The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Morris, Brian

1987 *Anthropological Studies of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Needham, Rodney

1963 Introduction. In: Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*; pp. vii–xlviii. London: Cohen and West.

Paden, William E.

1991 Before “The Sacred” became theological: Rereading the Durkheimian Legacy. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 3: 10–23.

1992 Interpreting the Sacred. *Ways of Viewing Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.

1996 Sacrality as Integrity: “Sacred Order” as a Model for Describing Religious Worlds. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and Its Scholars. Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data*; pp. 3–18. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Parkin, David

- 1991 Sacred Void. Spatial Images of Work and Ritual among the Giriama of Kenya. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pyysäinen, Ilkka

- 1996 Belief and Beyond. Religious Categorization of Reality. Åbo: Åbo Akademi. (Religionsvetenskapliga skrifter, 33)

Sperber, Dan

- 1996 Why are perfect animals, hybrids, and monsters food for symbolic thought? *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8: 143–169.

Smith, Jonathan Z.

- 1987 To Take Place. Toward Theory in Ritual. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Sullivan, Lawrence E.

- 1984 Lévi-Strauss, Mythologic and South American Religions. In: Robert L. Moore and Frank E. Reynolds (eds.), *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*. Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Söderblom, Nathan

- 1913 Holiness. General and Primitive. In: James Hastings (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*; vol. 6: 731–741. Edinburg: T & T. Clark.

Turner, Victor

- 1992 The Anthropology of Performance. New York: PAJ Publications. [1986]

Challenges in the Study of Religious Values

Introduction

In the conduct of research, the social scientist operates with a set of principles which are guidelines for carrying out the study. These principles fulfill at least two objectives: (1) to safeguard the quality of results, and (2) to address ethical issues. The first set of objectives fall mainly within the scope of theory and methodology while the other objective has legal and ethical (or moral) concerns as its focus. Certain problems arise from the very assumptions or principles which are purported to enhance the researcher's work. The aim of this paper is to highlight some of these issues in the study of religious values with special reference to Africa and to suggest some solutions in the process.

The discussion in this paper is centered on the theoretical, methodological, and ethical problems involved in carrying out such research. Of course these are not the only types of problems faced in the field: legal, ideological, political, and practical and logistic problems, for example, remain to be solved in social research. The discussion on some of the challenges faced in the area of theory and methodology are unique to each research tradition due to their divergent philosophical and epistemological presuppositions. I hope to draw special attention to the use of modern applications of multivariate data analysis which appears to be under-represented in the study of religions on the continent. The ethical concerns seem to apply more or less to any field of research irrespective of research heritage. I hope to argue that since methodology has vital implications for theory, problems relating to suitability, appropriateness of research method, and ethical permissibility of methods should be taken into account in addition to epistemological considerations. The ethical dimension in research in particular has to attract special attention on account of its direct relationship to the harm and/or benefit of the research to participants, their right of privacy and confidentiality, their right to be informed and to consent, and the social or governmental control over the whole research process. These demands im-

ply accountability of the researcher not only to research sponsoring agencies and to his/her own research community, but also to the local communities.

At least thirteen religious persuasions identified in Africa have been given a historical (although brief) rundown by Platvoet (1996b: 46–102). The study of religion on the continent has been concentrated on the three major ones, namely African Traditional Religions (ATRs), Islam and Christianity; but the emphasis has been on Christianity. Of late, however, a renewed interest is emerging in the study of Islam and ATRs but especially ATRs.

Theoretical Challenges in the Study of Religious Values

An important issue in the measurement of values in general is their identification. This falls within theoretical as well as methodological domains. The theoretical domain centers on finding answers to the question “what are values?”, and the methodological inquires “how are values detected and measured?”. These two are to a great extent interrelated and could be discussed together. But for the sake of analytical organization and clarity I shall separate them as mentioned above.

The question “what are religious values?” demands a specific religious definition. But definitions in general and for most concepts in sociology (of religion) in particular are elusive. First what do we mean by ‘values’? While I cannot make any detail analysis of the concept of *values* in this paper, I shall give a brief description of it. *Values* are either limitations on, or motivations for behavior as they are contributory factor, positively or negatively, in determining human action according to the perceptions of the current situation as against what “ought” to be. (Barker, 1981:120). Put simply they are criteria for decision-making either for the individual or for the society. Hence, the value perceptions of a community in part determine rewards and punishments of its members, which help condition people to strive after those things which give psychological and emotional satisfaction and avoid those which do not.

Similar individual values together form a value system. Hence we may have a religious value system or an economic or commercial value system. Relevant to our discussion, a religious value system then would be the comprehensive system of norms or standards that guides ongoing activities, guides which source is attributed to the sacred entity being revered. A value system does not describe the values of any individual. It is the essence in which the diverse value

sets of individuals and groups are related as complementary elements of a single system. A value system, therefore, represents the aggregate of what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden. In the religious sense, they are a persistent web of beliefs about favorable manner of deportment ranked in order of importance (Rokeach 1973:5). Contrasting it with conduct, it is not a report of actual conduct but a system of criteria which forms the basis for judging conduct and applying sanctions. These in Albert's (1968:288) view entail operational, theoretical and functional elements.

The above descriptions of values and value systems reveal their functions in any society. In short values serve as standards for guiding ongoing activities, and value systems as general plans used to resolve contentions and to make decisions. Besides they also have motivational functions in which they have adjustive, ego-defensive, knowledge and self-actualization elements (Rokeach 1973: 14–16).

The human 'values' concept has certain correlates chief among which include norms, sanctions, needs, motives and attitudes. Are these equivalents of 'values' or not? These concepts are very much closely related to "values" and reference to them are often unavoidable in the explanation or description of specific "values." The problem arises in identifying the relation between these concepts and the concept of "values". This is where care should be taken. It is necessary to understand the differences and links between values, norms or rules, and sanctions or controls, for example. While values in a culture stand for the peoples' goals or objectives in their life, the norms are the regulations/rules they are enjoined to adhere to in order to achieve their values. The sanctions on the other hand constitute the means by which members of the particular community make sure that every one in the group will follow the proper values, respect and observe the governing norms. Also although many particular motives may reinforce commitment to a given value they cannot be taken as their equivalents.

The definition of religious values depends on the epistemological orientation of the researcher in relation to his/her view of religion. The study of religion and religious orientations in Africa has over the years been carried out by both theologically inspired scholars of religion and anthropologists, but of late sociologists and psychologists have joined the task each peddling their disciplinary perspectives and world-views which color their work and specifically the definition of religion. Those, like some scholars of religion, who see religion as fulfilling sacred and cosmological needs, thus emphasizing the *sui generis*, or the "intrinsic value" nature of religion would define it in substantive terms. On the other hand those who, like most socio-

gists and social anthropologists, secularize religion viewing it in terms of societal needs, functions and control, would define it in functional terms. This has been the historical tendency in the social sciences in explaining indigenous religions of Africa in particular. The above discussion shows, therefore, that the pick between a "substantive" and "functional" view of religion, whether African or otherwise is based on the individual researcher's perspectives and concerns.

The functional view is especially stressed when it comes to assessing conversion from ATRs to Christianity in Africa. This is often represented as having economic overtones (Hopkins 1970:46; Meyer 1995), instead of emphasizing a genuine change of religious affiliation, or the possession of a subjective religious perspective. Often social psychological paradigms such as *relative deprivation* (RD), and its close associate, *social comparison*, are utilized to explain the spread of Christianity in Africa.¹ Hopkins, for example, made use of "learning and role conflict" theories to conceptualize and interpret his point of view (1970:53). His arguments derive from the need for recapturing the perceived deprivations and loss of security experienced in traditional societies, with the expectation of rewards through links with Europeans (1970:47). In this way recruitment into the new Christian community is seen in terms of socioeconomic indicators, discounting personality factors. Although use of this theoretical perspective was dominant from the 1950s to mid 1980s, traces of it are still detected today among some authors who use it to categorize the religious inclinations of Africans. An illustration of this is found in Meyer (1995) who attributed the preoccupation of "most" Ghanaians in the correlation between evil spirits and financial problems to economic deprivation. More on this under "Ethical Challenges" below.

The challenge posed to the researcher in the field of religious studies, therefore, is to delineate religion in a cogent conceptual framework which would form a suitable basis for a research project. A second concern is the balancing act so that the sociological inquiry does not turn into a deterministic venture where the religious phenomenon is interpreted on the basis of socioeconomic factors. In the end this means the researcher needs to develop a theoretical working definition of what religion and religious values are, ready for confirmation or refutation in research.

Not only the applicability of categories but also theoretical formulations developed in European contexts need to be re-examined, for example, the application of the "secularization" (and laicization), and

¹ See further elaboration on this in Asafo (1997).

the "rational choice" theories dominant among sociologists of religion in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Although there is no easy way out of these problems it is important to be articulate in the choice of language and categories as well as theoretical concepts in conveying our findings about the cultures we study.

Methodological Challenges in the Study of Religious Values

Basically, there have been two main research approaches used in religious studies. These are the qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative research is the research tradition mainly employed especially by ethnographers and historians, in data collection and analysis. This research tradition is distinguished by five main intellectual perspectives which provide it with its distinct epistemology. These are phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, *verstehen*, naturalism, and ethnogenics.² There are a variety of approaches under this tradition today but the three main methods normally used are: *participant observation*, *unstructured interviewing*, and *life history*. One can also find the increasing use of the *group discussion* and the *phenomenography* methods. The group discussion approach is a combination of observation and conventional *unstructured interviews*, organized in a group discussion format. *Phenomenography* is applied particularly in analyzing how people perceive phenomena. It has been used mainly in the confines of educational perception. This approach is equally suitable to be used in obtaining perspectives on religious orientations. It falls into the confines of post-modern radical empiricism which "aims to describe accurately and in such detail the experiences of the people under study that outside readers are able to enter those experiences" (Bourdillon 1996:145).

Quantitative analysis on the other hand builds on applied mathematics. Researchers using this method have a range of specialized, standardized set of data analysis techniques to choose from. These are usually statistical techniques relying these days more and more on computer programs such as *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), *Biomedical Programs* (BMDP), *Statistical Analysis System* (SAS), and *Minitab*. The use of this method requires manipulation of numbers that represent empirical facts in order to test ab-

² I am not able to discuss each of these methodological positions in this paper. The interested reader may refer to Bryman (1988), and Ritzer (1992).

stract hypotheses with variable constructs. This empirical data is acquired through survey questionnaires, and normally transformed into numbers, which stand for values of variables used to measure characteristics of subjects, respondents or other cases. The symbolic language of statistical relationships between variables is used to discuss or establish 'causal' or correlational relations. It is assumed that social phenomena can be measured and or quantified using numbers and when manipulated according to the laws of statistics, the numbers reveal features of social phenomena. This mode of investigation is favored mostly by sociologists of the positivistic-naturalistic inclination in contrast to the humanistic-culturalistic legacy. The positivistic-naturalistic group asserts that the social sciences are basically similar (methodologically) to the natural sciences. For this reason the same kind of reasoning, method, and explanatory role were to be applied in the social sciences as in the natural sciences. On the other extreme pole are the humanistic-culturalistic camp who deny any similarity between physical events such as those investigated by natural scientists and man's social actions, which is the center of investigation in the social sciences. The old confrontational line still exists on the question of whether it is appropriate or even desirable at all to subject social phenomena such as religious values to investigation using methods applied by natural scientists. The challenge confronting the researcher in this line of work is to determine how far to go with the use of sophisticated statistical/mathematical approaches to the research. While one should be careful in recommending a strictly high-constrain statistical approach to the study of such human phenomena as religious values, more light may be shed by the use of at least descriptive statistical methods.

Broadly speaking, the methods of social research may be divided into three categories. These stand for the different ways in which the data are secured: (1) experimental manipulation, (2) questioning of respondents, and (3) direct observation (Kelman 1982:68). Each of these main categories has been subdivided into three groups ending up in nine types of research methods. See table 1 for details.

Experiments and manipulations lie outside our field of study but are found mostly in the natural sciences and some sections of psychology and, therefore, would not be treated in this paper. In the context of our present discussion our concerns are mainly in the confines of the last two categories: questioning of respondents, and direct observation. As mentioned above the study of religion and religious orientations in Africa has been pursued by both theologically inspired scholars of religion and anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists. These researchers carry out their work with these two types of

research frame of reference. Within these bounds it is argued that the phenomenological and comparative historical approaches in respect of the study of religions in Africa with special reference to ATR should be encouraged in place of the hitherto theological and social-functional strategies (Olupona 1991). The phenomenological perspective is a dual procedure in which there are (1) morphological, and (2) hermeneutical phenomenology (Benneman, jr., et al, 1982:14). The normal mode of approach has been surveys and interview studies, records and secondary analysis, unobtrusive public observation, and participant observation.

Table 1. Categories of Research Methods

TYPE OF RESEARCH	SUB CATE GORY		
Experiments and Manipulations	1. Laboratory experiments and simulations	2. Field experiments	3. Organizational and social experiments
Questioning of Respondents	1. Questionnaires and tests	2. Surveys and interview studies	3. Records and secondary analysis
Direct Observation	1. Structured observation	2. Unobtrusive public observation	3. Participant observation

Each of the categories of method mentioned above has both technical, epistemological and ethical issues to contend with. The ethical dilemmas are deferred until when I discuss ethical problems later. For now we shall highlight the technical and epistemological challenges associated with the two main research traditions. These problems center around (i) *Reactivity* and the lack of *Ecological Validity* (ii) *Verstehen* and interpretation, (iii) Theory building, (iv) Validation, and (v) Poor representativeness and generalization.

(i) *Reactivity* and the lack of *Ecological Validity*

Despite differences between the quantitative and qualitative traditions of research both have similar technical problems. Chief among these are "reactivity" and the lack of "ecological validity", also known as "demand characteristics" in psychology, due to the unintended influence of the researcher's personality (age, race, gender, educational

status, etc.), and his/her research equipment and instruments. These may create a variety of undesirable results in that people's behavior or responses may not be actually their normal behavior or views. Conversely, the issue is one of "researcher reactivity" or "researcher bias", otherwise called "experimental reactivity" or "experimental bias" in psychological studies (Rosenthal 1976). It may be suggested that, in order to secure natural behavior, the researcher must be uninvolved.

Validity in scientific research "refers to how well a study, a procedure, or a measure does what it is supposed to do" (Graziano & Raulin 1993:60). In other words how accurately an indicator measures a construct under study. The lack of "ecological validity" can be seen in the sensitivity to slight changes in wording and the un/availability of the necessary knowledge to answer a question on the part of the respondent. Therefore, the question is how best the researcher's instruments capture the daily life, conditions, opinions, values, attitudes, and knowledge base of those being studied as expressed in their natural habitat. This kind of problem is particularly common and pronounced in religious research. Furthermore, this situation is further complicated by the fact of social desirability on issues as most interview reports are personally reported intentions of interviewees which may really not describe their actions. Often respondents belonging to religious groups would like to prove their unfailing loyalty to, and solidarity with their group by giving insincere responses to sensitive inquiries. Sometimes these perceived sensitive questions are avoided. In questionnaire situations in quantitative research they are not answered at all and thus creating the problem of missing values during analysis. Often the avoidance of sensitive questions may be traced to about three (or possibly four) sources: mistrust and/or, fear, agnosticism, and carelessness. With these considerations the data collected may be rendered "ecologically invalid."

As a solution to this problem Bourdillon suggests the involvement of participants in the collection of data, a practice which may be considered to reduce this situation. But often even "insiders" such as rulers, priests or even individual believers may misrepresent the dominant view in a particular community in the case of qualitative research (Bourdillon 1996:140–141;). A detail procedure such as involved in the "analytic induction" and "grounded theory" approaches may minimize this misrepresentation (cf. section on "Problems with theory building" and "Poor Representativeness" below). Furthermore, solutions may be found, or the incidence minimized by planning the research project to include a pilot phase (that is, finance permitting) when such methodological problems and others may be detected and

resolved before the main research. During this time too trust could be forged between the community and its leaders, and the researcher. This is to be done through the same strategy of rapport building by making the interviewees know why the research is being conducted and its benefit to them. Although "reactivity" and "ecological validity" are not restricted to any one research technique, it is much more pronounced in qualitative than in quantitative research.

A related problem in quantitative research is *Reliability*. This is the ability of a set of indicators of latent constructs to be consistent in their measurement. In other words, it is the degree to which a set of indicators "contribute" to the measurement of a construct. While *reliability* does not guarantee *validity* and vice versa, they are two separate phenomenon but inter-related conditions. A measure may be accurate (valid) but not consistent (reliable). The two together or separately often result in a further problem of measurement error, to be discussed later.

(ii) *Verstehen* and Interpretation/Explanation of Human Action

Social science strives to explain human action which in its broadest sense means "meaningful behavior". It is not always certain whether a man's behavior is intentional or not because both (as in the case of the source of morality) the internal and external causes of a specific act are often complex and obscure. Among the various questions that arise from this realization is how the social scientist should understand and explain man's "meaningful" behavior? Should his/her task be the causal explanation of such action on an individual or social basis? Should the explanation be "subjective" or "objective"? That is to say should the explanation of human action follow the methods of the *naturwissenschaften* (the natural sciences) which seek to explain objectively observed phenomena by means of general laws (pro positivistic-naturalistic), or should it rely on the faculty of *verstehen* or understanding (pro humanistic-culturalistic)? For the humanistic-culturalistic proponents, since the social or cultural sciences are of a character basically and radically different from that of the natural sciences, there is the necessity for the concern for the subjective states of men. This is the concern with understanding and interpreting men's motives and cognitions. This brings in the discussion on *Verstehen*, or "understanding". The central issue in this *verstehende* sociology is the idea of "objectivity" or "Epochè" (the suspension of normative judgment) in the explanation and interpretation of human action including religiously motivated behavior. The arguments for and against this philosophical basis of interpretation since Max Weber's time have been treated well now and again in the literature

(Truzzi 1974:1-2; Brodbeck 1968; Bourdillon 1996). Researchers who have taken the non-aligned position and suggesting different ways of understanding this concept have also emerged (Cox 1996).

The dominant hallmarks of qualitative research are physical nearness to the entity under investigation: direct face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the entity being investigated in their environment; and the insistence on taking the informants' perspectives. In this, consideration is given to the events, actions, norms, values, etc. which, in the researcher's objective view, is permissible or appropriate in the context of the perspectives of the participants in that social setting. This is a laudable objective and needs to be emulated by quantitative researchers when dealing with African cultures, despite the problem of the ability of the researcher to perceive and interpret events and phenomena as do his/her sources due to background differences between the researcher and the respondents. This shortcoming may be made up for by the application of what is known as the *triangulation of measurement* method. This is a methodological approach whereby some of the shortcomings of structured questionnaire survey are catered for by the inclusion of open-ended questions, thus giving the respondents opportunity to express their views freely in their own words. This gives much more substance to otherwise sometimes "dry" mathematical/statistical "explanations" encountered in most quantitative research.

Arguments for the application of *verstehende* methodology seem appealing in certain respects but unworkable in others as many sociological propositions are. It is not evident that an investigator cannot explain human action unless he/she has experienced him/herself the psychic states he/she imputes to them, or unless he/she can successfully recreate such states in imagination. Is it to be taken, for example, that a sociologist has to go through the psychological processes leading to suicide and then commit suicide before he/she can understand why people commit suicide under certain conditions? Granted that the investigator has experienced these psychic states or reproduced them, his/her explanation could still be far off the mark simply because he/she is a unique personality different from the person or group of persons whose actions he/she is observing. For example, it is possible to "know" that a believer who endows his/her estate to his religious organization has the love and welfare of his/her religious organization at heart, or has done so for fear of his/her god, without the researcher experiencing or recreating such love, or fear in him/herself.

Generally, it is accepted that the social sciences (sociology in particular) attempt the interpretative understanding of social action in

order to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects. Explanation requires a grasp of the complex of meaning in which an actual cause of understandable action thus interpreted belongs. The method of *verstehen* alone, therefore, cannot do justice to the comprehensive explanation or understanding of human actions particularly in the field of religion, a subjective phenomenon. Greater service could be rendered if applied in conjunction with the other modes of interpretation, i.e., the covering-law forms, very much favored in quantitative inductive/deductive-statistical and deductive-nomological analyses.

In relation to the study of religions in Africa the apparent crossing of ideological boarders is necessary not only in the research methodological traditions but also between academic disciplines. This seems to be the dominant view in the research community today (Olupona 1991; Platvoet 1996; Bourdillon 1996:140). Platvoet's (1996:118) conclusion is that the use of the multidisciplinary approach to the study of religions in Africa, a view point which combines anthropological, historical, phenomenological, comparative and other religious studies approaches, yields better results. Olupona (1991:3) contends that this "will provide us with a more accurate interpretation of the essence of African religious beliefs and world-views". He alleges signs of this are already emerging in the research community concerning the study of African traditional religions, citing Hacket's commendable style of amalgamation of the historical approach with the sociological in the study of the religious environment in Calabar (Nigeria). I however, concede the fact of some problems with inductive-statistical explanations which should be avoided.

(iii) Problem with theory building

A feature of qualitative research is the need for relevance (Holme & Solvang 1991:105ff.): relevance relating to both the researcher and the actor under study.³ *Researcher relevance* among other things deals with whether the result develops new theoretical knowledge and more useful understanding and models. *Actor Relevance* on the other hand deals with praxis.⁴ This element examines the usefulness of the information and the resultant theory building for better under-

³ Other aspects of *Researcher Relevance* are: (1) what value direction the result has; and (2) the understanding value the result has.

⁴ Additional elements of *Actor Relevance* deal with procedure or description; provocation: the importance to create reaction with the entity being investigated; self-experience: the extent to which the researched entity cooperates so that the actor gets a better understanding of and consciousness about him/herself.

standing of, and change of praxis for the entities being investigated. The question is whether in our bid to measure religious values our intention is to develop a theory, and if so when does one begin formulating such a theory?

In order to bring these problems to manageable limits, many researchers today (especially those in the qualitative tradition) emphasize the generation of theories rather than just trying to test already formulated theories and concepts as prevalent in quantitative research. To enhance a better linkage between theory and investigation, several approaches have been developed. Two of the most frequently cited approaches today are the *analytic induction* (Bryman 1988), and *grounded theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin [eds.] 1997) as a means of generating theory which is embedded in data, and also as a procedure to avoid the formulation of theories and concepts in advance of beginning field work. This is in order not to impose a potentially foreign framework on target societies or institutions through whose perspectives ethnographers (and sociologists) insist they want to view the social phenomenon; and also because there is "the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated, as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the views of participants in a social setting" (Bryman 1988:81). This calls for strategies which are relatively open and unstructured and in which the formulation and testing of theories and concepts proceed at the same time as data collection.

(iv) Poor Representativeness and Generalization

One main limitation in low-constrain methods of research, to which belong case study and naturalistic observation is poor representativeness. The problem associated with the reliance on a single case (be it a school, a community, a firm) poses a challenge of how far it is possible to generalize the findings of such research. One cardinal element of the problem is the representativeness of the case study findings to all the members of the population from which the case was selected (Graziano & Raulin 1993:132). The concern to see through the eyes of one's informants in qualitative research raises the need to address the question of the typicality of the eyes through which he/she is seeing. This in itself is an indication of the use of an appropriate framework to the investigator's mode of research. An example is the advice offered by Glaser & Strauss (1967) on the pref-

erence of *theoretical sampling*⁵ over *statistical sampling*. The theoretical sampling approach alleviates the predicament of the representativeness of the eyes.

Three further possible solutions to this dilemma have been suggested by Bryman (1988:88–90). First the researcher may study more than one case (the comparative approach). Secondly a number of cases may be examined by more than one researcher (the team-cum-comparative research approach), and thirdly, to seek a case which is ‘typical’ of a certain group of characteristics. Finally, a time series (longitudinal) approach to research is recommended, in which series of detailed interviews over a long period of time are conducted, instead of a one time short survey interview in which respondents give responses without giving much thought to it. There is also the need for a thorough and proper reconstruction of historical sources of the research material through proper “source criticism”. This may take care of not only the nuisance of inadequate symbolism but also of reliability (Platvoet 1996:116). It is evident that in the past, views on African religiosity normally represent those of the ruling or upper classes, as earlier information was primarily collected from such classes of the African society (Westerlund 1993:58–59). Just as European missionaries of the first and early part of the second of the four Christian missionary periods in Africa (1444/45–1790; 1790–1840; 1840–1890; and 1890–1960) concentrated on the ruling classes, so did the anthropologists and early historians and churchmen who researched and wrote on African culture and religion.

An aspect of the poor representative conclusions on religions in Africa has been the unreliable statistical data on the distribution of religions on the continent. Few would deny the fact that empirical data in this discipline is awfully atypical and undependable often illustrated by unacceptable levels of margin of error in figures presented in the literature on religions on the continent. For example, statistics provided by prominent writers like Barrett (1982:782) have been seriously contradicted by Folala.⁶ Also conclusions reached by Mandivenga (1991) based on Folala’s figures, although similar to the trend in change of religious affiliation as presented by Barrett has been

⁵ In *theoretical sampling*, in order to address the question of the adequacy of sample, the researcher observes only as many activities, or interviews as many people, as are needed in order to “saturate” the categories being developed, and then moves on to the next theoretical issue and repeats the same process.

⁶ Folala’s (1988:11) conclusions cited in Pobee (1991:58).

questioned in some other quarters.⁷ In the area of empirical (statistical) religious study there seems to be a gross lack of the scientific urge in response to a fair sense of representativeness. The challenge, therefore, to the researcher on religions in Africa is to move more towards a research which has a resemblance of the scientific approach instead of guesswork and approximations. One way of solving this difficulty may be through the direct action of the research community. Researchers should make the conscious and candid effort by way of symposiums when and where such theoretical and methodological questions, which cannot be solved easily by any one researcher by him/herself acting alone, would be identified. Then the community as one voice could confront national governments to include such information in their national population censuses, if held at all. But first the national governments have to be convinced that the inclusion of such information on religion in their censuses can also be of benefit to their countries. It is clear that some nations on the continent have deleted questions on religious affiliation and practice from their population census questionnaires. This only contributes to the already confused nature of the study of religions on the continent, at least the quantitative sense.

Identification of Religious Values

With the identification of values comes the age old puzzle: "how do we know whether we are identifying or measuring values and not attitudes?" Or put differently, "are social scientists not taking attitudes for values in their social investigations?" *Attitudes* as Thurstone (1959:216) describes it is "the sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats, and convictions about any specific topic." This reveals the subjectivity and personal nature of attitude. Irrespective of these characteristics "attitude" should not, according to Thurstone, disqualify it from being used as a scientific measure due to the availability of *opinions* which are one's expressions, verbal or written about an *attitude*.⁸ *Opinions* serve as symbols of attitudes. Therefore, in order to

⁷ This was contained in a correspondence I received from Arvi Hurskainen, the editor of the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* in April 1997.

⁸ Thurstone (1959, 216) restricts "opinion" to verbal expression which we deem not wholly adequate. Written expressions could equally describe one's attitude since an opinion, verbal or written symbolizes an attitude. Of course if someone has written a statement it could equally be referred to as what he/she "said".

measure attitudes one could use *opinions* despite its limitations,⁹ especially that of trustworthiness because of the problem of reactivity innate in field research.

The discussion on the operationalization of psychological-/sociological concepts may not be complete without the mention of the inclusion of background factors such as if the respondent had been brought up in a religious home, and the perceived religiosity of parents or adult guarantors, in the whole research process. It is generally agreed that childhood experiences often have serious implications for adult life. For that matter while designing a research questionnaire or formulating a research proposal, this should also be considered.

A significant aspect of a culture is language. The identification and study of religious values, therefore, involve the content analysis of the suitable verbal as well as written material of the religious heritage. This is made up of the community's traditions (oral and written) and folklore: folktales, riddles, wise sayings, etc., which may constitute a mass of ideological material. This category is equally necessary and important as its identification reveals implicit assumptions in social discourse which in turn uncovers values not otherwise readily observable. In more literary societies where religious thought has been preserved in written form one of the usual ways is to rely on literary texts—holy books and/or other literature—that spell out the belief and ritual systems of the said religion. For example, the Bible for Christians, the Qur'an for Muslims, the various Vedas for Hindus, Tripitaka for Buddhists, or the Book of Mormon for Mormons. Relying on texts in the interpretation of religious values poses a special problem in identifying the religious values in ATRs in this manner for lack of coded text.¹⁰ On the other hand Platvoet (1996:116) has found two major virtues (a high degree of contextualization and representativeness) in the study of the history of religions of Africa despite the lack of religious texts.

Even the study of coded religious traditions on the continent such as Christianity and Islam poses other measurement challenges due to certain ingrained cultural and/or ideological realities. Examples of these include the near peculiar translation and interpretation of foreign (particularly English) words such as “religion” into African lan-

⁹ For a discussion on the limitations involved in using ‘opinion’ as an index of attitudes, see Thurstone (1959:215–219).

¹⁰ This should not, however, be construed as the usual excuse advanced by “Western scholars to deny the existence and authenticity of African history”, in this case the history of African religions. Cf. Platvoet (1996:115–116).

guages due to their historical evolution. This may be illustrated among the Ewes of south-eastern Ghana with the etymological development of the two contrasting sacred entities: *Mawu* for the Christian "god" and *Abosam* for the "devil", and the resultant or accompanying meaning given to the idea of *religiosity* (Meyer 1992). It has been found in my own research that the Ewe idea of *religiosity* is accorded only to Christians and not to any other religious community. This is due to the etymology of the Ewe word *Mawusuborsubor*, and translation of this word from English into the Ewe language. To avoid this kind of enigma care, therefore, has to be taken in the translation of foreign language questionnaires, and prior knowledge of even the ideological basis of linguistic terminologies and expressions is vital. A significant issue is the use of questionnaires in regions for which it was not originally designed, without due revisions to suit the ideological view points prevailing in the area. It is important to revise such research instruments to take into account cultural and ideological conceptualizations in order to give a more meaningful explanation of the belief contents of the people if in-depth interviews are impossible.

Adopting other Methodological Approaches: The case of Multivariate Data Analysis

Although research on religion in Africa is carried out either in the form of questioning of respondents or direct/participant observation, the subcategory of questionnaires and tests, and structured observations are minimal. Equally important to be encouraged should be the quantitative approach in the form of questionnaire data. This is not to say this strategy is of any superior significance but its increased use may fill the statistical void that has been created by its little use. Inglehart (1990:130) insists that despite its curtailed adequacy, there are some indispensable advantages in using this quantitative approach to the study of religion: (1) It is a means of obtaining vastly larger sample size than one could obtain with in-depth interviews; (2) Moreover this is essential if the objective is to make reliable inter-generational comparisons or control for social background factors; (3) the mass survey, as done for example in the European Values Survey over the past ten years, can provide representative national samples — something extremely useful if one wishes to know what is happening to a society as a whole or to analyze phenomena in cross-national perspective; and (4) the public opinion survey has been a proven approach which has been found to be quite accurate and reliable for many purposes.

Furthermore, the use of the quantitative approach and relevant techniques such as found among multivariate data analysis, e.g., Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), helps bring out vividly, by mathematical manipulation the underlying structural relations among the various dimensions of the religious orientations and social concerns. For example, one may want to know how religion relates to differences in socioeconomic status in society, its relationship to technological changes, e.g., on issues like health (the AIDS epidemic and in what circumstances religion might put sway on sexual practices and promiscuity, or birth control issues, alcohol consumption and/or abuse, etc.), agriculture, education, and religion's role in social conflict and peace. Qualitative approach as championed by radical empiricists may deal with such issues but falls short of giving us how widespread and typical these views are, which is of immense importance for policy makers. In other words theories generated through isolated case studies by the use of qualitative method need to be re-evaluated in order to see how widespread the views expressed are in the community. This can be done more appropriately through sociological studies of religion relying more on multivariate data analysis. Bourdillon (1996:147) observes, and quite to the point that "The artistic impressions of radical empiricism may on occasion speak to such issues but we also need to know how widespread these impressions remain valid: we need to do some counting."

One, however, encounters some drawbacks in their operation, not the least as it is heavily theory driven. It is used mainly as a procedure of theory testing and confirmation, a criticism qualitative researchers are quick to point out. But this need not be so because statistical models can also be used as excellent means of, not only theory testing and confirmation but also theory generation, just as qualitative approaches like *analytic induction* and *grounded theory* mentioned earlier, if properly applied.

Besides, the application of this method requires the use of modern machines particularly powerful computers and the appropriate statistical computer programs, not to mention the special skills involved in working with them. It is evident that research projects of this type are poorly represented in the literature of the study of religions and religious values on the continent. If it is the lack of resources such as computers and their paraphernalia, African governments should be pressed to see the importance of such equipment in the academic pursuits of both students and teachers, and should be encouraged to provide them. On the other hand if the deficiency is due to undeveloped relevant skills, reflecting inadequate curriculum content, the university authorities should be made aware of the need so that

where this is wanting syllabuses in such universities would be revised. An attempt in this direction is under way in some universities by way of offering more detail methods courses to students. But this seems inadequate as much of it concentrates on the qualitative legacy.

There are at least eleven different varieties of multivariate techniques to choose from. I shall not burden the reader with all of these in this paper.¹¹ The choice of a particular technique is determined by the objective and theoretical direction of the research. Each of these follows a structured approach of six steps in multivariate model building, except Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) commonly called LISREL (one of the more popular computer programs used for it), which goes through seven steps and is unique to SEM (Hair, jr., et al, 1995). SEM examines a series of dependence relationships simultaneously, unlike other multivariate approaches. Its widespread use is traced to its two most important strengths: (1) while it allows a straightforward method of dealing with multiple relationships simultaneously with statistical efficiency, (2) it also has the ability to appraise the relationships thoroughly, thus providing a shift from exploration to confirmation analysis (Hair, jr., et al., 1995:617). Hence, SEM has an added advantage in that it is a simultaneous factor, multiple regression and path analyses. The seven steps involved in SEM are (1) developing a theoretically based model, (2) constructing a path diagram of causal relationships, (3) converting the path diagram into a set of structural equations and specifying the measurement model, (4) choosing the input matrix type and estimating the proposed model, (5) assessing the identification of the structural model, (6) evaluating goodness-of-fit criteria, and (7) interpreting and modifying the model.

Model equations are in two parts: the Measurement Equation, and the Structural Equation. The Measurement Equation is that part of the model where we see the relationship between the dependent variables and the observed variables. The Structural Equation is the rest of the model where there are only the structural relationships among the unobserved (latent: dependent and/or independent) variables. These equations, according to step 3 of the SEM process, are specified either in mathematical (regression) equations or in Lisrel special formulations (notations). Often the third step is skipped by researchers, for this is taken care of later in steps 5 and 6 by the computer program. The critical points in the model building using

¹¹ Interested readers may consult the following from which further reading lists may be obtained: Hair, jr., et al., (1995); Hoyle, (ed.) (1995).

the SEM technique are steps 5 to 7. It is at these points that special attention is to be paid to the operational assumptions mentioned below.

In the use of multivariate data analysis the researcher cannot avoid the use of certain basic terms. Assumptions in this type of analysis are based on such terms as dependent and independent variables, latent and observed variables, error terms, and parameter coefficients, variances and covariances, to mention a selection. Operational assumptions inherent in the notion of "cause" within the framework of variable analysis include the absence of specification error, identification problem, measurement error, and assumptions dealing with error terms (Lewis-Beck 1980:26–30; Hoyle 1995:1–15). Using this research approach is not an easy way of presenting the religious inclinations of respondents. It has its peculiar drawbacks and difficulties. But there is the need to re-assess the hitherto over-emphasis on the qualitative approach to the detriment of its quantitative counterpart. Some matching is overdue.

Ethical Challenges in the Study of Religious Values

In the work of the social researcher there is always the presence of moral dilemmas which need urgent attention. This plight "has the very real potential for violating the conditions of human freedom and is that it takes place at an intersection of ethical and epistemological systems, thereby posing unforeseen moral dilemmas for the anthropologist" (Appell 1978: ix). Appell's comments certainly do not apply to the discipline of anthropology only. Much can be said of all social investigation. It is important to be aware of the ethical dilemmas and pitfalls associated with social research.

The requirements of these predicaments demand that researchers thread the delicate line between the scientific requirements of methodology and the appropriate human relations (rights and values) that face the potential threat posed by the research (Kimmel 1988:9). This calls for underlying guiding research principles in order to proceed both ethically and without putting into jeopardy the validity of the research project as far as possible. Four broad ethical principles are invoked in the study of human participants: (1) autonomy/self-determination, (2) nonmaleficence, (3) beneficence, and (4) justice (Beauchamp, et al., 1982:18–39). These principles form the bases of the dilemmas facing the researcher. In that regard the researcher is continually faced with the question: "how can I conduct myself ethi-

cally and still have headway through sound and generalizable research?"

Ethical problems may be classified according to the level of the research process where they show their implications most clearly. These include treatment of research participants/respondents, responsibility to society, and integrity in the collection, analysis and reporting of data. The difficulties are also wide ranging with certain characteristics. In Kimmel's (1988:30–36) judgment, the source of ethical problems is conflicting values, and the complexity of a single research problem can give rise to multiple questions of proper behavior. Judgments about proper conduct lie on a continuum ranging from the clearly unethical to the clearly ethical. He supposes that an adequate understanding of an ethical question sometimes requires a broad perspective based on the consequences of research, and that though sensitivity to ethical issues is necessary this realization is not enough for solving them. Furthermore, dilemmas relate not only to the conduct of the research but also to the subject matter as well. Finally while ethical issues involve both personal and professional elements, it can pertain to science (as a body of knowledge) and to research (conducted in such a way as to protect the rights of society and research participants). An irony in this area is that an ethical problem can be encountered as a result of ones decision to conduct or not to conduct a specific study.

There are a range of ethical issues which have bearing on the measurement of human values (including religious ones) which raise difficult moral dilemmas. Essentially ethical dilemmas are linked to, and arise from the various categories and subcategories of research methods mentioned earlier (Kelman 1982:69). These dilemmas cover particularly the harm and benefits of social research to participants, their right to privacy and confidentiality, their informed consent and the social control of the findings of the research (Boruch and Cecil, eds., 1983; Beauchamp, et al., 1982). These issues have untold impact on the concrete interests of participants, the quality of interpersonal relationships and the wider social values. Taking the impact on the wider social values, for example, is the presence of diffuse harm, (i.e., the perversion of the political process, manipulation, inequality, arbitrariness); reduction of private space and erosion of trust (e.g., cynicism and anomie).

Another vital issue to be mentioned here is the issue of *accountability* (Riecken 1983:9). There are two kinds of *accountability*: (1) accountability of an agency sponsoring research for the way in which its funds have been spent. Corollary to this is the accountability of the researcher to discharge his/her contractual responsibility to the

agency: how honest has been the performance of the various research tasks? (2) researcher's accountability to his scientific colleagues. In this regard one has to inquire continually of him/herself: "have I fulfilled my tasks in a well recognized scientific manner with enough data to disclose, and details of procedure to allow competent peers to verify my performance?"

The researcher is not only responsible to his/her research community but also specifically to the community studied. True to the philosophical bias of their disciplines, Western researchers (not the least over represented are Anthropologists) all too often descend on African communities treating them as guinea-pigs in a scientific laboratory. While this is done sometimes with the best of intentions, it is at other times done nonetheless to the point of misuse, exploitation and misrepresentation resulting in the diffuse harm pointed out above. Meanwhile the researchers harvest huge benefits in the form of money, fame and academic credentials (Njinya-Mujinya 1996:120–121). The challenge usually arises during the analysis and interpretation of the materials obtained in the field study. Often observations in the African setting are erroneously presented as not matching up to certain pre-set European/Western criteria (Lewis 1990:313–314). This is not uncommon even in the study of religions in Africa. ATRs in particular are viewed as being full of superstition and magic (Murphy 1990:323–324); and often accorded the stigma of "primitivity", as though similar manifestations and practices are not found in Europe and the rest of the Western world. This indirectly reveals the ethnocentrism of such writers some of whom may be unaware of it. It is important therefore, that the researcher on Religions in Africa should allow the phenomenon a level playing ground as offered to other religions and regions of the world. While it is necessary or even important to make comparisons sometimes in research, it is equally necessary avoiding using preset standards. The religious phenomenon in Africa should be understood, respected and accurately presented in its cultural context. The imposition of the norms and values of the researcher's own culture should be deceased from, absolute "neutrality" should be encouraged towards all and any beliefs or the academic establishment.

A prominent although often ignored problem is the question of *respondent validation*. *Respondent validation* is the practice whereby ethnographers submit a version of their findings to the objects of inquiry for feedback. The difficulty here lies in the nature of the relationship between the researcher's data, which is the interpretation of his/her informants' world-views, and the elaboration of those data as a report for academic audiences. A significant aim of research should

be the advancement of knowledge, which would be put to good use to better the conditions of the society which has been studied. For that matter it is imperative that the society in which the study have been conducted should be informed about the scientific findings about them.

One way of making the informant-researcher communication complete is to establish information banks in rural Africa as suggested by Njinya-Mujinya (1996). This would go a long way to satisfy the "respondent validation" requirement in research. Njinya-Mujinya's suggestion, if taken seriously would benefit not only the research community but also the community in diverse ways. In this case and relevant to our focus in this paper, the religious communities or societies should be made into research centers of some sort and depository of information. Religious organizations should be involved in setting up this reservoir of knowledge. They are to be encouraged to take research seriously and to give the necessary assistance to researchers in the field to minimize the incidence of mistrust and undesired reactions on the part of respondents. This may only be achieved, in my opinion, if those being studied are made to be aware of the tangible benefits of the study. For example, members of religious organizations could be briefed on how a particular study could improve their spiritual well-being, or in another, their economic well-being in order to contribute to the advancement of their religious beliefs.

The subjection of informants or respondents in a research situation involves a form of control. This power is derived from the knowledge gained from the observation of, say the religious systems and values of a society, which are fitted neatly into the researcher's own pre-conceived categories. A recent example is found in Meyer (1995) who, while discussing the prominent view among Christians in Ghana about "the devil and money", straight away concluded, unconvincingly I suppose, that the link Ghanaians make between "satanic and demonic activities" and money is traced to the poverty of the people. She maintains that "In one way or another most of the stories of satanic and demonic activities are to do with money. In view of the poverty of many Ghanaians this is not astonishing. Many people have financial problems and are looking for ways and means to overcome them" (1995:239). Perhaps the author is ignorant of the fact that this link has little to do with economic prosperity or lack of it, and that it is a cultural phenomenon (part of the religious heritage of Ghanaians). Moreover careful investigation will reveal that this link is not drawn only by the "poor" but also the wealthy of the Ghanaian society. This is an unacceptable example of the researcher forcing his/her

categorizations onto the situation without establishing any bases (in this case no basis at all) for the viewpoint(s) expressed. It is a credit to Post-modern radical empiricism which pays attention to this unwelcome condition and, therefore, accords the relevant rank to the perceptions of informants without being deterministic. This is made possible by considering the relationship between the researcher and the people under study as one of equality, in which researchers must adopt a policy of openness in their study, and state clearly what they are doing, their objectives and reasons. It is imperative to note, therefore, that knowledge should not be sought only for its own sake, without due consideration to its practical value and power implications.

Conclusion

The purpose of the discussion in this paper has been to highlight some of the difficulties faced by researchers in their investigation and measurement of religious orientations. Broad areas discussed include theoretical, methodological, and ethical problems associated with social research in general but particularly with religious studies in Africa.

I support the view that the choice and employment of a research method should not take only the epistemological aspects into account but also its suitability to, and the purpose of, the research. Considerations should also be given to the cultural and ideological elements of the community whose value system is to be or being examined. Methodology has vital implications for theory. If the methodology is invalid and unreliable so may be the results of the research making theory seriously hindered. Significantly I urge that quantitatively oriented research which is under-represented in religious studies in Africa be stepped up, in order to reap the vast benefits entailed in the application of such research strategy. Multivariate data analysis does not only allow us to see the broader degree of representativeness of a theory, but also gives us the view of the structural links between dimensions of a particular theory or hypothesis. In the case where the use of only one research technique is bound to give confusing results it may be advisable, finance and time permitting, to use the *triangulation of measurement* method to curtail, to some degree, incomprehensible results.

The ethical dimension of social research is special since it has to do unrestrictedly with the injury and gain of the research to the participants, their right of privacy and confidentiality, their right to be

informed and to consent, and the social or governmental control over the whole research process. There are guidelines to follow as in any other research. These demands imply accountability of the researcher not only to research sponsoring agencies and to his/her own research community, but also to the local communities (political leaders included) where the researcher might find him/herself working. These demands are vital since they deal with interpersonal relationships and moral issues most of the time.

The awareness of the theoretical, methodological, ideological and ethical dilemmas involved in social research may enhance the work of researchers in their contribution to knowledge and understanding of cultures. There have been calls to take the transcendence and sacred in African thought seriously. This call was followed with the appeal constantly to evolve new ways of studying and viewing African Traditional Religions (ATRs) (Olupona 1991:2). While this was in the context of African culture and indigenous religions, it would not be out of place to extend this appeal to cover other religious forms on the continent. To answer this call needs a reappraisal of the scientific methods that have traditionally been employed to study religions on the continent in order to provide ‘better and more ‘objective’ knowledge about them: insights which can claim some improvement in impartiality, representativity and reliability after they have been critically tested, and accepted as for the moment valid knowledge by the global scientific community ...” (Platvoet 1996:129–130).

References

- Aish, Anne-Marie, and Karl G. Jöreskog**
1990 A panel model for political efficacy and representativeness: an application of LISREL 7 with weighted least squares. *Quality and Quantity* 24: 405–426.
- Albert, Ethel M.**
1968 Value Systems. In: David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York: Macmillan.
- Appell, G. N.**
1978 Ethical Dilemmas in Anthropological Inquiry: A Case Book. Waltham: Crossroads Press.
- Asafo, Dziedzorm R.**
1997 Social Class Conversion: Socioeconomic Status of Early Christian Converts in Africa. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6: 81–87.
- Brenneman, Walter L., Jr, Stanley O. Yarian, and Alan M. Olson**
1982 The Seeing Eye: Hermeneutical Phenomenology in the Study of Religion. London: Pennsylvania State University Press.

- Barker, Eileen**
1981 And ye shall be as gods. In: Religion, Values, and Daily Life: Acts of the 16th Conference, Lausanne 1981. Paris Cedex: CISR.
- Barrett, David B.**
1982 World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900–2000. London: OUP.
- Beauchamp, Tom L. et al (eds.)**
1982 Ethical Issues in Social Science Research. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Boruch, Robert F., and Joe S. Cecil, (eds.)**
1983 Solutions to Ethical and Legal Problems in Social Research. New York: Academic Press.
- Bourdillon, Michael.**
1996 Anthropological approaches to the study of African religion. In: Jan Platvoet, James Cox and Jacob Olupona (eds.), The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects. Cambridge: Roots and Branches. (Religions of Africa, 1)
- Brodbeck, May**
1968 Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences. New York: Macmillan.
- Bryman, Alan**
1988 Quantity and Quality in Social Research. London: Unwin Hyman. (Contemporary Social Research Series, 18)
- Bulmer, Martin, and Donald P. Warwick (eds.)**
1993 Social Research in Developing Countries: Surveys and Censuses in the Third World. London: UCL Press.
- Cox, James**
1996 Methodological considerations relevant to understanding African indigenous religions. In: Jan Platvoet, James Cox and Jacob Olupona (eds.), The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects. Cambridge: Roots and Branches. (Religions of Africa, 1)
- Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss**
1967 The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine.
- Graziano, Anthony M., and Michael L. Raulin**
1993 Research Methods: A Process of Inquiry. New York: HarperCollins. [2nd ed.]
- Hair, Joseph F., Jr. et al.**
1995 Multivariate Data Analysis With Readings. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall. [4th ed.]
- Holme, Idar Magne, and Bernt Krohn Solvang**
1991 Fcfskningsmetodik: Om kvalitativa och kvantitativa metoder. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Hopkins, Raymond F.**
1970 Christianity and Sociopolitical Change in Sub-Saharan Africa. In: Marion E. Doro and Newell M Stultz (eds.), Governing in Black Africa: Perspectives on New States. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Hoyle, Rick H.

- 1995 The Structural Equation Modeling Approach: Basic Concepts and Fundamental Issues. In: Rick H. Hoyle (ed.), *Structural Equation Modeling: Concepts, issues, and Applications*. London: SAGE.

Hughes, Marie Adele, R. Leon Price, and Daniel W. Mars

- 1995 Linking Theory Construction and Theory testing: Models with multiple Indicator of latent variables. In: Joseph F. Hair, Jr. et al., *Multivariate Data Analysis With Readings*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall. [4th ed.]

Inglehart, Ronald

- 1990 Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jöreskog, Carl G., and Dag Sörbom

- 1993 LISREL 8: Structural Equation Modeling with the SIMPLIS Command Language. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Kelman, Herbert C.

- 1982 Ethical Issues in Different Social Science Methods. In: Tom L. Beauchamp et al. (eds.), *Ethical Issues in Social Science Research*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Kimmel, Alan J.

- 1988 Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications. (Applied Social Research Methods Series, 12)

Lewis-Beck, Michael S.

- 1980 Applied Regression: An Introduction. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications. (Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 22)

Lewis, J.R.

- 1990 Images of traditional African Religions in surveys of World Religions. *Religion* 20 (3): 311–322.

Mandivenga, Ephraim C.

- 1991 Resurgence of Islam: Implications for African Spirituality and Dialogue. In: *Encounter of Religions in African Cultures*; pp. 14–21. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation.

Mbon, Friday

- 1996 Some Methodological Issues in the academic study of West African Traditional Religions. . In: Jan Platvoet, James Cox and Jacob Olupona (eds.), *The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches. (Religions of Africa, 1)

Meyer, Birgit

- 1992 'If You are a Devil, You are a Witch and, if You are a Witch, You are a Devil.' The integration of 'Pagan' ideas into the conceptual universe of Ewe Christians in Southeastern Ghana. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22: 98–132.

- 1995 'Delivered from the powers of darkness': Confessions of Satanic riches in Christian Ghana. *Africa* 65 : 236–255.

Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman

- 1984 Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods. London: SAGE Publications.

- Murhpy, J. M.**
- 1990 Black religion and 'black magic': prejudice and projection in images of African-derived religions. *Religion* 20: 323–337.
- Njinya-Mujinya, Leuben**
- 1996 Information Banks in Rural Africa: A Missing Building Block. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 5: 118–124.
- Olupona, Jacob K.**
- 1991 Major Issues in the Study of African Traditional Religion. In Jacob K. Olupona (ed.), *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society*. New York: Paragon House.
- Platvoet, Jan**
- 1996b The religions of Africa in their historical order. In: Jan Platvoet, James Cox, and Jacob Olupona (eds.), *The Study of Religions in Africa Past, Present and Prospects*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches.
- Platvoet, Jan, and Jacob K. Olupona**
- 1996 Perspectives on the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa. In: Jan Platvoet, James Cox, and Jacob Olupona (eds.), *The Study of Religions in Africa Past, Present and Prospects*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches.
- Pobee, Hohn S.**
- 1991 A Journey of Exploration into Theology of Religions. In *Encounter of Religions in African Cultures*. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation.
- Riecken, Henry W.**
- 1983 Solutions to Ethical and Legal Problems in Social Research: An Overview. In Robert F. Boruch, and Joe S. Cecil (eds.), *Solutions to Ethical and Legal Problems in Social Research*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ritzer, George**
- 1992 *The Sociological Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hills, Inc.
- Rokeach, Milton**
- 1973 *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: The Free Press.
- Rosenthal R.**
- 1976 Experimental effects in behavioural research. New York: Halsted Press.
- Strauss, Anselm L.**
- 1987 *Qualitative Analysis For Social Scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, Anselm L., and Juliet Corbin (eds.)**
- 1997 *Grounded Theory in Practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Thurstone, L. Leon**
- 1959 *The Measurement of Values*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Truzzi, Marcello (ed.)**
- 1974 *Verstehen: Subjective Understanding in the Social Sciences*. Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Westerlund, David**
- 1991 'Insiders' and 'Outsiders' in the Study of African Religions: Notes on Some Problems of Theory and Method. In: Jacob K. Olupona (ed.),

- African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society. New York:
Paragon House.
- 1993 The study of African religions in retrospect: from “Westernization” to
“Africanization”. In Jacob Olupona, and S. S. Nyang (eds), Religious
Plurality in Africa: Essays in honour of John S. Mbiti. Berlin: Mouton
de Gruyter.

P A S C A L B O Y E R

Cognitive Aspects of Religious Ontologies:

How Brain Processes Constrain Religious Concepts

A cognitive study of religion shares some of its concerns with traditional approaches in cultural anthropology or the history of religion. It aims to explain why and how humans in most cultural groups develop religious ideas and practices, and why these have recurrent and enduring features. By contrast with other approaches, however, a cognitive approach centres on one particular set of factors that influence the emergence and development of religion. The human mind is a complex set of functional capacities that were shaped by natural selection and evolved, not necessarily to build a coherent or true picture of the world and certainly not to answer metaphysical questions, but to solve a series of specific problems to do with survival and reproduction. A crucial aspect of this natural mental make-up is that humans, more than any other species, can acquire vast amounts of information through communication with other members of the species. A cognitive study takes religion as a set of cultural representations, which are acquired by individual minds, stored and communicated to others. It is quite natural to wonder to what extent what humans acquire and transmit is influenced by evolved properties of the mind. Obviously, many other factors influence the spread of cultural representations: economics, ecology, political forces and so on. The point of a cognitive approach is not to deny that there are such factors, but simply to show that, all else being equal, properties of the human mind too have an important influence on some aspects of human cultures.

In this paper I will present some general features of the cognitive study of religious concepts, and then present in detail a framework that emphasizes the role of universal cognitive constraints on the acquisition and representation of religious ontologies. I will then present anthropological and cognitive data that supports the model.

I will conclude with some general methodological consequences of a cognitive approach to religion.

1. Cognitive diversity in religious representations

That we take a cognitive route, influenced by developments in psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence and neuro-physiology, has some general consequences that must be emphasized at the outset:

[1] It means that we study processes that underlie people's conscious thoughts, yet are usually inaccessible to consciousness. For instance, research in psycho-linguistics shows how natural language understanding requires automatic processes that are completely inaccessible to introspection.

[2] It implies that claims about cultural representations should be based on independent experimental evidence. For instance, if we say that religious representations answer certain needs of the human mind or are constrained by particular features of the mind, we need independent evidence for the existence of these needs or properties.

[3] It may result in re-drawing what seem to us obvious boundaries and categories. For instance, it seems to us that there is such a thing as "religion", that we can find in diverse cultures. It may be the case that religion is in fact a cognitive motley, each part of which is transmitted in a specific way, so that the unified conceptual package of "a religion" is largely an illusion.

The last point is particularly important to cognitive studies. If we consider the mental representations involved in what we usually call religion, we observe that they belong to several different types or "repertoires", which may well have very different properties. "Religion" in the ordinary sense combines (among other things) at least five different domains of representations, to do with (i) the existence and specific powers of supernatural entities, (ii) a particular set of moral rules, (iii) notions of group identity ("our" religion is not "theirs"), (iv) types of actions (rituals but also daily routines or taboos) and sometimes (v) particular types of experience and associated emotional states (the main focus of W. James's psychology of religion). Now there is no reason to think that all these repertoires are represented or acquired in the same way. To take a distant analogy, consider natural language again: acquiring our mother tongue requires that we acquire a particular phonology and a particular syntax. Now these are represented in very different ways in the mind, they involve different specialized areas of the brain, and the acquisition process is very different for these two aspects. So, in

the same way, it may be the case that we acquire and transmit a religious ontology in a way that is unrelated to the way we acquire and represent a religious morality, and so on. Obviously, connections are then established between these types of representations, but we should not take for granted that “religion” is a unitary cognitive phenomenon.

I have another reason for insisting on this point. If we examine each of these different “repertoires” of religious representations, it is quite obvious that all of them also appear in non-religious representations. A religious ontology stipulates that there are specific agents with special causal powers; but we have a host of ontological assumptions about the existence and causal powers of various types of objects and agents in the world, as well as all sorts of concepts for fictional agents and objects with particular properties. There are specific moralities transmitted in a religious context, but morality extends beyond that and many moral rules and conventions are outside the scope of religion. There are religion-based concepts of ethnicity, but also many types of ethnic identities not founded on other criteria. There are religious rituals, but also non-religious ones. Religious experience, if it is specific at all, could be compared to other types of private experience, not all of which have religious content.

It may be the case, then, that in each of these “repertoires”, the cognitive processes underlying religious representations have more to do with non-religious concepts in the same “repertoire”, than they have with religious ones in other repertoires. To take a central question, the way we acquire and transmit a religious morality may have more to do, from a cognitive viewpoint, with the way we acquire and transmit morality in general than with other aspects of religion. This may seem odd, since religious morality is presented to us as a direct consequence of the existence of particular supernatural agents and of their wishes. However, remember point [1] above: the actual cognitive processes involved in acquisition and representation may be quite different from what they seem to conscious reflection.

In this paper, I will pursue these questions in the limited domain of *religious ontologies*, that is, mental representations concerning the existence (and causal powers) of various supernatural entities. I will try to show, in accordance with the points above, [1] that religious ontologies are not exhausted by what people can consciously report as their “religious beliefs”, [2] that there is experimental evidence to show how they are actually acquired and represented, and [3] that religious ontologies are parasitic on non-religious ontological

assumptions, so that it makes no sense to study people's religious concepts in this domain unless we have a good description of their non-religious concepts for everyday beings and objects.

2. Religious ontologies: a concept-based approach

There is undeniable cultural diversity in religious representations. This is why we will start from the assumption that cross-cultural diversity should be a starting-point for the systematic study of religious representations rather than an afterthought. The variety of religious representations to be found in the world is an advantage as well as a challenge for cognitive studies. Consider supernatural agents for instance. In many societies there are several gods, in others there are no gods at all, or both gods and spirits, or ghosts only, etc.

This cross-cultural diversity does not entail that religious concepts are the product of an unconstrained form of imagination. Cultural representations in general are widespread because, all else being equal, they are more easily acquired, stored or transmitted than others (Durham: 1991; Sperber: 1985; Sperber: 1996), and an account of religious representations requires an explanation of their cognitive salience (Bloch: 1985; Whitehouse: 1992). If we focus on the recurrent patterns underlying the apparent diversity of religious representations, it appears that they are constrained by a small number of principles, which are part and parcel of normal, everyday cognition and not specifically religious in nature (Boyer 1994b; Lawson and McCauley: 1990).

The ontological assumptions found in most religious systems, in otherwise diverse environments, generally constitute direct violations of intuitive expectations that inform everyday cognition (Boyer 1994a). Consider some widespread forms of religious ontology. Spirits and ghosts are commonly represented as intentional agents whose physical properties go against the ordinary physical qualities of embodied agents. They go through physical obstacles, move instantaneously, etc. Gods, too, have such counter-intuitive physical qualities, as well as non-standard biological features; they are immortal, they feed on the smell of sacrificed foods, etc. Also, religious systems the world over include assumptions about particular artifacts, statues for instance, which are counter-intuitive in that they are endowed with intentional psychological processes. They can perceive states of affairs, form beliefs, have intentions, etc.

Anthropologists are sometimes tempted to say that these religious assumptions are perfectly "intuitive" to the people who hold them, but this is not based on any experimental evidence, is directly contradicted by everyday life in the cultures concerned, and in any case would make it very mysterious, that the people concerned find their religious notions so fascinating. In the precise sense used here, the term "counter-intuitive" means that religious concepts include some assumptions that violate ordinary intuitive expectations of the kind that is routinely described in cognitive (and developmental) accounts of "naive physics" or "naive biology" or "theory of mind". An important result of experimental studies of early conceptual development that a number of broad ontological categories correspond to specific principles, which (i) orient the child's attention to particular perceptual cues for each ontological domain, (ii) constrain the child's inferences derived from those cues and (iii) develop in relatively autonomous developmental trajectories. As Gelman puts it, "the initial principles of a domain establish the boundary conditions for the stimuli that are candidates for feeding coherent development in that domain" (R. Gelman 1990: 83). This is observed at the level of categories such as PERSON, ANIMAL, PLANT or ARTEFACT. Clearly, categorical discriminations along ontological lines are present from infancy, as concerns PERSON as opposed to the rest (Morton and Johnson 1991; Meltzoff: 1994), ARTEFACTS v. NON-ARTEFACTS (Mandler and Bauer 1989; Mandler, Bauer and McDonough 1991). At 18 months "children do not differentiate dogs from horses or rabbits in the same way that they differentiate dogs from sea or air animals" (Mandler, Bauer and McDonough 1991: 290). The identification of objects as belonging to such categories as PERSON, ANIMAL, PLANT or ARTEFACT triggers specific forms of inference which focus on particular aspects of the objects considered and only handle information pertinent to that aspect. This is clearly visible in such domains as the representation of number (Gallistel and Gelman 1992; Antell & Keating 1983; Starkey, Spelke and Gelman 1990), the understanding of the physical properties of solid objects (Baillargeon: 1987; Baillargeon and Hanco-Summers 1990; Spelke: 1990), biological inferences (Gelman 1986; Becker and Ward, 1991), and the representation of mental states (Baron-Cohen: 1995). Some of these categories and principles appear very early: intuitive physical expectations about the behaviour of solid objects can be observed from the first months of life. Other domains take more time to develop, like the various systems that govern our inferences about other people's cognitive processes, which become gradually more complex between

1 and 5. Intuitive biology emerges rather slowly, perhaps as a result of development in other domains.

The main conclusion from these studies is that, by the age of 6, the various domain-specific principles are in place and govern people's expectations about physical, biological and cognitive aspects of their natural and social environment. These expectations are automatic, they are produced by principles that are largely inaccessible to consciousness, and they do not seem to be much changed by subsequent development and experience. Religious concepts seem to include representations that go against the expectations delivered by this universal "intuitive ontology".

One should not confuse what is intuitively counter-intuitive from a cognitive viewpoint, with what is perceived as unfamiliar. Some religious assumptions can become part of a cultural "routine"; this is orthogonal, to the question whether they violate tacit, intuitive ontological principles. Most important, when I say that some religious assumptions are counter-intuitive, I do not mean to suggest that they are not taken as *real* by most people who hold them. On the contrary, it is precisely insofar as a certain situation violates intuitive principles *and* is taken as real that it may become particularly salient. It is the conjunction of these two assumptions that gives such representations their *attention-grabbing* potential.

Religious concepts, then, are constrained by their connection to what could be called an "intuitive ontology": a set of broad categories about the types of things to be found in the world, together with quasi-theoretical assumptions about their causal powers. This provides a first approximation for the range of religious representations likely to be "successful" in cultural transmission. Cultural representations need cognitive salience to be acquired at all, and a violation of intuitive principles provides just that. The idea of spirits being in several places at once would *not* be counter-intuitive, if there was not a stable expectation that agents are solid objects and that solid objects occupy a unique point in space. In the same way, the notion of statues that listen to one's prayers is attention-grabbing only against a background of expectations about artifacts, including the assumption that they do *not* have mental capacities.

Beyond this, religious representations are further constrained by intuitive ontology. Counter-intuitive elements do not exhaust the representation of religious entities and agencies. For instance, ghosts are construed as physically counter-intuitive. At the same time, however, people routinely produce a large number of inferences about what the ghosts or spirits *know* or *want*, which are based on a straightforward extension of "theory of mind"-

expectations to the spirits. Indeed, most inferences people produce about religious agencies are straightforward consequences of activating those intuitive principles that are *not* violated in the representation of those supernatural entities. These background assumptions are generally tacit and provide the inferential potential without which cultural representations are very unlikely to be transmitted.

This framework makes certain predictions about the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition and representation of religious concepts, as well as about the cultural consequences of these processes. In particular, I will centre on the following consequences of the model:

[1] The cultural recurrence of religious concepts should mirror their counter-intuitive nature. That is, all else being equal, we should expect recurrent religious concepts to include combinations of counter-intuitive assumptions and intuitive background as described above.

[2] If counter-intuitive assumptions are found in widespread religious concepts, there must be some cognitive mechanism that makes them easier to acquire, store or transmit than other assumptions.

[3] The counter-intuitive part of religious concepts is only the overt, accessible part of these representations. In order to acquire those concepts and draw inferences about religious agents or entities, people in fact activate a background of intuitive assumptions which are in accordance with their usual expectations.

In the following sections, I briefly discuss anthropological evidence for [1] and direct cognitive evidence for [2] and [3].

3. Evidence for cultural spread of counter-intuitive concepts

This model implies that the variety of recurrent religious ontological assumptions should be very limited. Intuitive ontologies produce specific expectations that apply to a limited number of broad ontological categories, so that the number of assumptions that directly violate them should be limited too. Moreover, not all violations are compatible with maintaining an intuitive background that supports inferences about the agencies postulated.

Indeed, despite their apparent diversity, religious beliefs are in fact based on a very limited set of ontological assumptions, combining a few ontological categories: PERSON, ANIMAL, ARTEFACT, NATURAL OBJECT and PLANT as well as a few domain-specific infer-

ence engines, to do with intentional states, biological processes and physical reality. This would produce such recurrent combinations as PERSON with counter-intuitive physical properties (e.g. spirits, etc.), PERSON with counter-intuitive biological properties (e.g. immortal, or with particular reproduction, etc.), PERSON with counter-intuitive psychological properties (e.g. zombies or possessed people), ANIMAL with counter-intuitive biological properties (e.g. metamorphosed into other animals) and ARTEFACT with intentional properties (e.g. thinking statues). I showed elsewhere that these constraints from intuitive ontology result in a very limited “catalogue” of possible religious assumptions which, even including rather rare combinations, does not amount to more than fifteen combinations of ontological category and violation (or counter-intuitive transfer) of domain specific assumptions (Boyer 1998). The generative principles that produce this catalogue are entirely derived from the main ontological categories and domain specific inference modules generally identified in the psychological literature. Yet these categories generate a list that is fairly representative of the most common forms of religious ontological assumptions. This, obviously, applies to the ontological assumptions underlying religious representations, not to the specific set of “surface” features that accompany them. For instance, the principle of intentional agents with counter-intuitive physical properties is widespread the world over; but in each cultural environment it is accompanied with detailed, and highly variable explicit notions about the characteristics and behaviour of those agents.

In the absence of precise and reliable statistical data, it would be difficult to go further as regards the relative spread or distribution of religious ontologies. However, it seems clear that:

[1] some of these combinations (the SPIRIT and ARTEFACT WITH COGNITIVE POWERS types in particular) are so widespread that it would be difficult to find human groups that do not have them;

[2] these and other types of religious ontologies always require some background input from intuitive ontology;

[3] one does not find culturally widespread ontologies that do not combine such categories as PERSON, ANIMAL, ARTEFACT, PLANT with violation or transfer of intuitive psychology, intuitive biology or intuitive physics;

[4] when scholarly elites put forth a version of religious ontology that deviate from these combinations, these are generally “normalized” by popular representations towards one of the cases described here. This is a familiar phenomenon. A scholarly elite can devise representations that go far beyond the violation-transfer sys-

tem described here, and for instance postulate an ontology that contradicts intuitions of identity (in the case of the Holy Trinity) or assumptions about agency (in the case of the non-anthropomorphic universe of literate Buddhism). Such constructions are transmitted in their own right through scholarly transmission, and routinely ignored (in Christianity) or supplemented (in the case of Buddhism) by popular culture.

To sum up, the distribution of cultural representations seems to confirm the prediction that, all else being equal, representations that combine counter-intuitive principles and intuitive background in the way described here are more likely than others to be acquired, stored and transmitted, thereby giving rise to those roughly stable sets commonly described as "cultural". This is where we must give an account of the process that would lead to such differences in transmission. In the rest of this paper, I will show that this model is supported by experimental psychological evidence.

4. Recall for counter-intuitive concepts

The present model of religious concepts predicts that counter-intuitive elements are better recalled or recognized than representations that conform to intuitive expectations. However, one of the few direct studies of recall for such material, Bartlett's famous study of transmission chains for mythical stories, seemed to suggest precisely the opposite. For Bartlett, subjects tend to normalize stories to familiar "schemata" and discard their strange or exotic elements (Bartlett: 1932). So one could think that whatever conflicts with "schemata" or intuitive ontology would be discarded too. However, Bartlett's studies were very limited and could confound two causes for poor recall and distortion. The subjects might have discarded particular items from exotic stories either because they were culturally alien or because they were counter-intuitive, and Bartlett's conclusions about "schemata" do not distinguish between these two aspects. More systematic studies by Barrett (1996) and Boyer (1994b) show that, once effects of cultural familiarity are controlled for, counter-intuitive items do produce better recall. Both studies used quasi-stories in which a variety of items (PERSONS, ARTEFACTS, ANIMALS) were described as exhibits in an inter-galactic museum. Barrett studied transmission of items on three "generations" of subjects. Recalled items from each generation subjects were used as stimulus material for the next generation. The stimuli came in three "levels" of oddity: [1] conforming to intuitive expectations, [2] non-

standard but not counter-intuitive and [3] counter-intuitive (in the precise sense given above). In all categories, Barrett found a significant transmission advantage for counter-intuitive items [3] over standard ones [1], and in the PERSON category there was an advantage of counter-intuitive over both standard [1] and non-standard [2].

With slightly different stimuli in a similar format, Boyer chose to measure immediate recall after a distraction task, without further transmission to other generations of subjects (This is mainly because recall and transmission results are not really different. The transmission over n generations only amplifies effects of recall that can be seen in each generation's recall performance). The goal of Boyer's study was to measure the differences between various types of counter-intuitive properties for different categories. A first study included standard items [standard assumptions or SAs], as well as *violations* of intuitive expectations [assumption violations or AVs] (e.g. artefacts that have no shadow or suddenly disappear, people with extraordinary cognitive powers). In both types of items the properties were applied to the appropriate category of objects: the artefacts had physical properties, the persons had psychological properties. The study shows a significant advantage of AVs over SAs, with an interaction with category type, the counter-intuitive physical properties of ARTEFACTS being slightly better recalled than counter-intuitive psychological properties for PERSONS. A second study tested standard items against *transfers* of intuitive expectations [assumption transfers or ATs]. Here all properties were in conformity with intuitive expectations, except that they were either applied to the appropriate category (a person with a psychological property) or to the inappropriate one (an artefact with a psychological property). This, too, showed a significant advantage of ATs over SAs, again with a category effect for ARTEFACTS. In both studies, then, counter-intuitive items seemed to carry a significant advantage in terms of recall over control items.

These controlled studies did not use material presented as "religious" and post-study questionnaires showed that subjects did not assimilate them to religious concepts. The questionnaires also showed that cultural familiarity had little effect on recall. For each item used, subjects were asked whether they had ever encountered such notions in films, stories, dreams, etc. There was no correlation between this and recall performance. On the other hand, there was a strong, not really surprising correlation between recall and explicit judgments of "oddity" about the items.

There is evidence, then, that counter-intuitive assumptions of the type found in religious ontologies may have a higher cultural survival potential than other representations simply because of a better recall potential. This would provide the causal mechanism for the fact that concepts that include these assumptions are found as recurrent features of religious ontologies, as they are less likely than other concepts to be discarded in the course of cultural transmission. Obviously, one should want to go further and explain this significant advantage for recall. There are two possible explanations here. One is that counter-intuitive items are recalled better simply because they are surprising and differ from everyday experience, and therefore require more processing than standard items. This would seem the simplest and most economical explanation. But it has problematic consequences for our model of religious concepts. If counter-intuitive items are recalled (and transmitted) simply because they are odd or unfamiliar, one would expect all sorts of variations in cultural representations based on such assumptions. This is because there are indefinitely many ways in which a representation can diverge from everyday experience. As a result, we should find indefinitely many varieties of salient religious ontologies. But this is not the case, and we find recurrent features in religious concepts. Also, as I said above, people in most groups over-learn the religious ontology that is common in their cultural environment; they do not find it surprising, yet that is no obstacle to its transmission. An alternative explanation, in the line of the present model, is that *particular* combinations of counter-intuitive and intuitive assumptions are better because of the combination of salience and inferential potential described above.

This is rather difficult to test, but a first step is to show that "surprise" or oddity effects can be excluded as an explanation. Barrett's first study (see above) indicated that oddity is probably not the main factor, since it showed differences in recall between counter-intuitive items and non-standard but not counter-intuitive ones. To show that mere oddity is really not the main factor here, Boyer designed another study, in which standard and counter-intuitive items were compared to items that are even stranger than the counter-intuitive ones. This was done by using four types of items: [a] standard, [b] violations, [c] transfers, [d] combinations of violations and transfers [AVTs]. For instance, one could have [a] artefacts with a single location in space, [b] artefacts that disappear every now and then, [c] artefacts that have offspring, and [d] artefacts that have offspring of a different 'species'. The [d] type combines activation of the wrong inference domain (biology in this case) for the category

(ARTEFACT) and the wrong inference within that domain (things that have a biology normally have offspring of the same species). The point of this design was that, if mere strangeness or distance from experience was the factor driving recall, then the subjects' performance would be best for [d] items [AVTs], which were twice removed, as it were, from intuitive ontology. On the other hand, if certain particular types of combinations were particularly salient, this two-fold oddity should give those items no special advantage in terms of recall. This is what the results indicate. AVT items showed no recall advantage, quite the opposite; recall for such items was significantly lower than for either assumption violations [b] or assumption transfers [c], although it remained higher than for standard items [a].

5. The intuitive background: “Theological Correctness”

Let me now turn to another prediction from the model. As I said above, recurrent religious concepts comprise a salient, accessible counter-intuitive part, but also an intuitive background which consists of all relevant expectations from intuitive ontology that are *not* explicitly violated by the overt religious concept. We have lots of anecdotal evidence that this is the case, and my summary of anthropological data above used that. We rarely observe religious ontologies that do not include this tacit background: imagine for instance spirits that are located nowhere, or an omnipotent God who can perceive nothing at all, or the idea that ghosts become inanimate blades of grass or kitchen knives, etc. To take less extreme examples, this requirement of inferential potential also explains the *relative* spread of religious assumptions. The notion of a spirit (an agent with (i) strange physics and (ii) standard psychological properties) is symmetrical to that of a zombie (an agent with standard physics and counter-intuitive intentional properties). Although both notions are counter-intuitive, the former is much more widespread than the latter, probably because ascribing standard psychological properties to a religious agent affords much more inferential potential than construing it as a solid object. In all cultural environments where one finds notions of “zombies”, these non-intentional agents are invariably construed as “remote-controlled” by other agents, which invariably turn out to have all the usual features of intentional agents as construed by intuitive “theory of mind”.

However, since this intuitive part of the religious concept is not accessible, we cannot really be sure that it plays the role described in this model, namely driving inferences, unless we have precise

experimental evidence to that effect. What we want to show is that, unbeknown to the subjects, their inferences (e.g. that a given feature of the religious agent entails another feature, or that the agent does this because of that reason, etc.) and their predictions are in fact driven by background assumptions which are not accessible or culturally transmitted.

A dramatic illustration of this phenomenon is a study by J. Barrett and F. Keil of concepts of “God” and other counter-intuitive agents in both believers and non-believers (Barrett & Keil, 1996). Barrett & Keil first elicited explicit descriptions of God. These generally centre on counter-intuitive claims for extraordinary cognitive powers. Most subjects describe God as an agent who can perceive everything at once, focus his attention on multiple events simultaneously, and so on. The subjects were then tested on their recall of simple stories involving God in various scenarios where these capacities are relevant. On the whole, subjects tended to distort the stories in ways that were directly influenced by their tacit, intuitive principles of psychology. For instance, they recalled (wrongly) that in the story God attended to some problem *and then* turned his attention to another, or that God *could not perceive* some state of affairs because of an obstacle, although such information was not in the original stories. This is particularly impressive in that intuitive principles that specify limitations on cognitive powers (e.g. perceptions are hindered by obstacles between the object and the perceiving subject) are diametrical to the subjects’ explicit beliefs about God. The framework summarized above would explain how such contradictions are possible. The two types of representations are distinct and contribute to different aspects of the representation of religious categories: attention-grabbing salience for counter-intuitive assumptions and inferential potential for tacit intuitive assumptions. Incidentally, it is striking that neither the explicit concept nor the inferences produced by subjects show any difference correlated with the subjects’ particular faith, denomination or even general attitude towards religion. Atheists, Hindus and Christians of various denominations have similar performance. The study was replicated by Barrett in India with Hindu participants, using a combination of Hindu deities and novel counter-intuitive agents, with similar results.

Barrett & Keil use the term “theological correctness” to denote this tendency for subjects explicitly to entertain a description of supernatural agents that is not actually used in representing or predicting their behaviour. This limiting-case shows that spontaneous assumptions from intuitive ontology are constantly produced to support inferences about religious entities. This applies, *a fortiori*, to

cases in which there is no direct conflict between the explicit and the tacit part of the religious concept, such as the more general case of spirit-concepts or artefacts with cognitive powers.

6. Is “religion” an integrated cognitive domain?

To sum up, there is evidence, both anthropological and psychological, for a description of religious ontologies as based on a limited, salient, counter-intuitive violation or transfer of expectations. As I said above, recall is only one aspect of cultural survival, albeit a crucial one. I do not want to suggest that cultural representations are simply a function of memorability. The point here is more modest; differences in recall can cause differences of cultural survival in a way that accounts for *some* recurrent cultural representations. There are many other aspects of transmission beyond recall, and we have anecdotal evidence that some aspects can even override memory factors. Jokes for instance are notoriously difficult to recall, yet seem extremely stable as a set of cultural representations. They can be construed as the analog of germs that have few physiological effects yet are extremely contagious. In this case it is fast transmission (and motivation) rather than recall that results in a transmission advantage.

Beyond these simple effects, one must remember that particular modes of transmission can impose strong constraints on the concepts transmitted. Consider for instance the contrast between religious concepts acquired through salient, rich sensory experiences such as initiation rituals, and those acquired through rote-learning and systematic teaching. These are not simply different routes towards the same conceptual structures. They seem to have a direct influence on the representations acquired and their organization, because different kinds of experience activate different memory processes (*ref Whitehouse). So the salience and inference constraints described here are only one dimension in the complex dynamics of acquisition. Still, there is definite evidence that, all else being equal, religious concepts tend to display particular combinations of salient assumptions and background inferences in a way that constrains religious ontologies.

The conclusions and conjectures summed up above are all centered on the domain of religious ontology: claims about the existence and causal powers of various supernatural entities. I tried to show that religious concepts are parasitic on intuitive ontology. They are given in the cultural input but (i) their salience depends on their

counter-intuitive nature, relative to prior expectations and (ii) they are always complemented by default assumptions imported from intuitive ontology. So it would make little sense to describe (or study) the development of religious ontologies whilst ignoring the development of intuitive ontology. The particular way in which religious ontology develops depends on the wider development of ontological categories.

Now “religion” does not reduce to religious ontologies. Other conceptual “repertoires”, as it were, are involved in religious representations. As I said at the beginning, religious concepts also activate representations of moral rules, of group-identity and of private experience. I would contend that: (i) in each of these repertoires we may well find a similar “parasitic” structure, where religious concepts can only be explained against a broader background, and (ii) there is no overwhelming evidence than the various repertoires are strongly integrated into a unified religious domain. Morality is a domain where specific cultural input seems to activate general principles to do for example with a distinction between habit and convention and between convention and moral obligation (see e.g. (Turiel, 1983)). Religious morality does not develop differently; it only differs from the non-religious kind in making explicit claims about the connections between morality and supernatural agents, or about the origin of moral imperatives. To turn to group-identity, concepts of social categories and ethnic differences are informed by specific principles with a specific developmental path (Hirschfeld, 1996). Group-identity founded on religious criteria, as opposed to kinship or locality, does not seem to have specific features in that respect. A similar point could be made for the acquisition of cultural routines and rituals, or for the representation of private experience. In each of these “repertoires”, then, it seems that the relevant explanation for conceptual structure and development involves the repertoire as a whole, not just its “religious” sub-part.

Further, as I said above, there is no evidence that all these repertoires are strongly integrated, even though they are often presented, especially in literate traditions, as part of a unified package. That is to say, a “religion” is presented as a coherent system in which morality for instance is supported by belief in sanction from supernatural agents, as well as connections with group identity, specific practices and specific experiences. There is good anthropological and historical evidence that these connections between repertoires are *ex post facto* rationalizations rather than the expression of actual inferential links. The historical record shows that ontology may change without disrupting either morality or group-identity, or con-

versely a new morality can be established whilst preserving ontology, and so on.

7. Conclusions: Methodology in the cognitive study of religion

All this points to the conclusion that there is no domain-specialization in “religious thinking”. That is to say, we have no good reason to think that there is a distinct domain of “religious cognition” with particular functional characteristics. Obviously, we do not mean to suggest that there is no such thing as “religion”. The notion does denote a real social and cultural phenomenon, but this does not entail that religion is cognitively integrated into a domain. To take a distant analogy, “trees” are a distinct kind of reality for all sorts of economic or ecological or aesthetic purposes; yet “tree” is not a sound biological category.

This question of “domains” and integration is not just a technical issue for cognitive psychologists. It is of great importance for the study of religious concepts, and highlights some important differences between a cognitive study of religious transmission as a cultural phenomenon on the one hand, and traditional “psychology of religion” on the other. First, as Watts & Williams put it (Watts & Williams, 1988: 1), psychologists “have often chosen to study the *externals* of religion”, such as explicit claims to belief, “religiosity scales”, connections between personality types and religious commitment or between religious belief and social relations, and so on. Most of these studies transfer to religion general concerns and methods of social and personality psychology, and therefore leave aside the general cognitive processes involved in religious concepts. However, even when this research considers cognitive phenomena as such, it seems to me that the psychology of religion may perpetuate misleading notions of religious concepts. A good illustration is Watts and Williams’ own general essay on “religious knowing” (Watts & Williams, 1988), that makes a strong case for the fact that religious representations should not be considered as *a priori* different from other conceptual domains, and aims to highlight “essential similarities between religious knowing and other everyday forms of knowing” (Watts & Williams, 1988) 38). Watts & Williams for instance evaluate the relevance of different cognitive frameworks (prototype theory and metaphor) to an understanding of the (mental) concept of God (Watts & Williams, 1988): 128ff.). They start from the assumption that “religious knowledge is the knowledge of

God" and conclude that "religious knowing involves, not so much coming to know a separate religious world, as coming to know the religious dimensions of the everyday world" (Watts & Williams, 1988): 151).

Despite suggestive descriptions and explanations, this type of work illustrates a general problem in the field of "psychology of religion", namely that the authors only consider one particular tradition; more disturbingly, they seem to take for granted certain aspects of religious thought which are in fact particular to that tradition. The variety of religious representations to be found in the world is an advantage as well as a challenge for cognitive studies. Consider supernatural agents for instance. In many societies there are several gods, in others there are no gods at all, or both gods and spirits, or ghosts only, etc. One could argue that Western Christian data can be subsequently compared to other cultural contexts. However, this particular focus may conceal some aspects of religious concepts that are crucial to their acquisition and transmission (see Pyysianen, this volume, for consequences of this point for a comparative study of religion). This is why my first methodological conclusion is that a psychology of religion should be prescribed a heavy dose of cultural anthropological material:

- [1] Cross-cultural diversity should be a starting-point for the study of religious representations rather than an afterthought.

The main reason for that prescription is that an exclusive focus on Western notions, because of the particular features of the traditions concerned, suggests that there is an autonomous domain of religious cognition, and that its features are generally accessible to consciousness. These two premises are less than altogether plausible, as I tried to show here. Consider the comparative study of ontological assumptions in various religious systems, a traditional concern of cultural anthropology as well as the history of religion. If, as cognitive evidence seems to show, religious concepts are really parasitic upon a universal system of intuitive expectations, it follows that we cannot either describe or explain religious ontologies in isolation. For instance, it makes little sense to describe some people as believing in ghosts who monitor the behaviour of the living, if we do not evaluate to what extent those ghosts are in fact represented in accordance to everyday expectations about intentional agents. An isolated study of religious ontologies would provide a catalogue of oddities and leave out the background that makes it possible to acquire these oddities and find them quite natural. The same point applies to the study of religious morality, as I suggested above. So

we cannot really explain the acquisition and transmission of religious morality without importing most of our explanation from the acquisition and transmission of morality in general. As a second general methodological principle, then, I would submit that:

- [2] All repertoires of religious representations should be studied in the context of the wider, non-religious domain that supports their acquisition.

Moreover, I suggested above that the different religious repertoires are not causally integrated. The argument here is that ontology and morality and group-identity and ritual are all transmitted along specific “tracks” of cultural transmission, which are more or less independent. This leaves us with the question, How are those different repertoires integrated in the individual mind of a participant in a religion? After all, people do not keep these different repertoires entirely separate. On the contrary, they seem to establish connections between these different aspects, and to use such connections when trying to persuade others of the validity of their religious assumptions. Elsewhere I suggested that these connections typically take the form of abductive explanations, providing connections between assumptions that are already there rather than deducing some of them from the others (Boyer 1994b). That is, once people have a certain ontology and a certain morality for instance, they are likely to produce individual, conjectural explanations that account for one in the context of the other. There is some anthropological evidence that this is the case, but evidence is scarce, leading to my third methodological point:

- [3] The integration of religious representations should be studied as a matter of individual cognitive possibility, rather than as a “culturally given” or “theologically given” fact.

In other words, that (i) people represent various pieces of a religious system and that (ii) these pieces are integrated in an official theology, does not entail that people actually integrate the pieces in accordance with that theology.

This last point leads to the idea that explanations for the transmission of religious concepts must use independent evidence. In other words,

- [4] All claims about the “religious mind” are claims about the mind, and therefore should be reducible to empirically supported (or at least experimentally testable) claims about neural function.

As I tried to show in this paper, some aspects of religious ontologies are already studied in this way, allowing us to make definite predictions about the spread of certain religious concepts. This may seem a reductionistic strategy, and indeed it is, as are most explanations in the empirical sciences.

References

- Baillargeon, R.**
1987 Young infants' reasoning about the physical and spatial characteristics of a hidden object. *Cognitive Development* 2: 179–200.
- Baillargeon, R., and S. Hanko-Summers**
1990 Is the top object adequately supported by the bottom object? Young infants' understanding of support relations. *Cognitive Development* 5: 29–53.
- Barrett, J. L.**
1996 Anthropomorphism, Intentional Agents, and Conceptualizing God. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Cornell University
- Barrett, J. L., and F. C. Keil**
1996 Conceptualizing a non-natural entity: Anthropomorphism in God concepts. *Cognitive Psychology* 31: 219–247.
- Baron-Cohen, Simon**
1995 Mindblindness. An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bartlett, Frederick Charles**
1932 Remembering. A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Becker, A. H., and T. B. Ward**
1991 Children's use of shape in extending novel labels to animate objects: Identity versus postural change. *Cognitive Development* 6: 3–16.
- Bloch, M.**
1985 From Cognition to Ideology. In: Richard Fardon (ed.), Power and Knowledge. Anthropological and Sociological Approaches. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.
- Boyer, Pascal**
1994a Cognitive constraints on cultural representations: Natural ontologies and religious ideas. In: Lawrence A. Hirschfeld and Susan A. Gelman (eds.), Mapping the Mind: Domain Specificity in Cognition and Culture. New York: Cambridge University Press.
1994b The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion. Berkeley: University of California Press.
1998 Cognitive Tracks of Cultural Inheritance: How Evolved Intuitive Ontology Governs Cultural Transmission. *American Anthropologist* 100: 705–712.

Durham, William H.

1991 Coevolution. Genes, Culture, and Human Diversity. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gallistel, C. R., and R. Gelman

1992 Preverbal and Verbal Counting and Computation. *Cognition* 44: 79–106.

Hirschfeld, Lawrence A.

1996 Race in the Making: Cognition, Culture and the Child's Construction of Human Kinds. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley

1990 Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mandler, J., and P. Bauer

1989 The cradle of categorization: Is the basic level basic? *Cognitive Development* 4: 247–264.

Mandler, J., P. Bauer, and L. McDonough

1991 Separating the sheep from the goats: Differentiating global categories. *Cognitive Psychology* 23: 263–298.

Meltzoff, A.

1994 Imitation, memory, and the representation of persons. *Infant Behavior and Development* 17: 83–99.

Morton, J., and M. Johnson

1991 CONSPEC and CONLERN: A two-process theory of infant face-recognition. *Psychological Review* 98: 164–81.

Spelke, E. S.

1990 Principles of object perception. *Cognitive Science* 14: 29–56.

Sperber, Dan

1985 Anthropology and Psychology. Towards an epidemiology of representations. *Man* 20: 73–89.

1996. Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Starkey, P., E. S. Spelke, and R. Gelman

1990 Numerical abstraction by human infants. *Cognition* 36: 97–127.

Turiel, Elliot

1983 The Development of Social Knowledge. Morality and Convention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Watts, Fraser, and Mark Williams

1988 The Psychology of Religious Knowing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whitehouse, Harvey

1992 Memorable religions: Transmission, codification and change in divergent Melanesian contexts. *Man* 27: 777–797.

A R M I N W . G E E R T Z

Ethnohermeneutics in a Postmodern World

During the last three decades a growing amount of literature has accumulated that, to quote from the title of a recent collection of essays, can aptly be summed up with the words: *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989).¹ This literature addresses Western literature and science and definitively rejects much of that literature and its stereotypes. It shows how power is at the center of Western literature, and it therefore addresses issues of hegemony, language, place and displacement, racism and sexism, and it attempts to address a common post-colonial theory. This critical literature, sometimes extreme but usually insightful, coincided with the postmodern crisis in ethnography and other cultural sciences that have also assimilated literary theory.

Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin show in the above-mentioned book that post-colonial literary criticism appears to be taking two major paths at the moment:

On the one hand, via the reading of specific post-colonial texts and the effects of their production in and on specific social and historical contexts, and on the other, via the “revisioning” of received tropes and modes such as allegory, irony, and metaphor and the rereading of “canonical” texts in the light of post-colonial discursive practices (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989: 194).

They emphasize that post-colonial art, philosophy, and literature are no mere continuations or simple adaptations of European models but products of “profound interaction and appropriation” involving a “radical dismantling of the European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European

¹ This title is a take-off on a quote from Salman Rushdie: “...the Empire writes back to the Centre....” The first half of this paper consists of the conclusion to my essay “Can We Move Beyond Primitivism? On Recovering the Indigenous of Indigenous Religions in the Academic Study of Religion” which is slated to appear in Jacob Olupona, ed., *Beyond “Primitivism”: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*. In this paper I have developed the ethnohermeneutic approach somewhat more.

discourses". But even though the demand by post-colonial writers and thinkers for a new or recovered "pre-colonial reality" is comprehensible, it is none the less completely unachievable. As they wrote: "It is not possible to return to or to rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise."² One might add as well that it is impossible for Europeans to return to their colonial cultural hegemony (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989: 195–196).³

One of the failings of humanism is that it has been the hand-maiden of primitivism. I think that the two should be clearly separated if humanistic science is to contribute anything of value to the academy. The humanistic study of religion does not need primitivism even though the Enlightenment itself was formulated in terms of primitivism. As Carl L. Becker noted, Enlightenment philosophers were not interested in how society came to be, rather they were concerned with identifying the universal, natural man, the man who "did not exist in the world of time and place, but in the conceptual world, and who could therefore only be found by abstracting from all men in all times and all places those qualities which all men shared" (Becker 1964: 97–99; quoted in Hughes and Allen 1988: 207). Aside from the predominantly male terminology, I suggest that this is essentially what cultural sciences are all about, and it is therefore crucial for us to find ways to avoid the excesses of primitivism in our search for the universally human.

I have tried to formulate a number of theoretical and methodological approaches that might be useful to such a project. The key to these approaches is taking our dialogue partners seriously on an equal basis as mutually fallible human beings. My first approach involves what could be called an iconoclastic pedagogics which takes its point of departure in the stereotypes received from literature, movies, etc. and systematically deconstructs them ("the deconstruction of the Exotic") in our publications and teaching. Since we are dealing with very powerful social and psychological mechanisms, it is essential that this approach be followed up by a "reconstruction of the Exotic". This second stage of the process focuses on issues relevant to indigenous peoples as well as to the West, but only on the basis of accurate ethnography, authentic familiarization with the

² See the excellent reader *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Williams and Chrisman 1994).

³ See Anthony Giddens insightful analysis of modernity in Giddens 1990: 63–78.

worldviews and scriptures of the world's religions, and no-nonsense knowledge about how believers actually behave.⁴

My second approach attempts to deal directly with the issues of postmodern criticism in an effort to reconstruct a basis for scholarly consensus in a pluralistic arena. I have drawn on two similar but separate attempts.⁵ The first is being promoted by feminist anthropologist Annemiek Richters who defends the kind of postmodernism that conjures up a *new, radicalized Enlightenment* (Richters 1991).⁶ The point is "where does justice reside now that meta-narratives about progress, civilization, humanism and rationality have lost credence?" (Richters 1991, 131). I agree with her and suggest that solidarity and ethics *require* us to maintain these meta-narratives, at least in an improved version, while keeping "openness to difference and otherness". This point of view was strongly criticized during the conference on primitivism in Davis, California in 1996. It was claimed that since the Enlightenment gave philosophical credence to European war crimes, there was no sense in upholding it. And, indeed, many Enlightenment thinkers were racists and worse (see Eze 1997). The argument was also put forward in Davis that one cannot isolate the "good" values of the Enlightenment without bringing in the "bad" ones. But I disagree. If this argument held true, than what reasons could there possibly be for preserving the "good" values of indigenous cultures when many indigenous cultures have also been guilty of imperialism, racism, and genocide? Certainly their philosophies were also used to support the ideologies of war criminals. But this does not mean that their philosophies are without value. As Terry Eagleton noted, what is good about postmodernism is that it has helped "reviled and humiliated groups" to "recover something of their history and self-hood":

⁴ This program was promoted in a debate I participated in with American religious studies colleagues on the theme "As the Other Sees Us. A Conversation on the Postmodern Study of Religion" in Geertz 1994a and Geertz 1994b.

⁵ Both of these approaches are addressed in a paper I gave at the 1995 conference of the German Association for the History of Religions on "Vergleichen und Verstehen in der Religionswissenschaft" (Comparison and Understanding in the Study of Religion) in Bonn. See Geertz 1997.

⁶ As she wrote: "What they [women] should do, however, is to search for a kind of postmodernism that does not foster the pathos of the *end* of Enlightenment, but conjures up a *new, radicalized Enlightenment*" (Richters 1991: 127).

This, as I've argued, is the trend's most precious achievement; and one cannot realistically expect that those involved in a painful struggle for recognition will be much enthused right now by transfigured notions of universality, especially when these ideas spring from groups which have traditionally been their enemies.... There is indeed a bad kind of universalism; but there is a bad kind of particularism too. If Enlightenment universalism is exclusivist in practice, ethnic particularism can be exclusivist in both practice and theory. Little is to be gained by simply substituting the one for the other, though there is perhaps little to be gained either by arguing the point now (Eagleton 1996: 121).

Eagleton has also argued that much of postmodernism has sprung from or taken root in the United States and reflects "that country's most intractable political problems":

It is then perhaps a little ethnocentric of this anti-ethnocentrism, though hardly a gesture unknown to that nation, to project its own political backyard onto the world at large.... If postmodernism is a form of culturalism, it is because among other reasons it refuses to recognize that what different ethnic groups have in common socially and economically is finally more important than their cultural differences. More important for what? For the purposes of their political emancipation.... It is because of its commitment to minorities that postmodernism questions the notion of a general humanity; but it is difficult to see how some such appeal would not be necessary for defending minorities against racist assault (Eagleton 1996: 122–123).

For the record I must emphatically state that being critical of post-colonial and postmodern discourse is not an expression of capitulating to the right nor of supporting chauvinism, colonialism, racism, authoritarianism, or instrumentalism. I am, on the contrary, very much a part of postmodern discourse, but I wish to maintain a critical rationality—however problematic that might be—rather than displays of flamboyant subjectivity, self-serving ethnicity or crypto-religiosity. Following social activist Murray Bookchin, I agree that "until the current antihumanistic tendencies are subjected to serious criticism, we cannot even begin to address the more tangible problems of our time that antihumanism obscures and distorts" (Bookchin 1995: 33).⁷

⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith has expressed similar sympathies: "We cannot judge another culture by reference to ourselves [but] we may judge (both another and ourselves), if our criteria are universal "rules of reason." The anthro-

The Dutch anthropologist Annemiek Richters has similarly argued along these lines:

Those who deploy postmodernism to try to extend the project of Enlightenment and to overcome Enlightenment's one-sidedness, endeavouring to confront a wide range of contemporary problems, point out the necessity of a paradigm shift in contemporary philosophy culminating in an epistemology and a politics which acknowledge a dearth of meta-narratives and foundational guarantees but which none the less persist in formulating minimal criteria for legitimating discursive and political practices: criteria which are not exclusively practice immanent, but in part meta-practical. What we indeed require are guidelines for the normative conditions needed to support power-free discourses and to identify pseudo-cognition, pseudo-consensus and symbolic violence (Richters 1991: 133).

Those acquainted with contemporary philosophy will recognize, no doubt, that Jürgen Habermas is what she has in mind. Despite criticism from feminists of Habermas' theories (cf. Fraser 1985), Richters is convinced that his "communicative ethics or communicative rationality" will help renew the emancipation of meta-narrative in a "de-transcendentalized way" (Richters 1991: 133; see Benhabib 1985; Fraser 1985; Fraser 1986; Felski 1989).

This idea has also been proposed by the second scholar I have drawn on, namely, philosopher Albrecht Wellmer. Wellmer is of the opinion that the concepts of reason and of the autonomous subject have been illicitly drawn into the turbulence of the postmodern critique of "logocentrism" for different motives and on the basis of divergent insights (Wellmer 1985: 346). Wellmer insists that the three forms of the critique of reason and the subject should be kept separate: 1) the psychological critique of the subject; 2) the philosophical, psychological and sociological critique of instrumental or "identity-logical" reason and its subject; and 3) the language philosophical critique of "self-transparent reason and its meaning constituting subject" (Wellmer 1985: 346). Wellmer rejects the simplistic image of modernism that postmodernists have and wishes to reappropriate and transcend the democratic universalism of the Enlightenment

pology of the last century, the study of religions in the academy, has contributed to making more difficult a naive, ethnocentric formulation of the "rules of reason," but this does not require that such "rules" be denied, or suggest that we should slacken in our attempts to formulate them" (Smith 1982: 105). See his recent article "Nothing Human is Alien to Me" (1996).

and the Marxian problematic of pluralistic reason. Wellmer thus proposes his challenge:

Against the democratic universalism of bourgeois society we must object today that democracy remains unreal as long as it does not penetrate the pores of social life; against Marx and anarchism we must object that this cannot mean a state of general immediacy and harmony; against rationalism in general we must object that *neither* ultimate legitimations *nor* ultimate solutions are to be expected. But this does not mean that we dismiss *either* democratic universalism and its autonomous subject *or* the Marxian project of an autonomous society *or* reason. It means rather that we must think the moral-political universalism of the Enlightenment, the ideas of individual and collective self-determination, reason and history in a new fashion (Wellmer 1985: 360).

Postmodernism has also been criticized by post-colonial writers. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin wrote in their collection *Past the Last Post* (1991) that postmodernism and post-structuralism operate as a Euro-American western hegemony clinging to its position of global centrality (Adam and Tiffin 1991: viii).

My third approach to finding a way out of our dilemma is to promote what I call ethnohermeneutics.⁸ It is somewhat similar to dialogical anthropology in the sense formulated by anthropologists Gilles Bibeau and Ellen E. Corin whereby reliable anthropological interpretation must involve “native indigenous exegesis, dialogical ethnography, co-belonging and optimal distance” (Bibeau and Corin 1995: 6). Versions of this approach sometimes seem to be hampered by curious clichés such as the attempt to remove the so-called “omniscient third-person discourse of a solitary male” (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995: 20), or by handy, but superficial, techniques such as Dennis Tedlock’s transformation of solitary male discourse to an imagined dialogue (Tedlock 1995).

Edward Sampson’s comments in this respect are relevant here:

Dialogism is simultaneously both correct and incorrect. It is correct in leading us away from a merely self-celebratory stance and permitting us to see just how intimately intertwined self

⁸ I have formulated some of my ideas in the following articles: Geertz 1990a; Geertz 1990b; Geertz 1994a; Geertz 1994b; Geertz 1997; Geertz s.a. Furthermore, demonstrations of the method can be found in Geertz and Lomatuway’ma 1987; Geertz 1992; Geertz 1994c. I am currently working on a publication that will map out ethnohermeneutics in more detail.

and other are. Dialogism is incorrect, however, in assuming that self and other are always equal contributors to the co-constructive process. Some have more power to set the terms of co-construction than others. The history of human relationships can be seen as a playing out of this differential (Sampson 1993: 143).

The power plays he is referring to are also those of well-meaning postmodern anthropologists, for instance, who engage in monologues that are actually dialogues (Sampson 1993: 152 ff.).⁹

Another critic trying to deal with the problems of primitivism is Marjorie Perloff who argued in her article "Tolerance and Taboo: Modernist Primitivisms and Postmodernist Pieties," that we must somehow avoid the essentialization of the West that a critique of primitivism brings with it. As she wrote:

Ironically, then, we are now witnessing an increasing body of scholarship on oppressed groups that, in its zeal to track down the oppressors, reinscribes the very oppression and subordination it seeks to descry. Furthermore, such would-be oppositional discourse curiously reverts to the very binary model that post-structuralist critics have assiduously claimed to be undermining (Perloff 1995: 340).

Perloff demonstrates the problem in her critical analysis of Marianna Torgovnick's book *Gone Primitive* (1990) and Cary Nelson's book *Repression and Recovery* (1989). What seems to be political analysis of canonical works is more often than not simply the passing of moral judgment on them with concomitant absolutist notions of good and evil:

Torgovnick's root assumption is that a good writer (or ethnographer) is equivalent to a good person, and, concomitantly, that a "good" book is one that is a repository of the "right" cultural values. But, as John Guillory has recently argued, we must beware of equating "the values expressed in a work with the value of the work," of assuming that a given work is simply the "container of such and such values." (Perloff 1995: 352; Guillory 1993: 30-33).

Others, such as Terry Eagleton have criticized postmodernism for its collective amnesia and its failure to address more important issues (Eagleton 1996).

⁹ Sampson draws inspiration on this point from Fabian 1985 and Bourdieu 1977.

Ethnohermeneutics tries to widen the circle a bit by drawing its inspiration from the textual sciences and the ethnosciences. Ethnomethodology, which began in 1954 with the work of Harold Garfinkel and others, "studies the technical details of how participants in social settings use common sense to manage their membership, biographies, language, and knowledge in order to accomplish naturally organized ordinary activities", as the movement historian Pierce J. Flynn defined it (Flynn 1991: 1). Ethnomethodologists understand their movement as a "radically reflexive form of sociological inquiry", and the distinctive features of ethnomethodology are:

- 1) Indexical expressions: "Indexical expressions essentially are communicative products that depend on unstated assumptions and shared knowledge for the mutual achievement of sense. Examples are special vocabularies, referential statements, and actions that index a prior socially recognized understanding, like a handshake or a wink."
- 2) Reflexivity: "Reflexivity refers to the dynamic self-organizational tendency of social interaction to provide for its own constitution through practices of accountability and scenic display."
- 3) Membership: "Ethnomethodology places fundamental interest in what a member of a social scene or group has to know and do in order to accomplish recognized membership, performative competence, and identity. Membership stands as the key to the understanding of the other ethnomethodological features."
- 4) Accountability: "Accountability refers to members' practices of perceiving, describing, and justifying their actions to each other in the local collectivity."
- 5) Local practices and social order: "Local practices are the embodiment of membership and assemble all that is social. Ethnomethodology is the study of people's local practices and methods by which social rationality, knowledge, order, structures, and objects are artfully achieved."
- 6) Situatedness: "Situatedness refers to the radically contextual nature of human-sense-making activities. Ethnomethodological studies of social settings seek to discover how structural features are embedded in practical action and common-sense situations of choice."
- 7) The unique adequacy of methods and becoming the phenomenon: These are "methodological devices designed to orient the researcher to the fullest investigation possible of members' ordering procedures 'from within' social settings. Unique adequacy of methods refers to the condition that the highest validity is a re-

sult of the ethnomethodologists' own achieved competence in the membership domain studied."

- 8) Scenic display: "Scenic display refers to members' performative mastery of a social scene's local practices, implicit rules and knowledge, and accountability. Scenic display is the embodied totality of artful membership..." (all quotes from Flynn 1991: 27–30).¹⁰

What I am trying to envision in relation to the ethnosciences is a combination of anthropological, historical, and linguistic methods that pay close attention to theories and models proposed by indigenous thinkers. I would like to move beyond the primarily sociological interests of ethnomethodology and expand the term ethnohermeneutics to mean the bringing together of the hermeneutical horizons of the student of religion and the indigenous interpreter. The idea of this kind of interaction draws inspiration from anthropologist Anne Salmond who in a paper on cross-cultural conceptions of knowledge promoted an alternative approach to the empiricist criterion of knowledge by proposing that language is "an instrument for the negotiation of meaning, and that contexts of utterance and pre-existing knowledge are important both in saying, and in interpreting anything that is said." As she wrote:

This is an interpretive account of meaning, which applies as much to scientific language as it does to everyday talk; and it has the effect of directing our attention as anthropologists to our own interpretive activities as well as to those of others, and to the complex interactions between our interpretations, theirs and 'the real world' (Salmond 1982: 65).

The end product of these complex interactions, I suggest, will be greater than the two.¹¹

When I presented this approach at the above-mentioned Davis conference on primitivism, it was rejected as being too ethnocentric. But this reaction might have been the result of a misunderstanding. When I speak of "indigenous interpreters" and "indigenous students of [or belonging to] that religion", I am not referring to indigenous scholars. I am referring to the reflections and/or unreflected premises of believers, of the cultural bearers, of the indigenous elders and thinkers, and so on. I had not thought it necessary to stipulate that

¹⁰ These eight features have been conceptualized in a paper by Mehan, Juless-Rosette and Mehan 1984.

¹¹ This draws inspiration from the hermeneutical philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. See Gadamer 1972.

indigenous scholars are in the same position in relation to their areas of study as Western scholars are, since many of them share more or less willingly in the paradigm of Western cultural science. Many function at any rate in Western universities.

The methods used to elicit the ethnohermeneutic perspective are not new. They include fieldwork, comparison, the sifting of evidence and texts, and so on using the principles of validity, warrant, and proof. It is *by its very nature* an expression of the principles of religious criticism, relativism, and skeptical rationality—all of which are elements of the agnostic platform that Orientalist critics wish to avoid (El-Affendi 1991). But with the combined efforts of the multitude of voices and perspectives engaged in a common, self-critical scientific endeavor, I believe that the whole product will become “the third perspective”.

One of the major problems facing indigenous scholars is that they are often caught between being marginalized in relation to traditional social institutions and forms of knowledge on the one hand and to Western social institutions and forms of knowledge on the other. This situation is, in my opinion, well-suited for pursuing the ethnohermeneutic platform, since they are in effect simultaneously contingent as well as transcendent to the relative boundaries of both cultures. But very few do so because there is much deconstructive work to be done in relation to the Western bias in the cultural sciences.

Conclusion

When I first promoted the term ethnohermeneutics in 1985 at the IAHR congress in Sydney, I was trying to formulate the combination of methods necessary to the study of indigenous oral traditions in the framework of the history of religions. At the time, the hallmark methods of our field were historical, philological and comparative with a strong emphasis on texts in exotic languages and little or no interest in the social, psychological or philosophical aspects of religion and its study. Ethnohermeneutics was an appeal to be more methodologically plural in the history of religions—a consequence of this appeal is that I prefer to call the latter by the broader term “the study of religion” or *Religionswissenschaft* which is equivalent to the Danish *religionsvidenskab*. I have tried to promote this idea at various IAHR conferences and in various publications as well as partaking in formulating the Warsaw statement of 1989 which at-

tempts to redefine the history of religions in relation to the social sciences.

My second reason for taking up the term ethnohermeneutics was my dissatisfaction with the amateurish and condescending attitude towards indigenous cultures and religions widespread in many human and social sciences. Some of the greatest philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, historians, and cultural scientists are either ignorant of world history or adamantly ethnocentric.¹² Ethnohermeneutics is an appeal to professionalism in dealing with these cultures, especially in requiring the basics of the study of any other religion, namely, historical insight, linguistic knowledge and—wherever applicable—fieldwork.

My third reason for the use of the term has developed since 1985 in response to the epistemological and ethical problems that have plagued the human and social sciences. During the past 30 years, many scholars have tried to correct these weaknesses, but many have become victims of the power struggles of postcolonialism and postmodernism. Without falling victim to what Thomas J. Csordas and Janis H. Jenkins have termed “two equally virulent strains of intellectual flu that have infected academe in recent years” namely “scienceitis” (“a disorder of irrational fear that science is necessarily an instrument of oppression”) and “pomophobia” (“a disorder of irrational fear that postmodern theory will necessarily render knowledge impossible”) (Csordas and Jenkins 1997: 2). Our field, its methods, its theories and its central terms are developing and changing in response to contemporary challenges, but I suggest that we strive for balance and reasonability.

References

- Adam, Ian, and Helen Tiffin (eds.)
1991 *Past the Last Post. Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

¹² Jürgen Habermas, for instance, who is an otherwise brilliant critic of social oppression in any guise, none the less reads into contemporary Western reflection the end result of a development out of traditional, “archaic”, “mythical”, and “closed” societies (read: “primitive”) see Habermas 1987: 72–113. This is unfortunate since much of his thought on communicative action can serve to help cultural science out of its present *cul-de-sac*. See the challenges raised in Taylor 1994 edited by Amy Gutmann containing papers by Habermas and other leading social theorists.

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin**
1989 *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge.
- Becker, Carl L.**
1964 *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [1932]
- Benhabib, Seyla**
1985 The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics. *New German Critique* 12: 83–97.
- Bibeau, Gilles, and Ellen Corin**
1995 From Submission to the Text to Interpretive Violence. In: Gilles Bibeau and Ellen Corin (eds.), *Beyond Textuality: Asceticism and Violence in Anthropological Interpretation*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bookchin, Murray**
1995 *Re-enchanting Humanity. A Defense of the Human Spirit against Antihumanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism, and Primitivism*, London: Cassell.
- Bourdieu, Pierre**
1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Csordas, Thomas J., and Janis H. Jenkins**
1997 From the Editors. *Ethos* 25: 2–6.
- Eagleton, Terry**
1996 *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- El-Affendi, Abdelwahab**
1991 Studying My Movement: Social Science without Cynicism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23: 83–94.
- Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi (ed.)**
1997 *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Fabian, Johannes**
1985 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Felski, Rita**
1989 Feminist Theory and Social Change. *Theory, Culture and Society* 6: 219–241.
- Flynn, Pierce J.**
1991 The Ethnomethodological Movement: Sociosemiotic Interpretations, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. (Approaches to Semiotics, 25)
- Fraser, Nancy**
1985 What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender. *New German Critique* 12: 97–133.
1986 Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity. *Praxis International* 5: 425–530.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg

- 1972 *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.

Geertz, Armin W.

- 1990a *The Study of Indigenous Religions in the History of Religions*. In Witold Tyloch (ed.), *Studies on Religions in the Context of the Social Sciences: Methodological and Theoretical Relations*; pp. 31–43. Warsaw: Polish Society for the Science of Religions.
- 1990b *Hopi Hermeneutics: Ritual Person among the Hopi Indians of Arizona*. In Hans G. Kippenberg, Yme B. Kuiper and Andy F. Sanders (eds.), *Concepts of Person in Religion and Thought*; pp. 309–335. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- 1992 *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*. Knebel: Brunbakke.
- 1994a *On Reciprocity and Mutual Reflection in the Study of Native American Religions*. *Religion* 24: 1–7.
- 1994b *Critical Reflections on the Postmodern Study of Religion*. *Religion* 24: 16–22.
- 1994c *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 1997 *Hermeneutics in Ethnography: Lessons for the Study of Religion*. In: Hans-J. Klimkeit (Hrsg.), *Vergleichen und Verstehen in der Religionswissenschaft*; pp. 53–70. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- s. a. *Global Perspectives on Methodology in the Study of Religion*. In: Armin W. Geertz and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), *Perspectives on Method and Theory in the Study of Religion: Adjunct Proceedings of the XVIITH Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*, Mexico City, 1995. [forthcoming]

Geertz, Armin W., and Michael Lomatuway'ma

- 1987 *Children of Cottonwood: Piety and Ceremonialism in Hopi Indian Puppetry*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (American Tribal Religion, 12)

Giddens, Anthony

- 1990 *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Guillory, John

- 1993 *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Habermas, Jürgen

- 1981 *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*; vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hughes, Richard T., and C. Leonard Allen (eds.)

- 1988 *Illusions of Innocence. Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

Mannheim, Bruce and Dennis Tedlock

- 1995 Introduction. In: Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim (eds.), *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*; pp. 1–32. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Mehan, Hugh, Bennetta Jules-Rosette and Gerald Platt

- 1984 Perspectives on Ethnomethodology. [ms., University of California, San Diego]

Nelson, Cary

- 1989 Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910–1945. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Perloff, Marjorie

- 1995 Tolerance and Taboo: Modernist Primitivisms and Postmodernist Pieties. In: Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*; pp. 339–354. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Richters, Annemiek

- 1991 Fighting Symbols and Structures: Postmodernism, Feminism and Women's Health. In: Lorraine Nencel and Peter Pels (eds.), *Constructing Knowledge: Authority and Critique in Social Science*; pp. 123–144. London: Sage Publications.

Salmond, Anne

- 1982 Theoretical Landscapes on Cross-Cultural Conceptions of Knowledge. In: David Parkin (ed.), *Semantic Anthropology*; pp. 65–87. London: Academic Press. (A. S. A. Monographs, 22)

Sampson, Edward E.

- 1993 Celebrating the Other: A Dialogic Account of Human Nature. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Smith, Jonathan Z.

- 1982 Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- 1996 Nothing Human is Alien to Me. *Religion*: 26: 297–309.

Taylor, Charles et. al.

- 1994 Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. Ed. and introd. by Amy Gutmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tedlock, Dennis

- 1995 "Interpretation, Participation, and the Role of Narrative in Dialogical Anthropology. In: Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim (eds.), *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*; pp. 253–287. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Torgovnick, Marianna

- 1990 Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wellmer, Albrecht

- 1985 On the Dialectic of Modernism and Postmodernism. *Praxis International* 4: 337–363.

Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman (eds.)

- 1994 Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader. New York: Columbia University Press.

R E N É G O T H Ó N I

Misreading and Re-Reading

Interpretation in Comparative Religion

One would think that, once we have learned to read, reading is easy. However, the amazing and somewhat disappointing fact is that even the most simple message can be misread. To paraphrase Murphy's law: whenever there is the possibility of misunderstanding, misreading is more likely than correct reading (e.g. in terms of the author's intention). Allow me to act the cicerone to some common misreadings regarding Buddhism. First, however, let me relate an introductory episode by way of illustration.

The barbed wire

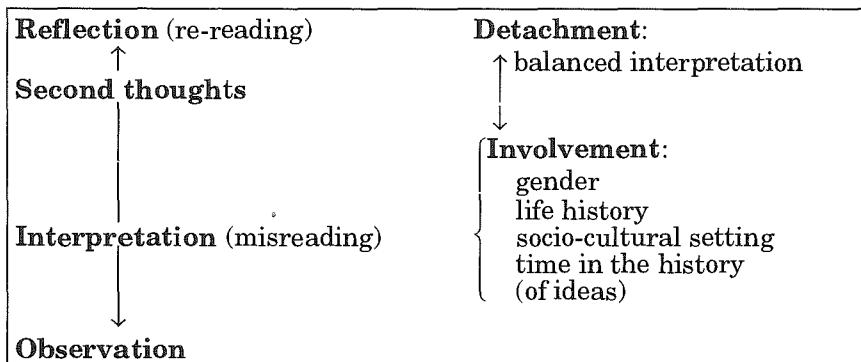
Last winter, while on holiday on the island of Lanzarote, I witnessed an intermezzo at our neighboring apartment. The husband of the elderly couple loudly complained that he needed to move to the second floor, because the barbed wire fence around his balcony on the first floor reminded him of his prison camp during the war. It affected his sleep and turned his holiday into a nightmare. The sight of the wire triggered his terrifying war memories, and he just could not spend another day in that apartment.

A few days after the episode, as we were sitting on our balcony which had a similar fence, I asked my wife how she saw it. She said spontaneously that it reminded her of the fence they had at her father's farm to prevent the cows from leaving the field. To me, again, the fence brought to mind our neighbor, who used to add some more wire every autumn to prevent a young 'gang' from stealing his apples, a common habit of any youngster in Pori in the early sixties.

It was quite clear that the barbed wire fence around our balcony in Lanzarote was there to protect us from opportunist burglars. The lesson to be learned from this episode is, however: the way we 'read' observations — barbed wire, for example — is dictated by our expe-

riences of life in the first place, and only secondly by our ability to conceive the intended function. The more subtle the matter, the harder it is to end up with the correct reading, in other words with an unbiased conception of the intention of the originator. The theoretical implication of this illustrative episode is condensed in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 Observation re-read



The *first* or immediate interpretation of an observation often is affected by aspects of involvement such as gender, life history, socio-cultural setting, and time in the history (of ideas). On *second thought* the first interpretation proves to be a misreading which, through re-reading and careful reflection — with suspended judgment —, is corrected resulting in a more balanced interpretation. Allow me to elucidate this assertion by analyzing some interpretations of Buddhism.

Interpretations of Buddhism

The Venetian merchant, adventurer and outstanding traveler, Marco Polo (1254–1324), was the first true European observer of Far East cultures and religious practices. In his *Il milione*, known in English as the *Travels of Marco Polo*, said to be dictated to Rustichello, a specialist in chivalry and its lore, Marco Polo gives the following description of the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka since 1972); it was written while he was locked up in one of the local prisons in Genoa after having been taken prisoner by the Genoese during a battle in the Mediterranean:

'Furthermore you must know that in the Island of Seilan [Ceylon] there is an exceeding high mountain; it rises right up so

steep and precipitous that no one could ascend it, were it not that they have taken and fixed to it several great and massive iron chains, so disposed that by help of these men are able to mount to the top. And I tell you they say that on this mountain is the sepulcher of Adam our first parent; at least that is what the Saracens¹ say. But the Idolaters say that it is the sepulcher of SAGAMONI BORCAN [Śākyamuni Buddha], before whose time there were no idols. They hold him to have been the best of men, a great saint in fact, according to their fashion, and the first in whose name idols were made' (Polo 1903: 316–317).

According to Marco Polo, the Sinhalese Buddhists were ‘idolaters’, in other words worshippers of idols. This interpretation of the Sinhalese custom of placing offerings such as flowers, incense and lights before the Buddha image is quite understandable, because it is one of the most conspicuous feature of Sinhalese Buddhism even today. However, in conceiving of Buddhists as ‘idolaters’, Polo was uncritically using the concept of the then prevailing *ethnocentric* Christian discourse, by which the worshippers of other religions used idols, images or representations of God or the divine as objects of worship, a false God, as it were. Christians, on the other hand, worshipped the only true God. Marco Polo was simply reading back or projecting (cf. Eco’s *intentio lectoris*) his own internalized ideas onto what he saw from an outsider’s point of view at the same time as he was interpreting and relating his observations to his Genoese readers.

Today, with the advantage of hindsight, we may conclude that Marco Polo was fairly accurate in his observations, but he never asked how the Sinhalese conceived of Buddha as they venerated his image, and therefore he never acquired intra-cultural grassroots knowledge of what Buddha stood for in the Sinhalese-Buddhist socio-cultural setting. The observations were accurate, but the interpretation was the result of misreading due to a lack of contextual knowledge.

Allow me to proceed some centuries forward in history, and to take a close look at how the shipwrecked English sailor Robert Knox (1641–1720) interpreted the same sights as Polo observed. Although he lived as a captive among the Sinhalese from 1659 to 1679, in other words nineteen years, he still conceived of Buddha as a God:

¹ During the Middle Ages the term Saracens was used to denote Arabians in particular, and later on all Muslims in general.

'The Religion of the Countrey is Idolatry.... There is another great God, whom they call Buddou [Buddha], unto whom the Salvation of Souls belongs. Him they believe once to have come upon the Earth. And when he was here, that he did usually sit under a large shady Tree, called Bogahah. Which Trees ever since are accounted Holy, and under which with great Solemnities they do to this day celebrate the Ceremonies of his Worship. He departed from the Earth from the top of the highest Mountain on the Island, called Pico Adam: where there is an Impression like a foot, which, they say, is his, as hath been mentioned before' (Knox 1911: 114–115).

Again, with advantage of hindsight, we realize that Knox also misinterpreted his observations as he perceived the Sinhalese to be 'idolaters', and the Buddha to be a 'great God' and a 'Savior of Souls':

The idea that the Sinhalese and other Buddhists are worshippers of Buddha is still very persistent today, and it seems almost impossible to correct this preconception or rather prejudice. This is despite the fact that both buddhologists and anthropologists have shown irrefutably that the Sinhalese venerate Buddha as a man who attained enlightenment and release from the round of rebirths (*samsāra*), and that, according to the Buddha's teaching, man has no soul (*anātman*).

It must, however, be admitted that it is somewhat confusing that, although Buddhists — the laity in particular — venerate the Buddha, they also often worship the Hindu gods. However, the fact that the Buddhists themselves make a distinction between venerating and worshipping is a case in point. As we shall see, there is only one correct interpretation here, too, although it has taken westerners more than seven centuries to arrive at the right answer.

Another equally persistent preconception or prejudice, which still prevails in many an encyclopedia and textbook, is that Buddhism is an atheistic religion.² As we search for the roots of this interpretation, we are lead back to the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). His (critical) discernment, however, was decisively flawed by his personal aversion to theology and his well-known hatred of university philosophers of a theological persuasion. He particularly objected to the theistic philosophy of 'reason' of his arch-enemy Hegel (Dauer 1969: 33–34).

² When, following these lines of thought, we state that Christianity is a non-nirvanic religion, we immediately realize how inadequate a characterization and categorization this is.

This antagonism resulted in an eclectic reading of Buddha's teachings rather than a balanced reading of Buddhism as a religion, which would have entailed not only reading the doctrine, but also reading about everyday life and practices. Schopenhauer focused his attention on the intellectual aspects of Buddhism, and especially on the rationality and conformity of the Buddhist doctrine with reference to his own inner experiences of everyday life. One of the reasons why he found Buddhism so appealing was the tragic untimely death of his father:³

'When I was seventeen, without any proper schooling, I was affected by the misery and wretchedness of life, as was the Buddha, when in his youth he caught sight of sickness, old age, pain and death' (Schopenhauer 1990: 119).⁴

Apart from this confession, where Schopenhauer stresses a spiritual affinity with Gautama Buddha's shocking realization of life as 'suffering',⁵ he also quite explicitly announces his pleasure in the conformity between the Buddhist doctrine and his own lines of thought:

'It almost seems that, as the oldest languages are the most perfect, so too are the oldest religions. If I wished to take the results of my philosophy as the standard truth, I should have to concede to Buddhism pre-eminence over the others. In any case, it must be a pleasure to me to see *my doctrine in such close agreement* with a religion that the majority of men on earth hold as their own, for this numbers far more followers than any other. And this agreement must be yet the more pleasing to me, inasmuch as in my philosophizing I have certainly not been under its influence. For up till 1818, when my work appeared, there were to be found in Europe only a very few accounts of Buddhism, and those extremely incomplete and inadequate, confined almost entirely to a few essays in the earlier volumes of the Asiatic Researches, and principally concerned with the Buddhism of the Burmese' (Schopenhauer 1966: 169). (My italics)

³ On the death of Schopenhauer's father, see Zimmern 1932: 25–27.

⁴ 'In meinem 17ten Jahre, ohne alle gelehrte Schulbildung, wurde ich vom Jammer des Lebens so ergriffen, wie Buddha in seiner Jugend, als er Krankheit, Alter, Schmerz und Tod erblickte'. Schopenhauer 1974b: 96; cf. Dauer 1969: 11–12.

⁵ For the feeling of spiritual affinity, see also Lipps's concept *Einfühlung*. Lipps 1903; Lipps 1905; Anschütz 1915.

Having realized the close agreement between the Buddhist doctrine and his own idea of the ‘will-to-live’, Schopenhauer points out that ‘one cannot grasp the absolute by ordinary methods of cognition, but must first discover it in [ones] own inner experience’ (cf. Dauer 1969: 13). These lines of thought clearly show how Schopenhauer, in constructing his philosophy, confirmed the correctness of his thinking by referring to Indian philosophy. It is not surprising that, in this context, rather than theorizing, he invokes the concept according to which Buddhism is atheistic as a justification of his own atheism:

‘This [i.e. that there is no God, Creator] is attested by the religion that has the greatest number of followers on earth, Buddhism, which is very ancient and now numbers three hundred and seventy million followers. It is a highly moral and even ascetic religion and supports the most numerous body of clergy; yet it does not accept such an idea at all [i.e. the idea of a self-evident theism, existence of God]; on the contrary, it expressly rejects this out of hand and is thus according to our notions *ex professo* atheistic’ (Schopenhauer 1974a: 115–116, §13).

If the discourses of both Marco Polo and Robert Knox can rightly be characterized as *ethnocentric*, Arthur Schopenhauer’s discourse may more appropriately be denoted *eclectic*, in other words peculiar to him in particular. We therefore need to ask: to what extent do scholars unintentionally project their conceptual shadow on the religious phenomenon studied?

Allow me to advance still another century, when anthropologists (of religion) discovered Ceylon (Sri Lanka since 1972) and conducted intensive fieldwork among the Buddhists there. It came as somewhat of a shock to them that the Sinhalese did not conform to their idea of Buddhism gleaned from literature.⁶ The fact that, apart from venerating the Buddha by offerings of flowers, incense and lights before his image, the Sinhalese also worshipped the Hindu gods, contradicted the notion of Buddhism as an atheistic religion. Consequently, since the early 1960s, Sinhalese Buddhism has been characterized in numerous anthropological articles and monographs as ‘syncretistic’ (Leach 1962: 84 ff.).

In *Precept and Practice*, Richard F. Gombrich devotes one chapter to the question whether or not Sinhalese Buddhism is syncretistic. First he states that ‘supernatural beings were as much a part of the Buddha’s universe as they are of a Buddhist villager’s universe to-

⁶ On the beginning of Buddhist scholarship, see Sedlar 1982: 39.

day' and that 'the presence of "Hindu" or "animist" supernaturals in the Buddhist's universe is not a novel or syncretistic feature, but has always been the case'. Then he concludes: 'So long as Buddhists continue to treat gods as kind of supermen, able to grant favours to suppliants, but still ultimately of limited life and powers and subject to moral law, their beliefs are not syncretistic' (Gombrich 1971: 48–49).

Gananath Obeyesekere's analysis of the Rambadeniya pantheon, depicted in Figure 2, confirms Gombrich's interpretation.

Fig. 2 The five-level structure of the Rambadeniya pantheon

	<i>Level</i>	<i>Name of deity</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Pan-Sinhalese deities	1.	B U D D H A [SAKRA, protector of the universal Buddhist <i>sāsana</i>]	Pure good
Local deities	2. Guardian deities: Saman Vishnu Kataragama Nāta Pattini		Rational punitiveness "just good"
	3. District deities		
	4. Demons		Irrational punitiveness
	5. Spirits		pure evil

At the apex of the simplified depiction of the pantheon is the Buddha. He occupies a presidential position vis-à-vis the other deities, and he is venerated in every ritual performed in the Rambadeniya village. Buddha is not, however, conceived of as a deity, in other words as a being who intercedes on behalf of humans and brings fertility, prosperity, well-being, or woe to people who propitiate him.

Buddha is addressed commemoratively rather than propitiatingly or in a petitionary manner. He does not, however, possess human status either, because by virtue of having attained enlightenment and release from the round of rebirths (*samsāra*), he has transcended his humanity. Consequently, his characteristics are his

compassion, benevolence, and nonpunitiveness: he is goodness incarnate! Buddha's presidential position in the pantheon is emphasized by the fact that in every Buddhist ritual he is always venerated before the worshipping of other deities.

The Sinhalese address liturgical stanzas commemoratively to images and other symbols of the Buddha 'presence'. Buddha is also given dietary offerings, because he is conceived of in some sense as 'living'. A popular stanza, for example, runs: 'Pardon me, Venerable World Sage, Blessed One, the "demeritorious" deeds I have done with body, word, thought, or by carelessness'.

One of the crucial questions in this connection is therefore: in what sense is there a Buddha 'presence' in the rituals? Obeyesekere states that, although cognitively the Sinhalese conceive of the Buddha as nonliving, psychologically they perceive him as living. This, he argues, is due to the fact that, like other humans, the Sinhalese worship 'conventional' deities — gods and demons. Attitudes towards conventional gods are therefore generalized to or *reflected* upon the Buddha. The reconciliation of these seemingly irreconcilable positions is, according to Obeyesekere, brought about through the symbolism of the Buddha relics, with the underlying notion that, although the Buddha is not living, his presence is manifested in the relics (Sinh. *dhātu*).

This interpretation is completely consonant with, or reflective of, other aspects of Sinhalese religion, where the ingredients used in magic, altars and images become activated (*jīwan*) through the 'essence' (*dishti*) of the deity, who in ritual is invited to cast his eye (*bälma*) on these objects. In accordance with these lines of thought, the Sinhalese say that the Buddha is 'present in his relics' (*Buduhā-muduruvō dhātuvala jīvamānava innava*). Therefore they address the relics as 'Venerable Relic' (*Dhātun Vahanse*) (Obeyesekere 1966: 5–8).

Every Buddhist temple has a relic casket and a relic chamber (*dāgäba*), where Buddha and the enlightened person's (*arhat*) relics are enshrined. The relics have the connotation of 'life force' or 'vital principle'. The notion of the Buddha personality incarnate in his relics (*dhātu*), refers to his immanent presence only. Therefore, the Sinhalese do not seek assistance in everyday matters from the Buddha personality incarnated in his relics (Obeyesekere 1966: 8).

Slightly below the Buddha in the pantheon is Sakra, the protector of the universal Buddhist monastic tradition (*sāsana*), who is merely referred to in Rambadeniya in myths; he is never propitiated or worshipped, because he has delegated his authority to Saman, the protector and guardian of the Buddha-sāsana in Sri Lanka.

Saman is the first among equals on the second level of the pantheon, together with four other deities (of equal status): Vishnu, Skandha (Kataragama), Nāta, and Pattini. These are all conceived of as defenders of the faith, and hence as guardian deities with the special task of protecting the secular kingdom. As gods in a conventional sense, they are both punitive and benevolent. Their punitiveness is, however, a rational punitiveness, in other words they are just gods punishing only for transgressions.

Level three in the pantheon consists of district deities, who have more or less the same attributes as the guardian deities. The Sinhalese conceive of these gods as provident father figures in relation to whom the petitioner is a ‘newborn baby’ or a ‘child’ (*lē bilinda, ladaruva*).

Level four consists of demons and other inferior deities, and level five of ghosts and the malevolent spirits of dead ancestors (*prēta*). The supernatural beings on these levels are conceived of as completely evil and ‘irrationally punitive’, in other words causing harm without just cause or reason.

According to Obeyesekeres’ analysis, the simplified Rambadeniya pantheon thus represents a morality structure, with pure goodness and benevolence at the apex and pure evil at the base. Morality here refers to karma, and the status of the pantheon deities is the result of karma. Buddha represents the highest goal of Buddhist aspiration: enlightenment and *nirvāṇa*. The gods are much below this ideal. They are beings who, by virtue of their good deeds, have achieved their position in the pantheon, but who still have a long way to go to attain release from the round of rebirths (Obeyesekere 1966: 9).

According to Sinhalese-Buddhist thinking, therefore, there are two spheres of reality: supra-mundane and mundane. Buddhist monastic tradition (*Buddha-sāsana*) is considered to function in a ‘supra-mundane’ (*lokottara*) sphere, while popular — sometimes called non-Buddhist — beliefs are seen in relation to ‘mundane’ (*laukika*) matters. *Lokottara* refers to the sphere of reality which is viewed as being beyond the round of rebirths (*samsāra*). The Buddhist *sāsana* is thus regarded as providing an instrument for ascension to the ‘supra-mundane’ sphere. The final life goal of a Buddhist is to attain enlightenment, which guarantees release from the round of rebirths.

In contrast, *laukika* refers to the sphere of reality which is conceived of as the world, in other words within the round of rebirths. Since the so-called religious needs of humans are, in many ways, connected with the problems of life in this world, the laity naturally

seeks help from the gods in mundane affairs, because sāsana does not provide its followers with relief in this sphere (Gombrich 1971: 153–191; Gothóni 1982: 50–51).

In spite of appearances, this does not contradict the teaching of Buddha. Buddha never denied the existence of gods. He conceived of them merely as impermanent beings. This is related in with the recital ritual for averting evil known as *pirit pinkama*, for example, practiced frequently in every Theravāda Buddhist country, where the gods are conceived of as functioning in an intermediate sphere, in between the two spheres of reality (Gothóni 1982: 50).

Such grassroots-level observations have encouraged some scholars to use the concept of ‘configuration’ instead of ‘syncretism’ to denote the two (parallel) spheres of reality. This characterization of Sinhalese Buddhism also corresponds to the Sinhalese distinction between the two spheres of reality called *lokottara* and *laukika*.

Today, therefore, we should speak of two configurations rather than of syncretism. The Sinhalese are fully aware of the difference between these two parallel belief systems, and they never mix them. They worship gods, but they are fully aware that the gods cannot further their efforts in attaining release from the round of rebirths. The gods can only help them in mundane matters. Accordingly, it is essential for us to point out that the Sinhalese *venerate* the Buddha (as the Enlightened One who has extinguished desire and attained release from the perpetual round of rebirths), but *worship* the gods who assist humans in mundane matters (Bechert 1978: 218–221; Schalk 1976: 79–81, 92).

Summa summarum

Polo and Knox, who did not know the Sinhalese language, were thus not able while out in the field to ask the Sinhalese people about their religious practices. Therefore they merely described what they saw in the manner of travellers’ tales of that time. Consequently, both of them were destined to interpret (i.e. misread) Sinhalese Buddhism totally from under the shadow of ethnocentric Christian discourse (Pye 1994: 54–55).

In contrast, Schopenhauer learned about Buddhism only from books. He was therefore dependent on the then prevailing discourse of focusing only on the doctrinal or philosophical aspect of Buddhism. Gautama Buddha’s life and doctrine also touched him personally. In his reading, he was therefore rather uncritically eclectic, seeing only what he wanted to see. He used Buddhism as an argument for the correctness of his own philosophy: ‘it must be a pleas-

ure to me to see my doctrine in such close agreement with a religion that the majority of men on earth hold as their own'.

Religion should no longer only be equated with a doctrine or philosophy which, although important, is but one aspect or dimension of the phenomenon religion. Apart from presenting the intellectual or rational aspects of Buddhism, we should aim at a balanced view by also focusing on the mythical or narrative axioms of the Buddhist doctrines, as well as on the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional, and the material and artistic dimensions of the religious phenomenon known as Buddhism. This will help us to arrive at a balanced, unbiased and holistic conception of the subject matter (Smart 1995: 16–21).

We must be careful not to impose the ethnocentric conceptions of our time, or to fall into the trap of reductionism, or to project our own idiosyncratic or personal beliefs onto the subject of our research. This requires careful re-reading of previous interpretations while judgment is suspended, as well as commuting between intra-cultural and inter-cultural terms long enough to be able to translate the aspects of the foreign religion into concepts and terms understandable to us. We may thus succeed without violating the distinctive character of the religion concerned for the benefit of universalistic categories.

References

Anschütz, Georg

1915 Theodor Lipps. *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 34: 1–13.

Bechert, Heinz

1978 On the Popular Religion of the Sinhalese. In: Heinz Bechert (ed.), *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries*; pp. 217–233. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. (*Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse*. F. 3, 108)

Dauer, Dorothea W.

1969 Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas. Berne: Lang. (*European University Papers*. S. 1. German Language and Literature, 15)

Eco, Umberto

1990 *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gombrich, Richard F.

1971 *Precept and Practice. Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gothóni, René

- 1982 Modes of Life of Theravāda Monks. A Case Study of Buddhist Monasticism in Sri Lanka. Helsinki: The Finnish Oriental Society. (*Studia Orientalia*, 52)

Knox, Robert

- 1911 An Historical Relation of Ceylon. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons.

Leach, E. R.

- 1962 Pulleyar and the Lord Buddha. An aspect of religious syncretism in Ceylon. *Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review* 49: 80–102.

Lipps, Theodor

- 1903 Einfühlung, innere Nachahmung, und Organempfindungen. *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 1: 185–204.

- 1905 Weiteres zur "Einfühlung". *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie* 6: 465–519.

Obeyesekere, Gananath

- 1966 The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions. In: Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (*Southeast Asia Studies. Yale University. Cultural Report Series*, 13)

Polo, Marco

- 1903 The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East. Transl. and ed. by Henry Yule. Vol. 2. London: J. Murray.

Pye, Michael

- 1994 Religion: Shape and Shadow. *Numen* 41: 51–75.

Schalk, Peter

- 1976 The Encounter between Buddhism and Hinduism in Buddhist Ritual. *Temenos* 12: 78–92.

Schopenhauer, Arthur

- 1966 The World as Will and Representation. Vol. 2. New York: Dover Publications. [1958]

- 1974a Parerga and Paralipomena. Short Philosophical Essays. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- 1974b Der handschriftliche Nachlass. Bd. 4/T. 1: Die Manuskriptbücher der Jahre 1830 bis 1852. Frankfurt am Main: Kramer.

- 1990 Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes, ed. by Arthur Hübscher. Vol. 4: The Manuscript Books of 1830–1852 and the Last Manuscripts. Oxford: Berg.

Sedlar, Jean W.

- 1982 India in the Mind of Germany. Schelling, Schopenhauer, and their Times. Washington: University Press of America.

Smart, Ninian

- 1995 Choosing a Faith. London: Boyars/Bowerdean.

Zimmern, Helen

- 1932 Schopenhauer. His Life and Philosophy. London: Allen & Unwin.

P E T E R J A C K S O N

Tracks on the Road-Myth^{1/2}

Indo-European religions beyond Georges Dumézil's *moyen d'analyser*

It would naturally seem presumptuous to describe the works of Georges Dumézil as a *failure*. Such a remark, however, does not necessarily concern the dismissal with half a century's theoretical efforts, it may simply allude to something Dumézil omitted to see and, fully aware of this omission (i.e. failing to "see the trees for wood"), the territory he left behind unexplored.

*

Critics have mistakenly implied that Dumézil was oriented towards the reconstruction of an *Urgesellschaft*, and — as a consequence of this prejudice — accused him of regarding myths as social projections being inconsistent with the "hard facts" of the Proto-Indo-Europeans. This misconception is to be regretted (see, for instance, Renfrew 1988). As for me, I think (regarding Dumézil's own ambitions) that the crux of the matter was indeed the uncovering of a culture, but by no means the relics of a pre-historic society in Southern Russia: Dumézil pursued the Indo-European *sensus communis*, which in this matter may respond to a common *cultural* sense. The characteristic of this pursuit is the conception of a unique Indo-European "mode of analysis" (*un moyen d'analyser*), which

¹ Cf. Parmenides (DK 28B8). The term "road-myth" has as much bearing on Diel's rendering (*Weg-Kunde*) as on the original Greek phrase μύθος ὁδοῖο.

² Immediately after the delivery of speech, Professor Lauri Honko draw my attention to his article "Traditions in the construction of cultural identity and strategies of ethnic survival" (1995: 131–146), of which I had been unaware up to then. While realizing to what extent Professor Honko had fore stalled my efforts to reevaluate the concepts of "culture" and "tradition", I presently regret that his theories and thorough analyses were not properly interrogated into my paper. At the same time, however, I am delighted at the prospects of proceeding on good authority.

marked the crisis of Dumézil's thought during the 50's. This inter-cultural framework of interpretation, fluctuating between social and supernatural facts, is thus described in the retrospective introduction to *Mythe et Épopée I*:

"[A] decisive progress was accomplished the day when I recognised, towards 1950, that the 'tripartite ideology' is not necessarily followed up by, in the life of a society, the *real* tripartite division of this society, according to the Indian model; on the contrary it may not, where one observes it, be (no longer be, perhaps it has never been) anything but an ideal and, at the same time, a mode of analysis, of interpreting the forces which assure the way of the world and the life of mankind."³

Dumézil regarded the insistence on etymological equations as a blockage in consideration of the Indo-European ideology (1968: 11 f.), whereas the occurrence of a comparative grammar and a common religious nomenclature necessitated the advantage of genetic comparisons over comparisons excluding the notions of organic contiguity. He considered it self-evident that societies sharing a political, juridical, ethical, and religious vocabulary (*rex, flamines, ius, lex, credo, fides, ritus* etc.) likewise share a coherent system of thought, and that this system may be sought beyond the manifestations of signs.⁴ This presupposition led Dumézil to compare sets of ideas, circumscribed by their inherent systematic constancy, yet dissolved in an irreversible cluster of formal variability.

Émile Benveniste, a scholar giving an early stimulus to Dumézil's ideas of the Indo-European social organisation (1932), pursued a similar line of inquiry in a work devoted to Indo-European ethnosemantics, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (1969). In this work, however, Benveniste elucidated the genesis of the vocabu-

³ [U]n progrès décisif fut accompli le jour où je reconnus, vers 1950, que l'"idéologie tripartite" ne s'accompagne pas forcément, dans la vie d'une société, de la division tripartite réelle de cette société, selon le modèle indien; qu'elle peut au contraire, là où on la constate, n'être (ne plus être, peut-être n'avoir jamais été) qu'un idéal et, en même temps, un moyen d'analyser, d'interpréter les forces qui assurent le cours de monde et la vie des hommes." Dumezil 1968: 15.

⁴ "Un tel accord donne à réfléchir : le maintien, sur les deux marges du domaine indo-européen, à l'extrême est et à l'extrême ouest, d'un vocabulaire aussi fortement lié à l'organisation sociale, à des actes, à des attitudes ou à des représentations religieuses, n'est concevable que si des fragments importants du système de pensée préhistorique auquel appartenait d'abord ces notions ont aussi subsisté." Dumezil 1949: 19.

lary of fundamental institutions (such as economy, kinship, society, authority, law, and religion) by examining the common semantic motivation of terminologically differentiated sets in view of their associations, oppositions, and cognates (1969: 9). Benveniste never adhered to Dumézil's procedures whole-heartedly, since he considered those based on indices other than linguistic facts and textual statements (1969: 292). Notwithstanding these separate starting-points, the methodological differences may also pertain to a shift in emphasis: if Benveniste compared contiguous sets of concepts undergoing verbal superposition, Dumézil compared contiguous sets of ideas emanating from an inherited ideology.

Seeing that the priority of systematic constancy is a criterion of Dumézil's strategy, we may contrast the coalescence of duplex sovereignty in India, Iran, Rome, and Ireland suggested by Dumézil (Mitra and Varuṇa; Vohu Manah and Aša; Dius Fidius and Iuppiter, Lug and Nuada) with the formal coalescence of two-part divine names in the cultured circles of India, Anatolia, Greece, Italy, and Ireland (Dyáuṣ pitā; Luv. Tatiš Tiwaz/Hitt. Attaš Šiuš; Zeùs patér; Iuppiter; *deiwo [...] [p]atir).

According to Dumézil, the incontestable consonance of the names Dyaus, Zeus, Juppiter, etc. would be of no use to the mythologist who wants to grasp the internal system organising the mythology of India, Greece, and Rome (1968: 11). Considering the same consonance, however, Calvert Watkins et.al. seem to discern an important aspect of the Proto-Indo-European symbolic culture, e.g. “the chief deity of the Proto-Indo-Europeans” (Watkins 1995: 8). One gets the impression that these angles of approach inevitably ends in the counteracting accentuations of a deep-seated *sensus communis* comprising historically attainable cultures (Dumézil) and a homogenous, yet historically unattainable cultural hypostasis (a “proto-culture”). Since both perspectives call for homogeneity, the emphasis on formal concordances assumes a diffusionist angle, from which historical data must appear as an accumulation of defect imitations in proportion to the prehistoric hypostasis.

Let us start from the simple assumption that a common heritage neither is bound to dissolve in fragments of a common ideology, nor to expose the outlines of an *Urgesellschaft*. In that case we may expect that each culture undertakes a unique decipherment of the common heritage, and that this heritage becomes senseless whenever detached from the magic circle of culture. For the sake of clarification, I will briefly illustrate this circumstance by means of two texts. The first passage is drawn from a Hittite ritual against do-

mestic strife (CTH 404), the second from a Vedic nuptial hymn (10.85), viz. two stanzas concerning defloration and the (woollen) bridal garment (28–29):

A. Then the Old Woman takes a snail and wraps it in blue [ZA.*GÌN*] and red [SA₅] wool [SÍG], and she brandishes it over the two participants in the ritual and speaks as follows: “Carry aw(ay) /..., shovelfoot [píd-da-al-li-iš *GÌR-aš* = *pat(a)-aš*], the evil tongue (*i-da-a-lu-un EME-an*). Let it carry it away by its back, and by its tongue let it carry them away, the evil mouth, the evil tongue.”⁵

B. 28. It is dark blue [*nīla-*] and red [-*lohitám*], the sorcery [*kṛtyā*], the entwinement spreads/gets about (therein), prospering its kinsmen. The bride is bound with bonds. [according to the Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra 1.12.8, this verse is accompanied with the following ritual action: “[h]er relations tie (to the body) a red and black, woollen [?] or linen cord with three (amulet) gems”] 29. Give away the woollen shirt, distribute good to the Brahmans! This sorcery, having acquired feet [*padváti*], enters (as) the husband (enters his) wife.

The joint semantic collocation BLUE : RED : (WOOL) : FOOT — in both cases characterised by a metaphorical or figurative use of the isogloss **ped-* — does indeed admit of a detachment from the individual contexts. On the other hand, we may well ask if the Hittite ritual and the Vedic nuptial hymn constitute a cultural nexus, or if the information accessible beyond the collocation itself is sufficient (as much as sufficiently concordant) for the extraction of an intercultural significance from the collocation? To complicate the matter further, we may merely notice that verbal collocations and formulae sometimes interact within the same literary stratum, apparently without conveying the same explicit or implicit sense.⁶

The following questions thus arise: are we justified in treating Indo-European religions (on these preliminary conditions) as a marked off field of research? If so, how ought we to carry on this research, and what do we expect to attain thereby? I do not, for self-evident reasons, attempt to give any conclusive answers to these questions here, rather have I tried to prepare a starting-point for alternative issues.

⁵ Translation and discussion in Watkins 1981.

⁶ Cf. for instance Priam’s parabolic statements about Odysseus in Il. 3.192–198 and Hesiod’s portrait of winter in Op. 505–563: πολυβοτείρῃ | ἐμπίπτων (Op. 510–511) = κεῖται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πολυβοτείρῃ (Il. 3. 195); διὰ ρίνοῦ βοὸς ἔρχεται (Op. 515) [...] δι’ αὐγα ἄησι πανύτριχα πώεα (516) = οἰῶν μέγα πῶϋ διέρχεται (Il. 3.198).

*

An objection, typical of the critical approaches to comparative Indo-European religious studies, reads: “The reductive tendency of the comparativist approach is inclined to erase the specific characteristics of a culture [.]” (Scheid and Svenbro 1996) Let us retort by slightly exaggerating the consequence of this remark: if the comparativist approach “erases” cultures, what do we perceive therewith? It simultaneously facilitates the penetration of cultures by rendering cultures transparent, and by those means it grazes tradition.

While culture is a tilled land, tradition is a grazing land; tradition answers to the “many tracks” or “signs” (*sémat[a] [...] pollà*) on an unborn and imperishable road.⁷ On the one hand we may liken culture to the interpretation and internalisation of these tracks, on the other hand to “something else com[ing] to mind” beyond the outward appearances of the track.⁸ Thus, the tracks — since they constantly await the cultural designation or design (a designation or design by means of culture) — lie ahead of us, yet they belong to a past that cannot be foreseen. Tradition is both *in front of us* and *of old*, it lies before us.

The vagueness of the intimate terms “tradition” and “culture” allows us to conceive them both as *action* and *condition*, both as *execution* and *storage*. Culture is the training, development, and refinement of mind, tastes and manners; the condition of being thus trained and refined; the intellectual side of civilisation. Tradition is the action of handing over (something material) to another; delivery, transfer; that which is thus handed down; a statement, belief, or practice transmitted (esp.) orally from generation to generation. I have purposely chosen these plain, lexicographic definitions in order to increase the sharpness of their reciprocity. By way of experiment I will bring the characteristics of “culture” together under the heading of “tracing”, including as well the condition of being “traced”, i.e. definite, designated etc.; “tradition”, on the other hand,

⁷ I am once more referring to Parmenides’ ΠΕΡΙ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ 8.

⁸ G. Thompson (1995) reminds us of the fact that St. Augustine reunited the concepts of “sign” and “track” by observing that “a sign (*signum*) is in fact a thing which, besides the outward appearance which it presents to the senses, by itself makes something else come to mind. When we see a foot track (*vestigum pedis*), we think that the animal to which the foot track belongs, has passed.”

will be understood as “tracking”, i.e. the formation of (conducting) paths, and the “tracks” thus formed.

Viewed from a different angle, tradition stands out as a “compound of signs” or a “semic assemblage”. By that I am not referring to the Saussurean *signe*, nor to the *signifiant*. I am referring to a sign that “requires an act of interpretation, [...] a true recognition of the sign, a true *nóesis* of the *sêma*[.]” (Nagy 1990: 203ff.) Culture, in its turn, is accordingly identified with this act of interpretation and the “noemic assemblage” harbouring tradition. The mutual consideration of this duality would thus imply the symbiosis of semiotics and phenomenology, since the former approach is occupied with signs and significations, and the latter with designs and designations: viz. the *semic* priority of tradition, and the *noemic* priority of culture.

As is well known, a genetic comparison aims at the origin of things and, fairly often in the case of comparative mythology and philology, at the ideological or semantic apex of cultures and concepts. Such an approach always concerns something significant, something *traced* beyond the cultural peculiarities. Compared to it, a generic comparison — which ultimately concerns the familiarity of things — rather engages in the fabrication of cultural encounters, aiming at the detection of a common traditional track. This track stands out as the subject-matter of cultivation, as something preserving its constancy despite sweeping cultural changes; most likely owing to its interpretative susceptibility. As a matter of course, we ought not to regard it as a mental template. Cultural data, however, may preserve features which, when properly isolated, manifest themselves as traditional bands devoid of cultivation (traditional residua): the phonetic or graphic features of words, the recurrent (verbal) features of myths etc.

Just as an etymologist may ignore the “truth” or “true sense” of words, i.e. while observing formal concordances within a wide range of meaning; the mythologist engaged in a generic comparison — since he observes traditional concordances within a wide range of cultural application — may (or must) ignore the single source from which myth passes its meaning along.

The presence of recurring Indo-European formulae and verbal collocations have hinted many scholars at the nodes of once fixed, yet hopelessly disintegrated, narrative strata. Even if the fixed diction or metaphor may play an important part in mythopoeic activity, it is not absolutely bound to carry the story itself; it may even become, as it were, “a familiar music of which the mind is pleasantly aware, but

which it knows so well that it makes no effort to follow it" (Parry 1986: 30).

Furthermore, the essential parts of the formula correspond to graphemes; both are vehicles of value, yet — with reference to the formula or collocation (cf. BLUE : RED : (WOOL) : FOOT (see above)) — the level of lexis corresponds to the level of sound regarding the morpheme or lexeme. In other words the formulaic sense of the formula exceeds the totality of its lexical sense: *k* is to *kléos* (*k-l-é-o-s* → "fame") as *kléos* to *kléos áphthiton* ("imperishable fame" → "poet's pledge-token of reciprocity" (Ibycus (Watkins 1995: 70)). We may carry this simile further by dwelling upon the movement, transformation, and revaluation of a specific grapheme — *A* for instance — in a series of societies (Phoenician, Greek, Etruscan, Italic etc.). At the outset we have gradually become aware of its consistent phonetic value, but while considering the Cherokee system of writing (developed by Sikwayi in the 1820's) we will come to the opposite conclusion: according to this notation — though evidently built on the Roman alphabet — *A* represents the syllable *go*. In both cases, furthermore, we may consider two shades of meaning: 1) the directly or indirectly accessible meaning of written words containing the specific grapheme (without which the phonetic value is indeterminable), i.e. the meaning carried off by means of the grapheme in (and by) individual cultures, and 2) the dormant ideographic value of the same grapheme (Proto-Sinaitic *alpu* "ox").

Needless to say, oral literature is ever in a state of change, for what reason it is justifiable to dismiss any notions of an invariable Nibelungen legend or tale of Troy. It is likewise justifiable, however, to conceive the present versions as compounds of partially fixed modes of speech, albeit components capable of innumerable combinations and interpretations.

In addition to the censorious plea for coincidence with regard to Indo-European religious studies, we may also expect a thematic parallelism to result from individual elaborations of common residua, i.e. similar cultural renderings of contiguous traditions. Thus, while treated as the result of a common stylistic or verbal core, thematic parallels are no longer associated with genetically contiguous theological or philosophical modes of analysis.⁹

⁹ Calvert Watkins draws a similar conclusion while comparing the Orphic *lamellae* with an Old Hittite eschatological text: "I do not want to insist on a thematic connection between the two sets of texts in the two languages. The similarities — even those which are most striking, like the 'singular detail' of the Greek word for muddy water — may belong to the plane of

What may appear as an evident cultural nexus at first sight, viz. the common confidence in these oral traditions, is rather a cultural impetus evoked by tradition itself, perhaps as a consequence of its exceptional position. Not only does this confidence implicate the fusion of poetic and hieratic speech¹⁰, but also the apprehension of the traditional discourse as “marked speech” sanctioned by usage. This attitude, on the one hand, was probably implied in the earliest denotation of the Greek word *mûthos* (“special” as opposed to ‘everyday’ speech” (Nagy 1990: viii)); on the other hand, as is evident from linguistic and ethnological research, “[t]he highlighting of mythological characters through conventional sound shifts is particularly salient when it introduces speech sounds foreign to the usual pattern of the given language” (Jakobson and Waugh 1987: 210): poetry and myth narration are currently distinguished from normal speech. The generic study of concordant traditions — while focusing the recurrence and cultivation of form — may derive advantage from these observations. Since the residua uncovered often recurs within the sphere of markedness, the instance of markedness is obviously participant in the preservation of tradition.

*

We cannot grasp the intercultural meaning of recurrent formulae or verbal collocations, which are (and must be) dynamic compounds subordinate to a continuous process of cultural adaptation. The skeletal conformity of Indo-European myths and rituals may not designate..., yet — since we concern ourselves with tracks apt to designation — it remains valuable. When it comes to reconstructed Proto-Indo-European, we may simply consider the proto-forms as “handy formulae for making clear the nature of relationships that

imaginative universals of eschatology. But I do wish to emphasize that speculations very similar to those of the Dionysiac-Orphic and Pythagorean ‘mysteries’, both in content and in the form of artistic verbal presentation, were being made and written down in a geographically adjacent and genetically related language some 1200 years earlier [...]. If we are to believe in an Indo-European eschatology, a common core of inherited beliefs about final things and *a common core of style of verbal expression in the (inherently conservative) service of the dead* (my italics), then it is to such comparisons that we should look.” Watkins 1995: 290.

¹⁰ An idea touched upon by Jacob Wackernagel (1943) in the seminal lecture on Indo-European poetics from 1932 (published under the title “Indogermanische Dichtersprache”). It goes without saying, however, that the synergism of poetry and mythology is a criterion of oral culture, and not an Indo-European peculiarity.

exists between cognate languages" (Beekes 1995: 3); the isogloss thus determines an incontestable point of formal intersection in the texts at hand, not the prehistoric apex. To study such points of intersection is ultimately to study the continuous revaluation of tradition, which itself cuts through the cultural particularities and generalities.

This mode of procedure does not exclude Dumézil's approach, but it does leave out certain presuppositions. While preferring the genetic concordance to the sheer coincidence¹¹, Dumézil underrated the opportunities of phenomenology, which may provide "a universal morphology of the natural world as the common world of people, of any society whatever", a theory of "what we see, grasp, and touch, just as we see, and other people, see them, grasp them, etc." (Husserl 1989: 376, 287) From this perspective, for all that, Dumézil's research must remain a valuable contribution to the phenomenology of religions.

References

- Beekes, Robert S. P.**
 1995 Comparative Indo-European Linguistics: An Introduction. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub.
- Benveniste, Émile**
 1932 Les classes sociales dans la tradition avestique. *Journal Asiatique* 221: 117–144.
 1969 Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes. 1. économie, parenté, société. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Dumézil, Georges**
 1949 L'héritage indo-européen à Rome. Paris: Gallimard. [2. ed.]
 1968 Mythe et Epopée. Vol 1: L'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens. Paris: Gallimard.
 1982 Apollon sonore et autres essais: vingt-cinq esquisses de mythologie. Paris: Gallimard
- Honko, Lauri**
 1995 Traditions in the construction of cultural identity and strategies of ethnic survival. *European Review* 3: 131–146.

¹¹ See, for instance, the concluding remark on the first *Esquisse de mythologie*: "Ce parallélisme et cet union du théologème et du philosophème conduisent à une recherche: d'autre Indo-Européens présentent-ils une analyse de la parole selon le même modèle? Si oui, jusqu'où va la concordance? Contient-elle des singularités qui recommandent de l'expliquer par autre chose que le hasard?" Dumezil 1982: 22.

Husserl, Edmund

- 1989 *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic. (Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, 2; Collected Works / Edmund Husserl, 3)

Jakobson, Roman, and Linda R. Waugh

- 1987 *The Sound Shape of Language*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. [2. ed.]

Nagy, Gregory

- 1990 *Greek Mythology and Poetics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Parry, Milman

- 1986 The traditional metaphor in Homer. In: Harold Bloom (ed.), *Homer*; pp. 25–31. New York: Chelsea House. [1971]

Renfrew, Colin

- 1988 *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Scheid, John, and Jesper Svenbro

- 1996 *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Thompson, George

- 1995 From ‘footstep’ to ‘word’ in Sanskrit. *Semiotica* 106: 77–78.

Wackernagel, Jacob

- 1943 Indogermaische Dichtersprache. *Philologus. Zeitschrift für klassische Altertum* 95: 1–19.

Watkins, Calvert

- 1981 Hittite harziyalla-. In: Yoël L. Arbeitman and Allan R. Bomhard (eds.), *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics. In Memory of J. Alexander Kerns*; pp. 345–348. Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V.

- 1995 *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

M O R N Y J O Y

Beyond the Given and the All-Giving:

Extraneous Speculations on Women and the Gift

As a philosopher of religion who also teaches courses in methodology in Religious Studies, I am distressed at certain of the trends I have observed to promote the study of religion(s) solely as a scientific project. This is to be regretted because it eliminates the diversity and richness of human experience in its many manifestations and, in its Eurocentrism, distorts the religious world views and various ways of being religious of non-Western peoples. My hermeneutic training and my pluralist disposition incline me towards a multidisciplinary and plurimethodological approach. This does not necessarily lead to a lack of stability or disintegration of the discipline of Religious Studies. Nor does it obviate the need for careful scrutiny of the theoretical presuppositions and methodological applications involved — perhaps under the guidance of a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Such an approach allows for the coexistence of both humanistic and social scientific modes, without implying that either of these disciplinary divisions, and its subsidiary fields of study, has the monopoly view or the most appropriate methods for studying the discipline. Perhaps a hermeneutics, in the style of Paul Ricoeur, with both its constructive and suspicious procedures could prove helpful. Ricoeur's delineation of hermeneutics encourages the interaction of explanation and understanding and thus permits the fruitful interplay of objective and subjective dispositions. It also has the advantage of admitting that facts are never simply facts — they are always already forms of interpretation. Thus, typologies and neutral analyses may often reveal more about the preoccupations of those who propose them than about the actual phenomena studied and discussed.

My paper is not a defence of this position nor a substantial contribution to the theoretical articulation of a hermeneutic approach,

instead it is an exercise in hermeneutics of a particular topic that has captured the interest of thinkers in diverse fields — including religious studies. It is an illustration of the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion — here with something of a feminist flavour — so that the biases and projections that inform much of scholarly theorizing can be discerned.

Contemporary discussions of the gift, be they in secular or religious settings, are entangled in an elaborate web of discourses, ranging from economical systems of finely calibrated reciprocity (Mauss 1967); to hallowed invocations of gratuitous expenditure (Bataille 1985; Cixous and Clément 1986); to rhetorical speculations regarding the conundrum of its definition (Derrida 1992); to the dynamics of a mutually affirming relationship (Irigaray 1996). Such discussions, with their obvious Western preoccupations, also entail a dubious agenda, inherited from earlier anthropological exercises, where other peoples' cultures provided the occasion for confirming theoretically biased preconceptions or musings about alternative utopian vistas.

In a post-modern, post-colonial setting, perhaps the only way to approach the topic of the gift is to examine some of the exegetical burdens it has borne and continues to bear. The figure of woman, maligned or idealized, has figured in many male analyses of the phenomenon of the gift. Her status in most of this work is an indicator of their own culture's received bias towards women. These theories reveal an assumed superiority that permitted Western men both to exercise dominance in their own culture and to exhibit an insensitivity to other cultures. As a result, they have often made pronouncements on the status of women in an unqualified universal fashion.

Thus, it is unfortunate that certain contemporary women scholars, in attempting to rebut this latter tendency and to provide alternative theories regarding women, also leave unexamined the colonizing mentality of the male scholars. Perhaps it could be said that any definition of the gift in the contemporary west reveals the predicament that continues to ensnare anyone, male or female, who approaches it — loaded as it is with over-determined cultural baggage that further embroils even those who attempt to disavow any influence.

1. Preoccupations with the Gift: That which is Given

Perhaps the seminal study this century, and the impetus of much recent theorizing, is Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* (1967), which was informed by his readings of Franz Boas' *On the North-Western Tribes of Canada* (1894) and *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (1966), as well as Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). In both the Kwakiutl potlatch and the Melanesian kula ring, Mauss detected a delicate balance of giving, receiving and repayment — with a broadly defined religious orientation sustaining the interacting social, political and economic aspects. Mauss' elaboration was directed to extolling communal values as opposed to contemporary Western nationalistic and acquisitive interests. In his "Moral Conclusions", Mauss ends with an endorsement of this "primitive" economy as inculcating a generous disposition that is "less serious, avaricious and selfish than we are" (1967: 79), and less predisposed to war.

It is by opposing reason to emotion and setting up the will for peace against rash follies of the kind that peoples succeed in substituting alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation. (1967: 80)

While superficially a generous endorsement, such a retrogressive projection reflected more Mauss' own preoccupations at the time of writing in post-World War I Europe. His recommendations are questionable today not just from the viewpoint of unwarranted deductions (however romantic), but from the findings resulting from a reexamination of the original material. Such reservations are expressed by the scholar of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith:

It is terribly complicated and not clear to me what belongs in and what belongs out of the category, and I really do not have it sorted out; and particularly now that Goldman and others have researched the Kwakiutl material, terribly important things are coming out. What's happened is that the opportunity to go back to Boas' notes at Columbia and see what he wrote, as opposed to what he thought he wrote twenty years later, has had the result that the Kwakiutl turn out no longer to have a potlatch. How then is potlatch to be related to exchange and exchange to potlatch? (Burkert, Girard and Smith 1987: 214–5; see Goldman 1975)

Apart from registering this sobering reflection, it is beyond the scope of this presentation to undertake a thorough investigation of the exact reliability of the base data concerned with potlatch itself.

But it does indicate that a close scrutiny of all such imposed categories is imperative and a beginning has been made in an important study by Christopher Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (1997). The concomitant problem that I wish to focus on in this paper is of equal moment with regard to unwarranted assumptions — it is the refusal to acknowledge women as full participants or agents in these procedures concerned with the gift.

Mauss is culpable in this regard. He is content to replicate material regarding women's role from Boas and Malinowski:

All these institutions reveal the same kind of social and psychological pattern. Food, women, children, possessions, charms, land, labour, services, religious offices, rank — everything is stuff to be given away and repaid. (Mauss 1967: 11–12)

Mauss is not alone in this devaluation of women. His position can be compared to that of Lévi-Strauss who also generalized from his own observations and from Mauss' as well as Malinowski's Trobriand work:

The prohibition of incest is less a rule prohibiting marriage with the mother, sister or daughter, than a rule obliging the mother, sister or daughter to be given to others. It is the supreme rule of the gift, and it is clearly in this aspect, too often unrecognized, which allows its nature to be understood. (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 481)

The sad fact is that Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, following Malinowski, as did others who were influenced by Durkheim's sacred and profane dichotomy, did not deem that the realm of women merited serious study.¹ They were viewed as the property of men, without significant rituals or property of their own.

While Luce Irigaray, a contemporary women critic, does not refer to Mauss specifically, she does cite Lévi-Strauss in her essay "Women on the Market"(1985b), where she criticizes the accepted generalization of trafficking in women as well as its rationalizations.

¹ Anthropologist Diane Bell in her work, *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1994: 36, 242–248), has illustrated how Australian aboriginal women have suffered from the limitations of many Western men's circumscribed view of the women of their own society (particularly with reference to Durkheim's categories of sacred and profane). For example, Bell's work relates how Australian aboriginal women were judged profane according to the Durkheimian structure, thus lacking the necessary attributes for sacred rituals and myths, and therefore not even worth being studied.

Why exchange women? Because they are “scarce [commodities] ... essential to the life of the group,” the anthropologist tells us. Why this characteristic of scarcity, given the biological equilibrium between male and female births? Because the “deep polygamous tendency, which exists among all men, always makes the number of available women seem insufficient.” (Irigaray 1985b: 170)

Besides ironically questioning the implicit assumptions that all men are intrinsically desirable to women and that women could not possibly have polygamous inclinations, Irigaray makes the sweeping observation that women’s only value appears to be that of an exchange commodity.

All the social regimes of “History” are based upon the exploitation of one “class” of producers, namely women. Whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labour force) and whose constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order as such, without any compensation in kind going to them for that “work”. (Irigaray 1985b: 173)

Irigaray expands on this remark, by emphasizing women’s contribution as providing the unacknowledged infrastructure of the entire socio-economic apparatus that goes by the name of patriarchy. In Irigaray’s view, this repressed role has never been acknowledged, let alone deemed worthy of consideration for its indispensable contribution. Irigaray’s early work is dedicated to exposing and rectifying this oversight, which she views as ubiquitous.

2. The Ultimate Gift — Sacrifice

There is a denser and more extreme aspect of the gift — the notion of sacrifice — which was also broached by Mauss and Hubert (1964). This dimension has been elaborated at great extent in the work of René Girard. Mauss had set the scene by stating:

The connection of exchange contracts among men with those between men and gods explains a whole aspect of the theory of sacrifice. It is best seen in those societies where contractual and economic ritual is practised by men. (Mauss 1967: 13)

He had then associated this sacrificial dimension with a religious impulse that he posited at the heart of potlatch:

Sacrificial destruction implies giving something that is to be repaid ... It is not simply to show power and wealth and unselfishness that a man puts his slaves to death, burns his precious oil, throws coppers into the sea, and sets his house on fire. In doing this he is also sacrificing to the gods and spirits, who appear incarnate in the men who are at once their namesakes and ritual allies. (Mauss 1967: 14)

Mauss did not elaborate in detail on the spiritual underpinnings of this sacrificial impulse — but he located them within a “*do ut des*” dynamic of an anticipated abundant divine recompense, with the added underlying incentive of an insurance policy against covetous evil spirits.

Girard’s work, while it acknowledges this human propensity to ward off potential malevolence of deistic figures, expands the basic gestures of placation to include actual human sacrifice. For Girard, the origin of religion can be located in the complex motivations that instigate such sacrificial activity. He would claim: “All religious rituals spring from the surrogate victim (scapegoat), and all the great institutions of mankind, both secular and religious, spring from this [sacrificial] ritual” (Girard 1991: 306). In Girard’s reading of a primal act of violence, it is not protection, nor appeasement for the murder of the father (as in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*), that instigates this immemorial compensatory gesture. Instead, Girard cites a form of guilt that arises in response to arbitrarily motivated designs on another’s property (which he terms as a form of mimesis) as responsible. Such cupidity of another’s goods can escalate out of proportion, unless it is contained by the sacrifice of a substitute figure that defuses the situation. (Again, as with Freud, this archaic mythic projection would seem implausible on many counts; Frear 1992).

In Girard’s script, however, in contrast to Freud’s conclusions regarding the endless repetition compulsion of religion rituals, there is the intervention of the Christ figure, the ultimate innocent victim. Christ inverts the established order by revealing the mercenary machinations involved in former sacrifices, and thus, by his own sacrifice, overturns and renders as henceforth inappropriate, the violent origins of religion.

Girard’s theories, however, as those of the previously mentioned male anthropologists, exhibit a distinct bias in favour of the male of the species. Not once does he refer to women’s participation (or lack of it) in this ritual of immolation — except for a casual, even dismissive reference to Dionysian maenads. This is also in line with

Girard's disapproval of all pagan precedents, for Girard's work, as it progresses, becomes an earnest vindication of Christianity.

Luce Irigaray, in *Women, the Sacred and Money* (1993), castigates Girard's religious polemic for its neglect of women. In the context of sacrifice, however, Irigaray is especially concerned to stress that beneath Girard's speculations regarding the scapegoat figure — the sacrifice of whom restores equilibrium — there is another unacknowledged victim — woman. This female figure does not feature as an overt offering on an altar, but as a victim of covert deprivation and denial. On this reading, women's flesh, her integrity, her special place in the social order are all effaced by a man's emphasis on his gender's role not just as primordial in the religious, but also in the social scheme of things. It is here that Irigaray forges a link between her earlier indictment of woman as acknowledged infrastructure in an economy of goods and services, and women as the repressed source of life in a psychoanalytically ordered economy of desire.

At the same time, Irigaray makes another observation of profound significance with regard to the institution of sacrifice —This is the fact that women have rarely, if ever, been involved not just in the preliminary protocols of sacrifice, but of its public rituals.

One thing is obvious: in the religions of sacrifice, religious and social ceremonies are almost universally performed by men. Men alone perform the rite, not women or children (though male children can sometimes act as acolytes). Women have no right to officiate in public worship in most traditions, even though that worship serves as the basis and structure for the society. (Irigaray 1993: 78)

A similar encompassing judgment has also been made by Nancy Jay in her detailed study of numerous sacrificially-oriented societies: *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* (1992). Jay's conclusions are a complement to Irigaray's, as she argues for sacrifice as the legitimation of patrilineal line of descent as opposed to the matrilineal.²

Sacrifice may be performed for many reasons. But it is beautifully adapted for integrating patrilineal descent groups, a goal that can only be accomplished by differentiation from all other lines of descent. Sacrifice can both expiate descent from women

² I am aware of the possibility of ahistorical theoretical and empirical generalization made by Jay. There are critiques of Jay's treatment of sacrifice. See Raab 1997 and Strenski 1996.

(along with other dangers) and integrate the “pure and eternal patrilineage. (1985: 296–297)

Whether such all-inclusive diagnoses as those of Irigaray and Jay stand the test of further enquiry, particularly with regard to non-Western cultures, the disregard of women they observe is nonetheless a corollary of customs concerned with sacrifice in Western religions that place women as external to the exercise of power, rather than as a partner or participant. They are symptomatic of a much more deep-rooted and pervasive value system that has inculcated the bifurcation of purity and danger, sacred and profane, nature and culture. In most theoretical variants of this binarism, as promulgated by Western scholars, women have been generally associated with the less valued side of the pair.³

As an alternate scenario, Irigaray would envision a social and religious dimension where sacrifice, whether social or psychic, is no longer needed and where a just and mutually confirming mode of exchange operates.

3. The All-Giving

There is a third fascinating elaboration of women’s situation, also prompted by Mauss’s reflections on the gift, that needs to be noted. In Mauss’s account of the gift there was an ambivalent relation between a system of economic and social checks and balances governing the gift, and a moral impulse, sustaining a purely disinterested offering that is free of any qualifications. It is this latter extravagant gesture that has been embellished, most particularly in the work of George Bataille, who proposes an alternative model of dispensation that, in its unconstrained largesse, is characteristic of women: “To give is the fundamental feminine attitude” (1987: 127). This unconditional abundance as *dépense* (expenditure) was Bataille’s modification of (in his view) Mauss’ domestication of the profligate waste evident in Boas’ description of potlatch celebrations. In such a transgressive (or general) economy, it is not simply the civilized (i.e., bourgeois) utilitarian exchange of objects that Bataille wished to counter. In addition, he wanted to (re-)introduce a world view, untarnished by profane, rational calculations, where an economy of superabundance — be it in rituals of sacrifice, in squandering of riches, or in dissolution of assets — witnesses to a sacred universe.

³ Genevieve Lloyd documents this in Lloyd 1993.

This sacral reality has nothing to do with the orthodoxies of organized religion. For Bataille religion, specifically Christianity, has eradicated the innate human propensity for sacrality by the imposition of moral categories which deny the superabundant energy that Bataille considered the essence of life. Instead, eroticism and the role of women became central motifs in Bataille's exposition of transgression. The essential link, however, that conjoins eroticism and woman is sacrifice — a phenomenon which Bataille invested with the most intense release of both violence and dread, yet which affirmed the essential sacred nature of life. As Bataille asserts in his essay "Hegel, Death and Sacrifice,"

It must be said too that sacrifice, like tragedy, was an element that of a celebration; it bespoke a blind, pernicious joy and all the danger of that joy, and yet this is precisely the principle of human joy; it wears out and threatens with death all who get caught up in its movement. (Bataille 1982: 23)

Bataille's model fashions woman as the exemplar par excellence of this gesture of the requisite abandon and degradation.

[I]n the sacrificial act of sexuality, it is the woman who has the dubious honour of being the victim par excellence: The lover strips bare the beloved of her identity no less than the blood-stained priest his human or animal victim. The woman in the hands of her assailant is despoiled of her being. (Bataille 1987: 90)

Michele Richman illustrates the difficulty of this position when she reflects on the role of woman in the context of Bataille's elaboration of Mauss' *The Gift*. "The possible relation of their [women's] transgressive sexuality to the position ascribed them in the exchange system of patriarchal society is never explicitly considered" (1982: 81).

Perhaps for Bataille, as for Mauss and Lévi-Strauss, the blind-spot in the old dream of symmetry, the fantasy/fetishization of women, distorts not just men's attempts to control the operations of a society, but also their experiments exploring a divergent order. As is obvious, their observations on the gift have very little relation either to the primary anthropological data or to the lives of actual women. Yet it is this trajectory of the gift and its connection to women that still continues to exercise a fascination for many Western thinkers.

4. Beyond the Token of the Gift

The reaction of women theorists to this phenomenon has not been without its problems. The early work of Luce Irigaray with her use of the term *jouissance*, and of Hélène Cixous with her deployment of the term *l'écriture féminine*, demonstrate that both these French women theorists were disposed to the notion of woman as a term that eluded, in its expansiveness, “phallogocentric” confinement/repression. Both waxed lyrical, in a quasi-deconstructive style (and here the influence of Derrida is evident), about the possibilities of female recalcitrance to control and the exorbitance of female sexuality. Cixous contrasted the debased form of exchange economy that has been exploited by men in the past, with that of women (such in the figure of Ariadne) who lives “without calculating, without hesitating, but believing, taking everything as far as it goes, giving everything, renouncing all security” (Cixous and Clemént 1986: 75). Cixous obviously believes that there is a inordinate mode of “feminine” economy, that can be distinguished from that of the manipulative and calculating “masculine” formula.⁴ In this capacity Cixous observes it is possible for a woman to give of herself without reserve, but, in this proposed model, she is never taken advantage of, never despoiled.

If there is a self proper to women, paradoxically, it is her capacity to deappropriate herself without self-interest: endless body, without ‘end,’ without Principal ‘parts’; if she is a whole, it is a whole made up of parts that are whole, not simple, partial objects but varied entirety, moving and boundless change, a cosmos where eros never stops travelling, vast astral space. (1986: 87)

Cixous’ vocabulary of immoderation, however, is reminiscent of the prodigality endorsed by Bataille, where woman offers herself as a gift which is not in need of recompense. I think such utopian alternatives require extremely careful contextual scrutiny by women before they are unhesitatingly adopted (even as a disruptive strategy), or women will only too easily still find themselves at the mercy of a system, that while paying lip-service to a nomenclature of freedom from constraint, simply conducts business as usual.

⁴ Cixous does allow, however, that it is possible for men to have “feminine” as well as “masculine” attributes, just as women may have “masculine” as well as “feminine” ones.

Irigaray, influenced by Lacan as well as Derrida, sought initially to affirm jouissance both as a mode of excess sexual pleasure and also as a tactic of textual sedition, disruptive of the patriarchal symbolic system:

Turn everything upside down, inside out, back to front. Rack it with radical convulsions, carry back, reimport, those crises that her “body” suffers in her impotence to say what disturbs her... Not by means of a growing complexity of the same, of course, but by the irruption of other circuits, by the intervention at times of short-circuits that will disperse, diffract, deflect endlessly, making energy explode sometimes, with no possibility of returning to one single origin. (1985a: 142)

Though these various images of refractory women are galvanized in the service of dismantling the foundations of both the philosophical and social order, something could easily go awry in these programmes. Irigaray's endless diffusions initially seemed to run a similar risk as Cixous' of playing into the hands of entrenched structures. The question needs to be asked to whom, and for what purpose, does woman give (of) herself without reserve? Is it for subversion, for self-affirmation, or in the service of others? Unless women are clear about their motivation, it is too easy for women's munificence, viewed as a reckless abandonment, to be rendered ineffective by a system finely tuned to neutralize any wayward impulses. Still trapped by the ubiquitous binary structures, which remain unaffected by magnanimity, women may continue to represent an excessiveness which is the obverse of a capitalistic accumulation and exploitation. I believe that this aspect of both Cixous' and Irigaray's work, though reformatory in its motives, flirts with the danger of simply reinforcing women's eccentricity and incapability of challenging in any practical way the sacrificial nature of women's situation.

There is, however, a change in the direction of Irigaray's work from approximately the late 1980s, when she began to reflect on the work of Hegel and Levinas. Aware that deconstructive excesses were not sufficient for a new order, she began to seek a position that would not simply be a reactive move within a restrictive dialectic formula:

If neither absolute spirit nor the traditional Western monotheistic God seem to be the paths of a becoming, how can we ensure that the negative does not entail martyrdom? (1996: 13)

This search marks a rejection of the previous rules of exchange, whether of a binary or dialectical mode, where “the sacrifice of sexed

identity to a universal [was] defined by man with death as its master" (1996: 26). This introduces a further exploration by Irigaray of the possibility of a non-coercive, non-retributive exchange. In the social domain, Irigaray's utopian vision of a new order is based on a new mode of relationship

beyond the enslavement to property, beyond the subjects' submission to the object...[it seeks] a new economy of existence or being which is neither that of mastery nor that of slavery but rather of exchange with no preconstituted object — vital exchange...an exchange able to communicate, at times commune, beyond any exchange of objects. (1996: 45)

Though these exhortations of Irigaray are extraordinarily powerful, and her assertions regarding women's suppression by religion and its substitutes in the West are valid, they are perhaps in need of some cautionary restraints. Just as the male theorists have made false universalizations regarding women and the gift, I believe it is incorrect to assume, as Irigaray does, that such restrictions have been ubiquitously imposed on women throughout all histories and cultures.

While I believe Irigaray's work has been helpful in indicating the compromised stereotypical sexual constructions that have reverberated in Eurocentric deliberations on the gift, her own solutions do not entirely escape their beguiling seductions, specifically on questions of race, class and ethnicity. Irigaray does not criticize Lévi-Strauss or Girard on any other grounds than their biased and inappropriate treatment of women. There is no awareness that not just their analysis, but that the actual anthropological data may be flawed by the imposition of ethnocentric categories. Specifically, Irigaray does not realize that her work may also be imposing inappropriate generalizations on women in non-Western societies. Fortunately, in recent years, there have been women anthropologists who have since taken the male thinkers' classificatory systems to task, and their criticisms could also be a warning for Western women who are not sufficiently sensitive to issues of appropriation.

4. Alternate Scenarios

Annette Weiner, in her own study of Trobriand society has demonstrated that not all women have been powerless:

Beyond the ethnographic data, however, the “discovery” that Trobriand women have power and that women enact roles which are symbolically, structurally, and functionally significant to the ordering of Trobriand society, and to the roles that men play, should give us, as anthropologists, cause for concern... we have accepted almost without question the nineteenth century Western legacy that had effectively segregated women from positions of power. (Weiner 1976: 228)

In a similar vein, Eleanor Leacock criticizes Lévi-Strauss for erroneous assertions and for the deliberate omission of such egalitarian people as the Iroquois who would have challenged his theories:

The stubborn fact remains that even in its own terms Levi-Strauss entire scheme founders on those societies that are matrilineal...and matrilocal...It is therefore not surprising that in the space of a page and a half in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, there are four (incorrect) statements about such forms as extremely rare and transitory (116–117). Although he dedicates his book to Lewis Henry Morgan, Levi-Strauss does not include the matrilineal-matrilocal Iroquois described by Morgan among his ‘rare’ examples. (Leacock 1981: 235)

The fact that there have been matrilineal and matrilocal peoples where the gift of women was never the basis of the social or religious economy, questions the ubiquitous assumptions of women’s lower status and lack of power. As Weiner describes it, women were not the pawns in the pervasive patriarchal exchange system that Malinowski and Mauss described:

Throughout the Pacific and other societies of similar political scale, women as sisters and spouses gain their own domains of power through controlling economic resources and protecting inalienable possessions and the various cosmological phenomena that provide authentication of historical, ancestral linkages. (Weiner 1992: 152)

Weiner’s and Leacock’s portraits of societies where women exert control over a sphere, both material and spiritual, upon which no man may encroach, and where “the female domain, the regenesis of human life, is accorded primary value” (Weiner 1989: 234), makes the automatic assignation of women to secondary status appear simplistic and insensitive. Perhaps a more thorough questioning of the implicit Western orientation involved would have revealed a far more complex set of structures to emerge not just in Melanesian society, but in those of other peoples where women both have and ne-

gotiate social positions in ways that could inform Eurocentric blind-spots (Etienne and Leacock 1980). It could also point to models of exchange that would help Irigaray in her deliberations regarding a non-restrictive mode of exchange. However, this should not lead to unwarranted extrapolations of such examples as ideals for Western women, any more than to distortions by the imposition of artificial Western categories. As Marilyn Strathern warns:

The difference between Western and Melanesian (we/they) sociality means that one cannot simply extend Western feminist insights to the Melanesian case;...the difference between gift/commodity is expanded as a metaphorical base on which difference itself may be apprehended and put to use for both anthropologist and feminist purposes, yet remains rooted in Western metaphysics. (1988: 7)

Strathern's comments are indicative of the fact that the whole notion of difference needs to be faced squarely so that it can be recognized as that which provokes both idealizations and defence mechanisms, particularly on the part of a Western assimilative mindset. Difference, as it has functioned within a dialectic or binary format, is often disclosive of ingrained biases rather than an indicator of the need for a radical self-reflexive questioning of the actual system itself. Weiner's comments in his regard are salutary:

In weaving the "gift" myth, is not the anthropologist hiding a reality that concerns his or her role in his or her society? Is he or she not perpetuating and creating an image of "the primitive" as a person, or "primitive society" as a way of life, that has survived on some fundamental principle other than self-interest? (Weiner 1976: 221)

By simply embroidering such a fabrication, instead of questioning its basis and motivations (conscious or otherwise), Western scholarship continues to perpetuate the world in its own image. This tendency is strongly evident in the work of many theorists who, while they ostensibly display their distaste for the absolutes of Western metaphysics, also play fast and loose with questionable source material to support their disruptive models. In the same way, both Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, though they are critical of the male-centred Western adaptations, also seem circumscribed by the same Western parameters to which they are reacting. Thus, a discriminating cultural critique as well as a judicious self-reflexion would seem then to be a needed ingredient in any further discussion of the gift.

Conclusion

But perhaps these examples of selective reading of questionable data and utopian improvisations highlight a common predicament as the Eurocentric mindset is confronted by otherness — be it its former colonized peoples or its own internalized forms of exclusion. There needs to be a recognition that the phenomenon of the gift and the fascination it exerts for contemporary thinkers is a measure of dissatisfaction with prevailing norms. As a test case, the phenomenon of the gift needs to be perceived as an instance of heterogeneity in a culture that, despite its convoluted escape mechanisms, cannot honestly confront its repressive controlling impulses. The gift is thus a symptom par excellence of Western tendencies to distort for its own purposes (whether benign, malevolent or simply ignorant) whatever is viewed as alien, exotic or excluded. This has largely been (non-Western) cultures, women and those of other racial, class or ethnic varieties. Such behaviour is evident not just in anthropology and literature, but in philosophy, and especially in religious studies where the prevailing norm has been the cliché of the neutral male scholar. Insofar as this propensity is unacknowledged, the gift will remain an enigma to a society such as ours that refuses to admit not just its blind-spots (whether cultural, racial or sexual), but the mechanisms that continue to produce them. It will thus compensate by demonizing or idealizing uncritically, the *other* as bearer of those repressions that make its continued flourishing possible.

References

Bataille, Georges

- 1982 Hegel, Death and Sacrifice. On Bataille. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Yale French Studies, 78)
- 1985 Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–39. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- 1987 Erotism: Death & Sensuality. London: Marion Boyas.
- 1992 Theory of Religion. New York: Zone Books.

Bell, Diane

- 1994 Daughters of the Dreaming. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Boas, Franz

- 1894 Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada. London: British Association for the Advancement of Science. [microform]
- 1966 Kwakiutl Ethnography. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bracken, Christopher

1997 The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burkhert, Walter , René Girard , and Jonathan Z. Smith

1987 Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Cixous, Hélène, and Catherine Clément

1986 The Newly Born Woman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, Jacques

1992 Given Time: The Time of the King. *Critical Inquiry* 18/2: 161–187.

Etienne, Mona, and Eleanor Leacock (eds.)

1980 Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives. New York: Praeger.

Frear, George L.

1992 René Girard on Mimesis, Scapegoats, and Ethics. *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* pp. 115–133.

Girard, René

1991 The Scapegoat. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Goldman, Irving

1975 The Mouth of Heaven: An Introduction to Kwakiutl Religious Thought. New York: Wiley.

Hubert, Henri, and Marcel Mauss

1964 Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Irigaray Luce

1985a Speculum of the Other Woman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

1985b This Sex Which is not One. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

1993 Sexes and Genealogies. New York: Columbia University Press..

1996 I Love to You. Sketch for a Felicity within History New York: Routledge. [1992]

Jay, Nancy

1985 Sacrifice As a Remedy for Having been Born of Woman. Immaculate and Powerful. Ed. Clarissa Atkinson et al. Boson: Beacon Press.

1992 Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leacock, Eleanor Burke

1981 Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles on Women Cross-Culturally. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

1969 The Elementary Structures of Kinship. Boston: Beacon Press .

Lloyd, Genevieve

1993 The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Malinowski, Bronislaw

- 1922 Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea. London: Routledge & Sons.

Mauss, Marcel

- 1967 The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies. New York: Norton.

Raab, Kelley Ann

- 1997 Nancy Jay and a Feminist Psychology of Sacrifice. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 13/1: 75–89.

Richman, Michele

- 1982 Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Strathern, Marilyn

- 1988 The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Strenski, Ivan

- 1996 Between Theory and Speciality: Sacrifice in the 90s. *Religious Studies Review* 22/1: 10–20.

Weiner, Annette B.

- 1976 Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- 1992 Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving. Berkeley: University of California Press.

M A T T I K A M P P I N E N

From Cultural Domains to Cognitive Models

Inference and Explanation in Cognitive Anthropology

I will examine the patterns of inference and explanation utilized in cognitive anthropology of religion. My aim is twofold: first, to explicate their complementary roles in anthropological inquiry, and second, to discuss whether religious data, or people's perception of fundamental questions, pose any specific questions that should be taken into account.

The story will go as follows. First I will remind the reader of the cycle of interpretation, also called the Sherlock Holmes Method, where the researcher purports to guess the underlying structures on the basis of perceived or otherwise measured data. Then I will proceed to three examples from the field. These examples will highlight the kinds of religious models that have been prominent in my own fieldwork, carried out in the Peruvian Amazon and Western Finland. With the help of examples, I will discuss, not only the problem of inference and explanation, but also the nature of religiosity and fundamental questions, and will propose the notion of quasi-religious attitudes in order to deal with diverse phenomena. After the examples I will bring up some questions inherent in the search for models, namely the multitude of possible models and pertinent doubts about under-determination. It may well be that until now, the reader has not been worrying about the problem of under-determination, but I hope, from now on, she will. Finally, I will set for the search for religious models: what they are, where they reside, on what features they should be grounded.

1. The cycle of interpretation, or Sherlock Holmes at work

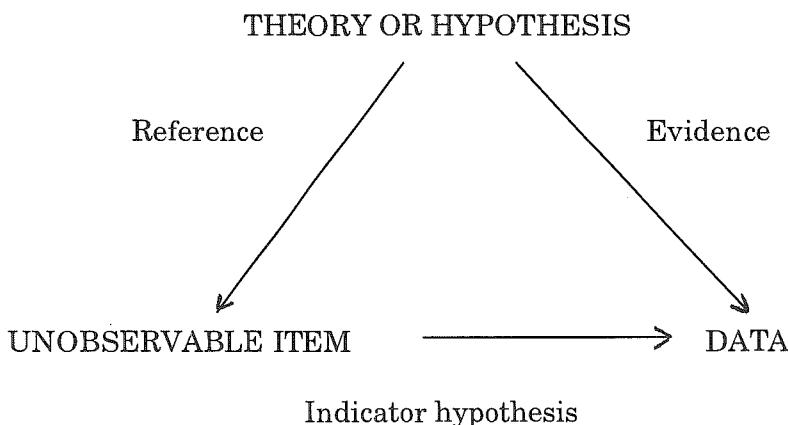
In the field of research of cognitive anthropology, there are three types of structured phenomena whose composition and dynamics are studied: (i) the cognitive systems themselves (human beings and groups), (ii) the cognitive or cultural models which provide the systems with representations and networks of meaning, and (iii) the cultural domains, or the cognized worlds, which are generated by the workings of cognitive systems and their models. The last realm is the collage of constructed realities. Both cognitive systems and cognitive models belong to the "cognizing" reality, whereas the cultural domains inhabit the "cognized" or constructed reality.

The course of cognitive inquiry consists of three steps: first, the cultural domain of a selected theme is mapped and described, and second, the existence and nature of cognitive models operating behind the domain is inferred. The third step is to utilize the inferred structures for the purpose of explaining the features of the cultural domain.

This three-step constellation is also known as the Sherlock Holmes Method, where the properties of the data are made intelligible on the basis of structures which are inferred from the very same data. Sherlock Holmes was famous for his ability to infer the existence of entities which actually did exist. For example, the forced smile of the butler, his nightly departure from the house, and the tracks of mud on the porch all point to the possibility that the butler was there at the time of murder. The assumption that the butler really is the villain, makes all these happenings intelligible, and enables Mr Holmes to weave a coherent story of what took place. We the cognitive anthropologists are on the same mission: making sense of perceived happenings in terms of hidden structures, or models.

An important distinction which should be made is the one between reference and evidence. Sherlock Holmes was extremely capable in constructing the reference in terms of the evidence. Theories of religious thinking and behaviour refer to the unobservable cognitive models, whereas the theories are supported by the evidence extracted from the cultural domain, or data.

The connection between the models and the domain is usually called operationalization, but I agree with Mario Bunge (1983) that the term *indicator hypothesis* is much more informative: the assumption to the effect that a cultural phenomena of type X indicates a model of type Y is a hypothesis. Figure 1 shows the mutual relations between these concepts.



2. Three examples from the field: inferring the models of fundamental questions

2.1. *Healing in the Amazon*

Among the mestizo peasants of the Peruvian Amazon, there are several illnesses which are treated by means of blowing tobacco smoke. One such illness is **susto**, or fright, where the patient is assumed to have lost his or her soul in encountering an evil spirit or other negative influence. In the treatment process the patient is cleansed with tobacco smoke. The smoke enters her spiritual tubes and expels the evil influences which have entered her body. Sometimes the influences are in very concrete forms: illness projectiles like spines, magical darts or small animals. As a rule, witchcraft-related illnesses, or cases of **brujería**, involve projectiles. Their treatment consists in removing the projectiles from the body, and then sheltering and fortifying the body against invaders (for a detailed description and analysis, see Kamppinen 1989.)

In cases of fright and witchcraft, the patient is treated in accordance with the container model—that is, the participants construe the patient in terms of boundaries, inside and outside. The cleaning of the body tubes by means of the tobacco smoke, as well as the manipulation of evil influences all indicate the workings of the container model. Once accepted, the model makes the treatment, the beliefs, the sayings, and other cultural data intelligible.

The container model is inferred from the data, and the model and the data are connected by the means of an indicator hypothesis, which assumes that the encountered pieces of thinking and doing

are sustained by the container model. The explanation (or cognitive systematization) of encountered phenomena relies on the container model, or to be exact, on the hypothesis concerning the container model.

Ethnomedical beliefs are usually considered religious for the reason that they deal with fundamental questions, and in addition that they are accompanied with superhuman agents, for example spirits and mythical beings. The next example will take us to different kinds of fundamental questions, to a discourse which is not traditionally seen as backed by religious models.

2.2. Models of trust and superhuman actors in Western Finland

The second example comes from Western Finland, where we studied the environmental attitudes of people affected by the siting process of the coal power plant (Raivola and Kamppinen 1994). I will argue that environmental attitudes qualify as quasi-religious attitudes. Their objects are superhuman actors, and they are conceptualized in like manner as traditional deities. The parallels between the contemporary era of late modernity and pre-modern times are sought and exposed, and the specific models of superhuman actors are discussed.

2.2.1. The archaic nature of late modernity

In several key sociology texts, contemporary times—notorious late modernity—have been compared to the pre-modern or archaic era. Anthropologists of religion have known all the time that the basic characteristics of man do not change rapidly, and that there are many shared features which span over ages. But there is more to this comparison. One explicit claim, made especially by Ulrich Beck (1992), is that the era of late modernity hosts risks and risk agents which behave like the superhuman actors of the pre-modern era. More precisely, apparent secularization is only apparent; it cultivates new (quasi)religiosity, which is directed towards the invisible superhuman agents of our times. Beck's claim can be given more content by means of a game-theoretical illustration (Brams 1983). Superhuman actors like deities, fairies, gods etc. are players similar to industrial or governmental agents: both are superhuman in the literal sense that they have intellectual, physical, emotional, causal and other resources which exceed the powers of average human beings. Most of us are familiar with the superhuman qualities of governmental agencies at least—how they remember your age, health, and unpaid taxes.

In addition to governmental actors, there are other curious things running wild in late modernity: the risks, especially those pertaining to chemicalization and radioactivity. What is characteristic of contemporary risks is that they are (1) theory-dependent, (2) invisible to unaided perception, (3) potentially lethal and potentially blessing. The first two characteristics are linked together. Since we cannot see, smell, taste or hear most risk agents of our times, we have to rely on the theoretical interpretations which inform us about the whereabouts of these risks. Theories provide us with sorts of causal maps, which indicate the causes and consequences of risk agents: where they reside, how they are brought into being, how they affect us, and what we can do in order to avoid them. Theory-dependence brings about dependence on experts, those who know how to deal with risks. The contemporary risks parallel with the evil effects or influences of pre-modern times. Both are controlled by "those who know", and average members of the respective societies have to have blind faith in the experts. Take, for example, the greenhouse effect: its presence, dynamics, and future effects are all provided to us through expert knowledge. Even those of us who choose to protest against the causes of greenhouse effect, are bound to accept the expert representation of the world. The risk consciousness is highly theoretical.

The third characteristic, namely, that risks involve enormous potential for harm and blessing, is most prominent in food additives. Their blessings are many: we can get edible items from the other side of the globe, and trust that vacuum-packed ham stays non-poisonous for days. On the other hand, we do not quite know what we are receiving as by-products, and very few people know what the long term effects are. The situation is similar to evil influences—as they behave, for example, in the mestizo culture of the Peruvian Amazon (Kamppinen 1989). The powers can be used both for good and evil purposes.

Thus the argument for the archaic nature of late modernity seems quite plausible. Beck is not the only one who has argued for the parallel in question. Mary Douglas, as well as Durkheim and Mauss, in their time, have argued for the similarity of risk classifications in different cultures (see also Kamppinen 1997).

In the next section I will look at a particular case which illustrates the nature of superhuman actors of late modernity.

2.2.2. The case of Meri-Pori coal power plant

We studied the cultural effects of the siting process of the Meri-Pori coalpower plant in Reposaari, Western Finland (Raivola and

Kamppinen 1994). Our aim was to describe and contextualize the attitudes towards the plant. Our central hypothesis was the standard Douglasian idea: the perceived risks of the coalpower plant vary according to the different frames into which they are adjusted. The material was collected by means of interviews and systematic ethnographic participation.

The acceptability (or the risk) of the coal power plant was relativized to different dimensions:

- What is the distribution of costs and benefits?
- What is the location of oneself in the distributive map?
- How justified is the distribution?
- Are the effects under control, and if they are, who is in charge?
- How far in the future do the harmful effects reach?
- Is the direction of change to the better or worse?

These dimensions are known from studies conducted by Slovic et al. (see Slovic 1987). Another, kind of higher-level theme which figured in interviews was the notion of *trust*, namely:

- Who are the players in this game?
- What are their intentions?
- Can they be trusted?
- How powerful are they?

With respect to trust, our informants fell nicely into two ideal-type classes: the technology optimists and the technology pessimists. Those of our informants who trusted the technological and political elite, perceived the risks of the plant as acceptable. These optimists thought they were in good hands, and that Finnish engineering will solve the possible future problems. They did not see any unsolvable or lethal problems arising in the future. Hence, they constructed superhuman actors who were benevolent, powerful, and trustworthy. The pessimists saw grave problems in the future, felt that they were not taken into account in the decision making process, and constructed the superhuman players as malevolent, powerful and untrustworthy. The following citation from a female informant illustrates the construction. She comments on a public hearing which was held in the Reposaari community:

"These coal power company people, they are such that you cannot get a direct answer from them. And in this meeting, they talked for three hours. Since we were allowed to stay there for

four hours only, it was quite a short time. They talked and talked and showed flow charts. They were all well educated, and you know we here in Reposaari have gone only to elementary school. So it is impossible for us to understand them... It is so easy, you just put a flow chart there and show how everything goes just fine, but we don't understand it, unless someone explains it afterwards... If you make a really good flow chart, you silence the common people."

On the other hand, the industry was perceived more trustworthy than the governmental institutions. The political decision making was considered inconsistent, whereas the industry was seen as consistent, even though acting solely for its own good. It is easier to cope with a superhuman actor which is consistent (for example, consistently evil and greedy), than with an actor which changes its basic characteristics every other day.

We analyzed the construction of trust into two components, *fairness* and *control*, and we were able to systematize the construction of trust into four ideal types. Below, they are combined with characteristic statements of the informants:

- 1) Positive perception of fairness and positive perception of control: "Finnish engineering works well, and it is for everybody's benefit that the plant functions."
- 2) Positive perception of fairness and negative perception of control: "You cannot make it so good that there is no risk; it was a good try but the task was too hard."
- 3) Negative perception of fairness and positive perception of control: "They did not want to make it as good as possible; it was only question of money."
- 4) Negative perception of fairness and negative perception of control: "The figures are fake, and the decision making tries to cover previous mistakes."

Our study suggested that trust and its concomitant ontological and epistemological commitments can be used for systematizing the interview material. The different superhuman actors like experts, industry, and governmental entities received their distinctive roles when contextualized in the world of informants, where hopes, fears and other attitudes shape the cognitive landscape.

Next I will take a closer look on the cognitive tools used by our informants in the conceptualization of superhuman actors. The prominent tools were

- ontologization
- personification

Ontologization refers to the cognitive process where the object of mental state is given existential status. Superhuman actors, even though not experienced in visual, auditory, or tactile modalities, are conceived as being there. They are real (Finns believe in the existence of governmental entities more firmly than in the existence God), they have spatial and temporal properties, and they are causally effective. Ontologization transforms the object into a more concrete form, by giving, for example, spatial properties to "experts" who are nowhere in particular. The traditionally strong central government of Finland is also treated as being in particular places, especially in Helsinki, where its main representatives are. Ontologization turns abstract entities into more middle-sized physical objects.

Personification assigns personal, human qualities to non-human entities. Government is considered unfair, industrial bodies greedy, and so on. Personification can be seen as a kind of ontologization, where the concretizing properties are human-like ones.

2.2.3. Environmental issues as fundamental questions

Do environmental attitudes, or attitudes towards technology, qualify as religious attitudes? They certainly deal with fundamental questions, that is, with issues which are of utmost importance for the people in question. The *livelihood*, the surroundings of everyday life, is the aspect of reality with which people are most intensively dealing. In addition to being of fundamental nature, environmental issues involve superhuman actors, which must be taken into account, diagnosed, prognosed, and manipulated. If the term "religious" should be saved for more traditional uses, I think here we have extremely interesting and systematically behaving quasi-religious attitudes.

2.3. *The container model of green markets*

This final example deals with the models of new markets created by environmental legislation and consumer awareness. We studied small and medium sized Finnish firms to find out how they perceive the emergence and the nature of the new green market (Peltomäki and Kamppinen 1995). The methods of data collection were interview and survey. Our principal finding was that those firms which were co-operating with other firms saw the new market as more promising. A question which arose due to this finding was how the

green market was conceptualized. Here it was natural to apply the container model in the process of interpretation. The green market appeared to be an entity whose crucial properties were its boundaries, inside and outside. The market was constantly conceptualized in terms of its boundaries: how to enter, with whom, and when; what was it like to be there, and when to retract from the market.

Here we have another good example of quasireligious attitudes, if you will. The entrepreneurs we interviewed were people who worked for 12 or 16 hours per day. The fundamental question for them was the question of finding the market, entering the market, and staying there.

3. Under-determination

Are there other possible models which could generate the domains of phenomena described above? Unfortunately, there are. What is unfortunate about the situation, is that the models or interpretations are always under-determined by the data. Data provides evidence for alternative models as well. And there is no way to put our favourite models to crucial tests. For one, the healing scene I described in the first example could have been produced by the force model, the balance model, the model of sacred things, or by the propositional ethnotheory of illness and health. The ontological model of superhuman actors could be substituted by a similar set of models. The green market data is readily understood in terms of human action plans, strategies, and resources.

Thus under-determination is real, and there is no escape from it. The problem is well-known also in other fields of research. What is characteristic of humanities and social sciences, is that—in the absence of crucial tests—the determination of models is constrained by intuition, rationality, aesthetic considerations, and over-all argumentative structure employed in the study. Different kinds of models are so abstract that they do not exclude one another, and therefore many researchers have their favourite models which are then put to work. As the reader can conclude from the above examples, my favourite models are container and entity models.

4. Search for religious models of fundamental questions

What are the characteristics of religious models, if any? I propose that religious models are second-order models—they presuppose the

models (and the constructed worlds) of time, space, causality and boundaries. Religious models of gods, for example, ascribe temporal, spatial and causal properties to these things, yet they combine the properties in such ways that gods (entities with such combinations of properties) are found in religious traditions only. Quasi-religious models of superhuman actors, on the other hand, make ontological commitments in ascribing various spatial and temporal properties to these things.

Since religious models can be conceptualized in several alternative ways, and since there is no way to submit them to crucial tests, how to choose between different models? The model of superhuman entity, for example, can be construed in terms of containers and boundaries, or in terms of causal forces, or in terms of social and moral qualities.

In cognitive studies and in cultural anthropology in general, there have been two traditions of placing the different models in top ten lists. One tradition looks for the origins of models, and the other tries to find their actual dwelling places. The Durkheimian tradition has argued that since all cognition is socially conditioned, this “great conditioner”—society—must be the Ultimate Reality which affects all other models, especially the models of fundamental questions. Body-thinkers like Mary Douglas, Mark Johnson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty see the bodily experience as the Ultimate Experience, which shapes all other experiences. This line of thought, which emphasizes the origin models, proceeds to offer the following working rule: religious models will bear traces of their origins, so in studying religious models or in constructing and explaining them, look for their society-like or body-like features. The second tradition, the one which tries to find the actual dwelling place of these models, is more alive today: cognitive neuropsychology aims at pinpointing the mechanisms affecting the models.

To put it briefly, religious models (or models of fundamental questions) have been grounded upon

- society (E. Durkheim)
- bodily experience (M. Johnson, M. Merleau-Ponty, M. Douglas)
- neural structures
- characteristics of human information processing (P. Boyer)
- evolutionary sense (S. Atran, E. O. Wilson, D. C. Dennett)
- human/environment interaction (G. Lakoff, R. D'Andrade)
- logic (E. Hutchins)
- computability
- explanatory cash value (all of us!)

A fruitful source for the construction and evaluation of religious models is the common sense ontology of "Aristotelian" categories. By this I refer to the ontology lying behind the everyday experience, to the assumptions which form the building blocks of the Hortonian "primary theory." This common sense ontology is a theory which deals primarily with middle-sized physical objects, persons, space and time. Its central concepts are those of entity, property, boundary, inside, outside, process, change, action and object.

References

Beck, Ulrich

1992 Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Brams, Steven J.

1983 Superior Beings: If They Exist, How Would We Know? New York: Springer.

Bunge, Mario

1983 Treatise on Basic philosophy; vol. 1: Epistemology & Methodology, 1: Exploring the World. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Kamppinen, Matti

1989 Cognitive Systems and Cultural Models of Illness: A Study of Two Mestizo Peasant Communities of the Peruvian Amazon. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica. (Folklore Fellows' Communications, 244)

1997 Cultural Models of Risk. Turku: Finland Futures Research Centre. (FUTU Research Reports, 2/1997)

Peltomäki, Mikko, and Matti Kamppinen

1995 Yritykset ja ympäristökyysymys (Finnish firms and the environmental issue). Pori: Satakunnan ympäristötutkimuskeskus (Tutkimusraportti/Satakunnan ympäristötutkimuskeskus, A 7)

Raivola, Petri, and Matti Kamppinen

1994 Hiilivoimalan rakentamisen sosiokulttuuriset vaikutukset (The Sociocultural Impacts of Building a Coalpower Plant) Pori: Satakunnan ympäristötutkimuskeskus (Tutkimusraportti/Satakunnan ympäristötutkimuskeskus, A 5)

Slovic, Paul

1987 Perception of Risk. *Science* 236: 280–285.



Keeping Religion in Mind

Cognition is the set of processes by which we come to know the world. Cognitive science is the set of disciplines which investigate these processes and propose explanatory theories about them. What cognitive science is discovering is that the relationships of these processes to each other are quite complex and the route to their products intricate. The resulting picture of cognition that emerges from the study of cognitive processes belies any simplistic views of the mind either as a blank slate needing only external input to establish knowledge, or as a general, all-purpose learning mechanism that acquires knowledge in simple, lockstep stages. Instead cognition is thought to involve various predispositions or biases to acquire knowledge in complex ways, and to involve intricate relationships between cultural input and the mechanisms which process it.

For some students of religion it is becoming increasingly clear that cognitive science promises to contribute to an explanatory understanding of aspects of religious ideas and the practices such ideas inform. In fact some cognitive scientists seem to have discovered in the course of their inquiries into the set of processes by which we come to know the world that religion is worth *keeping in mind* (Boyer 1994; Barrett and Keil 1996; Lawson and McCauley 1990; Lawson and McCauley 1993; Guthrie 1993; Malley 1996; Whitehouse 1992; Whitehouse 1995).

The phrase, "keeping religion in mind", is obviously ambiguous. It can be taken to mean: "Do not forget to study religion as you study the mind." This sense of the phrase is addressed to the *inquirer*, the one doing the study, and involves the recommendation that the scientist not forget to include religion in the course of her investigation. The phrase can also be taken to mean: "Do not forget to keep religion in the mind rather than in the world." The implication here is that too much attention is being paid to the *socio-cultural aspects* of religion at the expense of a serious consideration of its cognitive aspects. This mood is particularly evident in the headlong, postmodernist drive to see everything as socio-cultural with the mind considered little more than a kind of yo-yo toy acting only in response to

socio-cultural forces. The admonishment contained in the recommendation to keep religion in mind reminds us that there is a science of mind, that religious people have minds, use them, and that such minds are worth studying in a systematic and empirical manner. The phrase could also mean that the study of religion should continue to *focus on the mind rather than being relegated to the emotions*. I intend all three of these interpretations: As you study the mind, do not forget to study religion. Do not be so overwhelmed by socio-cultural factors that you forget about the key role that the mind plays in the formation of religious ideas and the practices they inform. And when you study the formation of religious ideas do not become too easily sidetracked into considering only emotive processes.

Now, just because I recommend keeping religion in mind does not mean that the study of religion should stop there, nor that religion is nothing more than mental machinations. I have little doubt that throughout human history, and across human cultures that the term "religion" has a referent i.e. that there are sets of socio-cultural practices, types of socio-cultural institutions, and forms of socio-cultural behavior, that can be called religion and about which there is a great deal to be said, some of it of great interest to scholars interested in developing an explanatory understanding of religion. The danger lies in conceiving of culture as a completely integrated system. As every scholar of religion knows, the moment you start trying to individuate such a wide range of ideas, values, practices, institutions etc., you run into trouble because it is very difficult to know where one set of phenomena ends and another begins. When we talk about "religion" we are actually talking about many types of systems rather than just one, systems which have different properties and are transmitted in different ways. In the light of such complexity it does us well to remember that the reification of religion is an ever present danger. It is also worth noting that linguists began to make theoretical progress when they recognized that the same was true of languages. From a linguistic point of view it is difficult if not impossible to individuate a language. In fact at a certain moment in the theoretical development of linguistics it became pointless to do so. Linguists recognized that the proper subject matter of their discipline was grammar rather than "language". Or more precisely grammar became their theoretical object. In order to clarify this distinction, some linguists have argued for a distinction between external and internal language. External language is a socio-cultural entity without clear boundaries. Internal language is a very complicated set of internal mechanisms that process linguistic in-

formation. And developmental psychologists have learned that the acquisition of knowledge is a complex process in which different concepts are acquired at different phases of cognitive development.

Most scholars of religion are aware of the problem of the difficulty of individuating religion as well as the danger of reifying it. As a consequence they have employed various strategies in order to overcome the problems and the dangers. Some scholars of religion have been driven to search for the core ideas that define religion in specific historical contexts. Their motto seems to be: If you cannot find the whole, then at least look for the center. Others have asserted that religions contain no common features at all. For them, every religion is completely different from every other religion. In fact this approach has led some scholars not to the study religion at all but to the study of uniqueness instead; which is quite a unique approach! Others regard almost anything as a religion. The motto here seems to be if it moves it's religion, if it doesn't move it's religion. There are many obvious advantages to such an approach. You cannot miss your target. Like the perfect hunter, you hit everything that you are aiming at because you never know how the targets differ from each other.

Seductive as these various approaches are, I shall follow none of them for the simple reason that they all confuse *the level of analysis*. Things can differ with each other at one level and at other levels be remarkably similar. The basis for comparative work lies in the ability to distinguish levels of analysis. For example, languages differ from each other in remarkable ways. Nevertheless they all can be analyzed, for example, in terms of the relationships among the subject, verb and object forms.

It is my view that if we pay attention to what cognitive science is discovering about the mind there is the chance that we will discover how what is in the mind has an effect on what is in the world. However, I would like to keep religion in mind long enough to ensure that we acquire enough knowledge about the cognitive aspects of religion in order to examine their effects on the world, specifically the world of religious practice.

How then shall we proceed? What do we take as our object of study? It is worth rehearsing briefly some of the alternatives. *Intellectualists* have taken as their object of study the human interest in explaining things. Hence, myths have been of particular concern to them. They have argued that religious ideas about origins and structures are our earliest, if outmoded, and certainly idiomatically different, explanations. Such views have not been confined to scholars of religion but have also found a prominent place in the history

and philosophy of science as well as anthropology. For example, the anthropologist Robin Horton (Horton and Finnegan 1973) has proposed that the underlying structure of physics is strongly analogous, if not homologous, to the structure of religious mythology. Both count as putative explanations of the world by appealing to hidden variables.

Symbolists have taken as their object of study the human tendency to symbolize what is most important to them in their society. So religious ideas are supposed to reflect, if not mirror, social form. *Ideologists* have taken as their object of study human power relationships and attempted to show how religious ideas and practices either reinforce or subvert such relationships. *Emotivists* have taken as their object of study human feeling and attempted to identify religious experience as either a heightened form of feeling, or a radically new form of feeling. And *structuralists* have taken as their object of study specific types of conceptual relationships, especially those involving patterns of similarity, homology, and opposition and then have attempted to show that religious narratives and ceremonial practices exemplify these properties.

From my point of view all of these theories have made a contribution to an explanatory understanding of religion. I think that we can learn from all of them. They teach us that in religion, explanation, symbolism, power relationships, the affective life, and analogy all play a significant role in social interaction and personal curiosity. Inquiry, however, does not stop with such ideas although it is enlightened by them.

Cognitivist theorists of religious ideas and practices take as their object of study *religious representations*. Of particular interest is the problem of how religious representations are related to other types of representations. Part of the reason for bringing the mind more clearly into the picture is not that the above-mentioned theories have ignored the mind altogether. Rather, the theory of the mind that intellectualists, symbolists, emotivists, ideologists and structuralists either employ or presuppose is just too simple. Even those theories which do not start with the mind as a blank slate still presume that the processes by which we come to know the world are quite uncomplicated. This is true even for those scholars who talk about the social construction of reality. Seldom do you see much discussion of what kinds of minds are doing in the process of social construction. The view seems to be that all we need do is identify the socio-cultural forces that are at work. Acquisition of knowledge is finally a matter of instruction or socialization: Teach a child to speak, as the child learns to speak, teach her about the world.

Sooner or later she will know more than she knew at the beginning of the process. So, knowledge involves primarily socio-cultural variables. Minds have to be simple enough to be able to learn and just complex enough to learn different things. Surely more needs to be said than this.

Cognitive science claims to know what that more involves. For example, a four-month-old infant, not yet being able to speak except babble in a rather charming sort of way, can already, without being instructed in the rules of arithmetic and the physical ways of the world, make numerical and physical judgments. In plain language, cognitive and developmental psychologists have good reasons (experimental evidence) for thinking that infants can do simple arithmetic and naive physics before they can talk. What has encouraged cognitive scientists to come to such a preposterous conclusion? Psychologists studying cognitive development have come to these conclusions by designing clever experiments which employ two techniques, dishabituation and preferential looking.

Dishabituation: When an infant is presented with an object to look at she will at first pay attention to it but will eventually look away. When the object is taken away and then shown to her again she will look at it again but for *less time*, and so on until she will finally almost completely ignore it. The infant has become habituated to the particular object in question. Now show the infant a new object, very similar to the first, but with some significant difference, and she will look at it for a longer time again. The infant has become *dishabituated* from the first object and her attention captured by the new object. The psychologist, therefore, can measure the interest of the infant by noting the amount of time that the infant spends looking at an object. The amount of time spent looking at an object gives psychologists an important means of measuring the infant's response to various stimuli. In other words we have a way of measuring a four month old's ability to note differences among successively presented objects by gauging the amount of time the infant spends looking at such objects.

Preferential looking. Infants will not only look longer at new objects than at objects they have become habituated to, they will also demonstrate a preference for looking at certain kinds of objects in which physical and numerical principles are apparently violated. Psychologists have no qualms about attributing to infants the notion of surprise by measuring their reactions to the violation of physical and numerical principles because infants will prefer to look at events which do so. Such events go contrary to their expectations and, therefore, rivet their attention.

We shall take the putative ability to perform certain arithmetical operations as a case in point. Karen Wynn (1992) has performed the following experiment. Infants, five months old, are first shown a hand placing a doll on a stage. Then a screen rises up in the front of the stage and hides the doll. The hand appears from the wings carrying a second doll, places the second doll behind the screen, and leaves it empty so that the infant can see that the doll is no longer in the hand. The screen is then dropped and the dolls on the stage exposed. In one experiment when the screen is dropped there are two dolls on the stage. In another experiment there is only one doll! Wynn discovered that infants preferred to look longer when there was only one doll present than when there should have been two. Her hypothesis is that the infant knows that an arithmetical principle has been violated: $1+1=2$, and not 1. Wynn has performed similar experiments by changing the number of dolls. If the experimenter, starting with one doll already on the stage, puts two additional dolls down, but when the curtain is raised there are only two dolls on the stage, the infant will look longer than if there were three. $1+2=3$ is not surprising. $1+2=2$ is, both to the infant and to us! Need I remind you that even adults are intrigued by magicians. If I were to start rising to the ceiling right now I am sure that this event would capture your interest.

Other experiments have tested infants for their knowledge of the principles of physical continuity of motion. Infants seem to expect that solid objects move in continuous paths and are surprised when they don't. They also seem to have a principle of solidity. They do not expect one solid object to pass through another. And they also seem to possess a principle of cohesiveness.

Infants also seem to know the difference between mechanical, teleological and cognitive agency (Leslie 1994). Infants will look longer at a ball hitting another ball causing the second ball to roll than at either a stationary ball or a rolling ball. And they will look longer at a ball that starts to roll on its own than at a ball that rolls because it came into contact with another ball. On the basis of such experiments psychologists conclude that infants within the first few months of life know the difference between something that can initiate action willingly and something that can act only when something else causes it to act.

But why mention such experiments which, while interesting, seem to be a long way from the study of religion? I mention them because I think that the concept of agency is crucial for an explanatory understanding of religion. In religion after religion agents with special qualities create the world and destroy it, transcend the world and

are immanent in it. In fact in religious worlds the number of agents acting on the stage are sometimes mind-boggling in their complexity, number and qualities.

Some scholars have argued convincingly that what distinguishes religious ideas from others is their counter-intuitiveness. They violate our common expectations of what the world is like. This is a good place to start but it is not enough. While many of the properties of religious agents are counter-intuitive the idea of agency is not itself counter-intuitive (except, perhaps, to some philosophers who imagine the world devoid of agency). The idea of agency is fundamental to the traffic that humans have with the world. It should not be surprising therefore that the concept of agency would play a particularly prominent role in religious systems. Perhaps it is only the theologians in various religious traditions who attempt to get beyond the notion of agency to some more esoteric and specialized concept. But that is a very small group of thinkers who by no means are representative of the thinking of religious participants in general. Please note, in any case, that the question is not whether there really are agents in the world, or even whether there are superhuman agents. The question is rather whether all humans have certain basic expectations about the world and whether such expectations include the notion of agency.

It is my view that the concept of agency is particularly important in cognitive studies hence my interest in the early appearance of the concept of agency in infants. My argument is really quite straightforward. If the concept of agency occurs as early in cognitive development as experimental psychology asserts that it is, then it should not surprise us that it will not only be employed in human traffic with the world but adumbrated in special contexts such as ritual action. While we should be surprised that the concept of agency occurs early in cognitive development (and science is supposed to surprise us and, therefore, grab our attention) we should be surprised at the inferences that such a discovery makes possible. We should not be surprised, for example, that religious ideas involving agents with special qualities were to follow naturally from our ordinary ideas of agents.

How then are agents represented? Agents initiate action. They get things done by doing things to other agents and to other objects. Given the notion of an agent that can do things to other agents and objects, it requires very little additional cognitive processing to postulate agents with special qualities. As I have already said, the world of religious ideas throughout history and across cultures is populated with agents with a host of special qualities. Religiously

conceived agents can be invisible, immortal, know things that no one else knows, move faster than the speed of light, transform things from one type of being into another, rise from the dead. In fact, as Boyer (1994) has argued, these special qualities are so attention-grabbing, and therefore, so easily transmittable, that we tend to overlook those aspects of religious ideas that are quite ordinary. Most of our inferences about them assume perfectly ordinary ontologies.

Thus far we have only attempted to establish the presence and importance of the idea of agency. Now we turn to issues concerning practice. Agents play a particularly important role in religious ritual, religious practice par excellence. In some religious traditions, for example, you cannot regard yourself as married or be treated by others as being married, unless an agent with special qualities has performed a ritual on you and your future spouse. And that agent, in turn, cannot perform the ritual of marriage unless another agent with special qualities has performed a ritual on him or her. The buck only stops with the gods initiating the first ritual, and these initial agents have very special qualities indeed. In fact we have argued elsewhere (Lawson and McCauley 1990) that in order to get a ritual tradition going it is necessary to have agents with special qualities, i.e. Superhuman agents. These agents are variously represented either as the initiators or as the patients of the particular action in question. Their very presence in the religious system makes a difference even when they are described as patients of the action. In rituals such as weddings, in some religions, the immediate agent initiating the action is a ritual official, but unless the imbedded rituals contain a culturally postulated superhuman agent with special qualities who grounds the action, the action will be judged invalid. So it is *necessary* that a superhuman agent be implicated in the action somehow. It is equally important to find out *where* in the structural description of the ritual the agent is represented. For example, in a sacrificial ritual the superhuman agent is the patient of the ritual act, the superhuman agent is the recipient and not the initiator of the sacrifice.

The surprising point is that such rituals will *require repetition*. But where the superhuman agent is the ultimate initiator of the action you will find a ritual that does not require repetition. It is important to note that there is nothing on the surface that gives us any obvious clues about which rituals require repetition and which do not. And it is dangerous to generalize by examining the content of a religious system in order to discover whether it requires repetition or not. In one religious system, for example, baptism might be

an unrepeated ritual in another it may be repeated many times. We need to examine the formal relationships of the specific ritual in question in order to discover its repeatability. And what is most significant will be where in the structural description the superhuman agent is represented. Similar conclusions can be arrived at by paying attention to whether or not a ritual can be reversed, will permit substitution, is effective, well-formed or relatively central to the religious system. What is important here is that the kinds of judgments religious ritual participants will make about the form of their rituals shows that we are dealing with a system of judgments guided by certain principles. Knowing what these principles are permits us to make various predictions. For example, a religious system that abandons or loses its unrepeated rituals will either have to create new ones or fade away. We have contemporary evidence from ethnographic studies especially the work of Frederick Barth (1975, 1987) and Harvey Whitehouse (1992, 1995) that supports this prediction.

A cognitive approach to the study of religious ritual demonstrates that when you examine religious ideas and the practices they inform you are looking at a religious *system* in operation. The relationships among such ideas are systematic and orderly. If they were not we would be looking at a random array of ideas and practices. In such a situation anything would go. But in religious systems anything does not go. The judgments that religious ritual participants make about their own systems are informed by underlying principles that are part of their implicit knowledge. Perhaps, most significantly, such implicit knowledge does not seem to be acquired by instruction. So rather than looking primarily at social and cultural facts in order to explain their acquisition we also need to start looking more closely at how the human mind works; we need to be developing a new psychology of religion as a subdiscipline of cognitive science.

It should now be apparent why I said earlier that it is important to acknowledge the discovery of cognitive science that the human mind is not a general, all purpose learning mechanism which only needs information via instruction to get the cognitive juices flowing. In fact it is becoming increasingly clear that cognition consists of a set of specialized processes with different kinds of products. These mechanisms do not come on line all at once. They require special information for their activation. In saying that I must insist that there is no need to think that religious ideas themselves are part of the early or even initial conditions of the human mind. All we need to acknowledge is that the ordinary cognitive resources that we bring into the world, or at least develop very early, are capable of

being employed for bringing about and apprehending religious ideas and the practices they inform. Seeing that most of us are born into a world in which such religious ideas already have currency, and such religious practices are a relatively frequent occurrence, it is no surprise that the set of cognitive processes by which we come to know the world stand ready and willing to be employed in the service of conceiving agents with special qualities and the practices that such conceptions inform. What is surprising is the principles involved, and the hidden relationships revealed. It is worth keeping religion in mind in order to discover the principles and the relationships they disclose.

References

- Barrett, Justin, and F. Keil.**
1996 Conceptualizing a Non-Natural Entity: Anthropomorphism in God Concepts. *Cognitive Psychology* 31: 219–247.
- Barth, Fredrik**
1975 Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Gunea. New Haven: Yale university Press.
1987 Cosmologies in the Making: A Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in Inner New Guinea. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, 64)
- Boyer, Pascal**
1994 The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Guthrie, Stewart Elliott**
1993 Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Horton, Robin, and Ruth Finnegan (eds.)**
1973 Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-western Societies. London: Faber & Faber.
- Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley.**
1990 Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1993 Crisis of Conscience, Riddle of Identity: Making Space for a Cognitive Approach to Religious Phenomena. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61: 201–223.
- Leslie, Alan**
1994 A Theory of Agency. In: Dan Sperber, David Premack and Ann James Premack (eds.), *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Debate*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Malley, Brian

- 1996 The Emerging Cognitive Psychology of Religion: A Review Article.
Method & Theory in the Study of Religion. 8: 109–141.

Whitehouse, Harvey

- 1992 Memorable Religions: Transmission, Codification and Change in
divergent Melanesian Contexts. *MAN* 27: 777–797.
- 1995 Inside the Cult: Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua
New Guinea. Oxford: Clarendon.

Wynn, Karen

- 1992 Evidence against Empiricist Accounts of the Origins of Numerical
Knowledge. *Mind & Language* 7: 314–332

T H O M A S L U C K M A N N

Remarks on the Description and Interpretation of Dialogue*

1. Ontological assumptions

An elementary difficulty with the analysis of all processes of human interaction is their transformation into data susceptible of analysis. This difficulty may explain why in the human sciences data of a different kind were, and generally still are, preferred. As against the fleeting processes of interaction and communication, their quasi-objective products appeared stable, permitting unhurried and verifiable description and analysis. The methodological preference of the human sciences for art and artefacts, actuarial statistics and registers, documents and other "material" objects was based on the assumption that interactive processes were beyond exact description. A methodological bias which arose from the technical difficulty in pinning down the processes of social interaction came to distort the theoretical view of human reality. A one-sidedly privileged status was accorded the *εργον* of humanity, at the expense of its *επεργεία* — to use the terms by which Wilhelm von Humboldt characterized the two fundamental aspects of language (Humboldt 1836).

However, the data based on the relatively stable products of social interaction and communication represented only the tip of the huge iceberg of social reality. Most of it remained submerged in the praxis of everyday life. It seemed that it would remain inaccessible to direct observation, close inspection and precise analysis. The ethnographers' field notes were assumed to recapture inadequately the ephemeral processes "in the field". In addition, they were open to — often rather facile — charges of subjective, cultural, class or, latterly, gender bias. Therefore the search was on for something which would permit at least indirect observation of the main body of the iceberg;

* A slightly different version of this paper was read at the Human Science Research Conference, August 1997, Trondheim.

although indirect it was to use reliable methods of inspection. In some branches of modern social science a substitute for direct observation was thought to have been found in the simulacra of interaction in the "laboratory" experiment. In others it was found in the quasi-objective elicitation of quasi-quantifiable "opinion". This situation prevailed in psychology and, with some notable exceptions, in sociology well beyond the first decades of this century. Even social anthropology seemed to have developed an uneasy conscience about continuing to use observation in the field, and to rely for the preservation of observation on the selective prism of field notes.

The ability to analyze in a reliable and precise fashion the ephemeral processes in which all the various material and immaterial products of social interaction are produced, depends on the relatively recent possibility of "freezing" these processes for later, repeated inspection. This was not possible until the development of technology first for auditory and then also for visual recording of such processes (Bergmann 1985: 299–320). To be sure, the analysis of the products of social interaction, from food, clothing and tools, factories, churches, jails and cemeteries to legal codes, birth registers, musical scores, literature etc. continues to be important in the study of human affairs. However, more attention and effort should be finally given to the analysis of the "production process" in relation to the "product" and in relation to the "consumption" of the "product". Otherwise, (communicative) interaction can be understood neither as part of social reality nor as the source of much social reality.

With the customary simplification of the recursive nature of the entire scientific enterprise, one may say that scientific analysis "begins" with the production of data, *i.e.*, by description of that which has been observed. After the ordering of data on increasing levels of generality, it "ends" by explanation, *i.e.*, by connecting data in a narrative which links antecedent conditions and consequences in terms of causes and functions. The fundamental presupposition is that there is something to be observed, described and explained that is there prior to observation, description and explanation. Science shares ontological realism with common sense. But common sense takes "reality" for granted without question; its realism is epistemologically naive. Such naiveté need not be — although it sometimes was and occasionally still is — the form taken by realism in science. It can be overcome. First, one must reflect upon the constitutive role of the descriptive and explanatory activities of the human mind in description and explanation. Second, one must turn a historically and sociologically trained eye upon the influence exerted by the traditions

(the "paradigms") of the community of investigators upon these activities.

In this regard there is no essential difference between the natural, and the socio-historical, human sciences. There is a difference, however, and an important one. The "something" that is there for the human sciences shows that it is there in a peculiar manner. If that "something" is to be adequately transformed into data and if it is to be explained in a way that does justice to the human nature of the data, this peculiarity must be taken into account from the very beginning.

As ordinary people we think we know something about human affairs and we act on the basis of that knowledge. Whether our knowledge is correct or incorrect according to some extrinsic criterion, it guides action and produces "real" results. However, knowledge is tested in experience and the relative correctness of at least of certain kinds, if not of all knowledge, is a consequence of praxis. From time to time it is brought to our notice that we do not know enough, not even for the practical purposes of everyday life. Even if we are not motivated by a general curiosity about the "whys" and "hows" of things beyond our immediate concerns, we need to know more for practical reasons and, in consequence, adopt a theoretical attitude. It is an attitude which eventually transcends common sense and, under certain historical socio-structural conditions, it leads to the formation of cosmological theories of diverse kinds. In a possibly contingent line of historical development it also leads to modern science. Nonetheless, under the umbrella of myth, theory and science, certain assumptions underlying our practical activities in everyday life, which are *de iure* sacrificed to the superior insight of theory, are not abandoned *de facto* and continue to be taken for granted.

We take for granted that people do (or fail to do) things because they want to do (or not to do) them. We take it for granted that human actions — unless they are actions of the possessed — are motivated by something that precedes the action in the awareness of actors. We take it for granted that actions are directed to goals in the near or distant future. We assume that actions have intended consequences. Evidently, that is why we act in the first place. If certain actions repeatedly fail to reach the goal for which we aimed, we tend to revise our knowledge about the chances of success. Furthermore, we find that actions, both seemingly trivial as well as important ones, have results — sometimes immediately, sometimes much later in our lives. We also note that not only our contemporaries but also our predecessors — particular individuals — and large numbers of anonymous ones, affect our lives, sometimes a long time after their

deaths. In other words, we find that human affairs are social affairs, that social affairs are historical affairs, and that historical affairs are marked by a combination of purposeful human action and a certain degree of contingency.

This is the source of the peculiarity which marks the "something" that is there for the social sciences and which is there independently of the production of data and of their explanation. This peculiarity, the subjective and intersubjective meaningfulness of human affairs in general and of social interaction in particular, must not be suppressed by the human sciences merely in order to avoid the methodological difficulties which arise from it. If it is suppressed, all that is specifically human in human life is suppressed with it. Forestalling that fatal consequence, another assumption must be added to the two assumptions which the human sciences share with the natural sciences. It is the equally realistic assumption (articulated in modern discourse as early as in the "anthropological" writings of Marx) that whatever universal physical and biological conditions must be presupposed, human affairs, including many of those that put on the appearance of immutable nature, are constituted in human activities, and that human activities are determined to a large extent by a *second nature*, the intended and unintended consequences of long chains of antecedent actions.

2. Methodological consequences

In the terminology introduced by Alfred Schutz, what is "there" for the social sciences is the domain of first-order (common-sense) constructs. These are constituted as the typical meanings which different kinds of interaction have for ordinary people. The domain of second-order constructs consists of systematic "idealizations" of the first-order constructs, *i.e.*, of theoretically motivated, generalizing and formalizing transformations of first-order constructs (Schutz 1962; Schutz 1964; Schutz 1966).

Both domains have several levels. First-order constructs are "ordinary language" constructs. They range from vernacular taxonomies, vocabularies of motives etc. to a rhetoric of action and ethnotheories. Second-order constructs must try to reconstruct them all, paying attention to their cognitive structure, and formalizing them on different levels of generality. It should be kept in mind that the formulation of second-order constructs still belongs to the descriptive, data-producing level of scientific procedure. On the other hand, second-order constructs are not simply reproductions of first-order constructs. First-order constructs consist of the typical meanings actions

have for actors. They originate in the practical interests of the actors and are socially objectivated in communicative processes which are structured by the relevance systems prevailing in everyday life. Second-order constructs are selective, ideal-typical reconstructions of such typical meanings which motivate the course of different kinds of actions. They are selective inasmuch as they are guided by a theoretical relevance system, an interest in classification for comparative purposes meant to discover both general structures of historical social worlds and specific genealogies of such structures. They are ideal-typical inasmuch as they attempt to specify — within different interactional domains — the range within which meaning-constellations are typical: from one "extreme", the "local" (both in terms of time, *i.e.*, epoch and generation; and of space, *i.e.*, cultural-social region and milieu) to the other "extreme", the universally human.

The selectivity and the ideal-typical formulation of second-order constructs have consequences for their methodological status. Although they belong to the descriptive level of scientific procedure, they are not strictly analogous to "objective" measurements in the physical sciences. The reconstruction of the typical meanings that moves from the "local" to the universal is a step which differs significantly from the corresponding data-producing step in the physical sciences. Second-order constructs are not the result of measurement but the result of interpretations. Strictly speaking, they are the result of interpretations of pre-interpretations. The theoretical interest in the discovery of "local" and universal typicalities in order to account for "local" and universal features of social interaction, social structure and "culture" guides the interpretive procedures. In consequence, the descriptive, data-producing level of social science methodology is intimately linked to its theoretical and explanatory level. The relation between theory and data is closer than the one postulated in the traditional hypothetico-deductive model. Yet, no matter how "theoretical" second-order constructs may be, they are not explanatory theory.

The reconstructions are specified as "local" or "universal" (or something between the two; one could say: "regional") in terms of time, space and domain. The first specifications are of course those of the data themselves. Questions are questions and answers are answers. In a second, formalizing step, structural similarities are established, thus, staying with the example, the meaning-structure of "adjacency pairs" which characterizes not only questions and answers but also greeting and return of greeting etc.. Another, more complex example, also taken from communicative interaction, are communicative gen-

res. They are formalized reconstructions of the typical and, under certain conditions, obligatory intersubjective meaning models for certain kinds of communicative projects. Such models are not only to a greater or lesser extent implicit elements of first-order constructs but may be also articulated in common-sense models of some sophistication, in ethnotheories (Luckmann 1995).

When starting with "local" first-order constructs, their cultural and historical specificity is evident. They are articulated in the variable ordinary languages of particular times and places. The formalizing steps that result in second-order constructs tentatively extend the range of applicability to other milieus, cultures and periods. In order to validate the extension, the second-order constructs are used as searching devices, as an heuristic, to see whether re-translation into the respective ordinary language is possible and whether they "fit" first-order constructs in the appropriate domain of interaction.

3. Interpretation as reconstruction of the meanings of communicative interaction

The realistic assumption that human action is meaningful and that the first step in the analysis of the meaning of action consists of the reconstruction of the typical meanings actions have for typical actors leads to a number of fairly complex issues in the methodology of the human sciences. They must not be evaded if — to put the matter in Weberian terms — the "subjective adequacy" of "objective" typologies of social reality is to be maintained (Weber 1968).

In ordinary life, individuals proceed on the tacit premise that, as their own actions are typically meaningful to themselves, so are the actions of others typically meaningful to them. That is how they manage to anticipate the outcomes of their own projects more or less successfully and how they, again with varying degrees of success, anticipate the actions of other individuals. The validity of this premise — which accounts for the fact that social worlds are not entirely chaotic — is demonstrated time and again, both to the interested participant in the practical attitude of everyday life and to the disinterested observer in the theoretical attitude of social science.

Although the general validity of this premise cannot be seriously doubted, several methodological problems arise with respect to its detailed workings. What are these problems and how is a reasonably precise reconstruction of the typical meanings of actions possible despite them?

First, not all actions are socially objectivated in vernacular terms, at least not in a way that would directly correspond to the motivations and goals (in Schutzian terminology: the "because" and the "in-order-to" motives). It cannot be assumed that there is complete isomorphy between the three different levels of reality: the socially objectivated semiotic system of ordinary languages, the individual stock of knowledge, and the meaning-structure of subjective experience.

Usually, vernacular terms draw relatively sharp contours around the subjective meanings of actions in order to permit intersubjective communication about the meaning of actions. Societies have a fundamental need for (at the very least, rough semantic) agreement in order to coordinate work in the present, to plan joint action in the future and apportion responsibility for past conduct. However, it must not be assumed *a priori* that behaviour for which a specific term is lacking in a given semantic repertoire is "meaningless" to the actor. To be sure, in such a case (absence of specific terms in intersubjective communication on the level of first-order constructs) their second-order reconstruction is correspondingly more difficult.

Second, the degree of precision in vernacular terms referring to the meaning of action varies. The meaning of some actions is objectivated in relatively vague terms and phrases. Whether the vagueness of the terms adequately represents a corresponding vagueness of the meaning which the action has for the actors is an open question. The latter may be even vaguer, or equally vague or it may be markedly more precise. The issue is not easily resolved in reconstruction, least of all by subsequent questioning. Consideration of "context" — more about that later — may help. All these problems are particularly acute in the reconstruction of the typical meanings of actions which are *not* directed to other individuals. Except for psychology, such actions are not in the centre of interest for the social sciences. The methodological problems arising from them are only marginally and indirectly relevant to the investigation of social interaction.

Third, the typical meanings, to the participants, of social interactions are almost regularly objectivated in vernacular terms and phrases, in intersubjectively intelligible vocabularies of goals and motives, in taxonomies of plans and courses of action in different domains (e.g., work and leisure in everyday life: ordinary and extraordinary reality), in a lexicon and a rhetoric of accounts, justifications, blamings, accusations etc. The "labels" attached by the participants in social interaction to what they and the others are doing may be considered as first-order constructs which normally represent the meanings to which they are jointly oriented — in their subjective perspectives, of course.

Fourth, in the case of communicative social interaction the problems discussed are still somewhat less acute, at least in one important respect. The typical meanings of communicative interaction are foregrounded by the actors themselves. The communicative projects of the actors in dialogue are projects that, by definition, employ the socially objectivated resources of language and other semiotic systems. The "production" side is directly linked to the "reception" side and alternates with it. In other words, the communicative projects are intertwined in temporal sequence. They are embodied in "discrete" linguistic items (minimal meaning units such as words, tonal units, recipient signals etc.) as well as in sequences that are obligatory in various degrees (dialogical "adjacency pairs", "weaker" forms of pairing, etc.). In face-to-face communication they are also embodied in expressive structures and non-linguistic (gestural, mimetic etc.) semiotic systems. They are applied in routines of language use which range from idiomatic phrases to genres.

Knowledge of linguistic and other semiotic systems, of expressive structures as well as genres may be tacit and sedimented in quasi-automatically applicable communicative routines. It may be explicit, possibly even forming part of communicative ethnotheories, and applied in consciously formulated communicative projects. Such knowledge is part of the social stock of knowledge held by a society, social class, in a milieu or group. In short, it is socially distributed, generally or restrictively, depending on the kind of society and the functions of the particular subsystem of knowledge involved. Because an elementary competence in communication is a presupposition of membership, knowledge pertaining to it is generally transmitted in primary socialization. Special skills, e.g., knowledge of certain communicative genres, may become part of expert knowledge which is accessible only in special careers in secondary socialization. Furthermore, knowledge of the social distribution of knowledge, including knowledge of the social distribution of communicative knowledge, is itself part of the social stock of knowledge. It, too, is socially distributed, more or less evenly.

4. "Units" of meaning and contexts

One of the most intractable issues in the reconstruction of typical meanings associated with typical actions is due to the fact that meanings are not independent, isolated "units". They cannot be measured on any spatio-temporal scale nor can they be reconstructed as self-enclosed single "items". No doubt, typical meanings have contours that set them off to a certain extent in the individual stream of

consciousness from whatever comes before and after them, e.g., as temporally and spatially bounded action projects. They are segregated from other typical core meanings, e.g., alternative action projects, with different degrees of sharpness and, as they follow one another in the flow of experience, the individual can grasp them, upon reflection, with different degrees of clarity.

Again, for the purposes of reconstruction, matters are somewhat easier in the case of communicative interaction. The participants in dialogue as well as in indirect, mediated forms of communication, have a routine awareness — or even explicit knowledge — of idealized segregated forms as vehicles of meaning (of utterances, in languages that have words, of words, etc.). In principle, they can recognize them as constituent units in the process of communication. This does not mean that the constituent units are grasped analogously to the looking up of separate entries in a dictionary. They are necessarily “nested” within larger wholes which carry an overarching meaning that joins the “units” syntagmatically and paradigmatically.

Whatever may be the smallest unit of meaning that is discoverable in human experience — that is still another question — it is necessarily embedded in several distinct “lines” of overarching meaning structure. The most important of these are drawn in individual-biographical systems of relevance, in institutionally defined “careers” in differentiated regions of social life and interaction, and in religious hierarchies of meaning. In any concrete case of interaction — here we are especially interested in communicative interaction — the constituent “units” of meaning are likely to be “nested” in more than one of these different overarching meaning structures at the same time. It is also likely, however, that depending on the situation, different superordinated meaning structures will not be equally relevant nor equally salient with regard to the “nesting” of constituent meaning “units”.

Reconstruction of first-order constructs is not a simple matter of identifying “units” of meaning (as if that were a simple matter!). It necessarily involves a reconstruction of the multiple embeddedness of meaning “units” in larger meaning structures. It may not be possible to specify which is the most relevant and salient in any particular, unique historical instance of interaction and dialogue. But the theoretical interest of the social sciences in comparison and generalization motivates even at this descriptive, data-producing level of investigation the reconstruction of typical “units” of meaning in typical structures of embeddedness. As these are pre-defined both in institutional-cultural collective practice and in the person-centered social definitions of “careers” and life-courses.

Evidently, matters are not simple. There is no easy solution to the problems arising in the reconstruction of the meaning of social interaction and dialogue. For certain purposes one may perhaps simplify matters by crude methods, e.g., "content analysis". The difficulties are simply ignored by what Cicourel called methodological fiat (Cicourel 1964). The subjective adequacy of the quasi-objective data is thereby lost. Sequential analysis of dialogue, on the other hand, follows the intersubjective constitution of interactional and dialogical meaning step by step and thus preserves the subjective adequacy of the second-order constructs. Although it is laborious when large corpora of "texts" and not merely prudently selected examples are investigated, sequential analysis confronts the difficulties (vagueness/precision; overarticulation/underarticulation; isolated units/"nesting" etc.) of sequential step- by -step reconstruction head-on and thereby remains true to the basic methodological principle of "subjective adequacy": reconstructing, as best as possible, the actors' perspectives.

Every word, every phrase, every communicative episode will mean different things to different people. This is true because an individual's unique biography and subjective relevance system offer some possibility of idiosyncratic variation. But it is also trivial because the point about communicative interaction is that the participants act on the assumption that for all practical purposes and until definite notice to the contrary not only are lexical items understood in roughly the same fashion but that entire communicative projects, too, with their embedded meanings and sequential realization, are practically intelligible. It follows that typical "units" of meaning and typical structures of embeddedness are not arbitrary theoretical concepts but second-order constructs which closely approximate the structure of first-order constructs of ordinary people. Reconstruction of typical "nesting", foregrounded in the meaning of communicative projects, is possible in principle, no matter how great the technical difficulties and how "uneconomical" the procedures of a sequential analysis of dialogue may be.

These difficulties have been usually, and quite appropriately, discussed as problems of (the reconstruction of) context, both in its widest and in a more precise, narrow meaning of the word. For the methodology of interpretative reconstruction, context refers to the context of meaning for the actors. The task of reconstruction therefore consists in "formalizing" and "idealizing" the typically relevant knowledge and assumptions of the participants in interlocking communicative projects, knowledge and assumptions without which the actors could not understand each other and without which the analyst could not understand the actors.

In conclusion, it may be useful to sketch the main kinds of assumptions and knowledge — beyond the fundamental principle of the reciprocity of perspectives — which are normally not part of "texts" but which the interactants must rely upon when engaging in interaction, the contexts which make the texts intelligible, first, to the actors, and second to the analyst.

Interactional "context":

- a) Assumptions about the extent to which the principle of the reciprocity of perspectives applies, i.e., assumptions about the normality of others.
- b) Assumptions about the extent to which others share in relevant portions of the social stock of knowledge and in the collective memory of a society, a group, and institution.
- c) Knowledge about the extent to which others shared past interactions, from short biographical intersections to long stretches of shared courses of life. Such knowledge may be characterized by different degrees of accuracy.
- d) Knowledge, mixed with assumptions, about the actual situation, more precisely, about the extent to which the world within reach (in its spatial, temporal and social dimensions) is shared with the other participants. Evidently, such knowledge defines the limits of successful deixis and ellipsis.

Dialogical context:

In the reconstruction of the meaning of communicative interaction all the aspects of interactional "context" must be considered. But in addition several specific aspects of dialogical context are added:

- a) The "collective memory" of past communicative episodes shared with others. This aspect of context may form an obstacle to interpretation unless it is drawn into the text ("but yesterday you promised...").
- b) From the beginning of the communicative episode onward the participants start sharing the memory (variously precise and accurate) of what has been said and done. At any subsequent moment of the episode the preceding parts of the communicative and, generally, interactive sequence are automatically relevant to, although not necessarily salient in, the participants' practical understanding of the ongoing communicative process. Therefore they are relevant to the analyst's reconstruction. Occasionally a preceding part also becomes salient and is reintroduced into the "text" ("but you just said, that..."), thereby making explicit what is im-

- plicit in all dialogue. This is context in the narrowest and most precise meaning of the term.
- c) Finally, there may be a sort of "intertextuality" entering the context of dialogue. The participants may recognize quotes from someone known to them — but not to the analyst — or to media "texts" known to them but not to the analyst. Reconstruction will be near impossible unless the quote is marked prosodically. This is usually the case; but then one only knows *that* something is quoted; the meaning of the quote for the ongoing communicative process may not be easy to decipher. It becomes fully accessible only when it is reconstructed by the actors themselves.

References

Bergmann, Jörg

- 1985 Flüchtigkeit und methodische Fixierung sozialer Wirklichkeit. In: Wolfgang Bonss and Heinz Hartmann (eds.), *Entzauberte Wissenschaft: Zur Relativität und Geltung soziologischer Forschung*; pp. 299–320. Göttingen: Schwartz. (Soziale Welt. Sonderband, 3)

Cicourel, Aaron V.

- 1964 Method and Measurement in Sociology. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Humboldt, Wilhelm von

- 1836 Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluß auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts. Berlin

Luckmann, Thomas

- 1995 Interaction Planning and the Intersubjective Adjustment of Perspectives by Communicative Genres. In: Esther N. Goody (ed.), *Social Intelligence and Interaction: Expressions and Implications of the Social Bias in Human Intelligence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Plessner, Helmuth

- 1965 Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie., Berlin: de Gruyter. [1928]

Schutz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckmann

- 1973 The Structures of the Life-World; vol. 1. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Schutz, Alfred

- 1962 Collected Papers 1: The Problem of Social Reality. The Hague: Nijhoff. (Phaenomenologica, 11)

- 1964 Collected Papers 2: Studies in Social Theory. The Hague: Nijhoff. (Phaenomenologica, 15)

- 1966 Collected Papers 3: Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy. The Hague: Nijhoff. (Phaenomenologica, 22)

Simmel, Georg

1957 Brücke und Tür: Essays des Philosophen zur Geschichte, Religion, Kunst und Gesellschaft. Ed. by Michael Landmann. Stuttgart: Koehler Verlag.

Thomas, William I., and Dorothy Swaine Thomas

1928 The Child in America: Behavior problems and Programs. New York: Knopf

Weber, Max

1968 Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre. Ed. by J. Winckelmann. Tübingen. [1922]

WILLIAM E. PADEN

Sacrality and Worldmaking: New Categorical Perspectives

If we attend to the world not in terms of objects but in terms of categories, this is especially so in the study of religion where we face both the shaping and obscuring effects of basic, etic terms like myth, ritual, deity and sacrality. Depending on how any one of these is theoretically construed, a quite different set of data, comparisons, and explanatory issues is generated.

The category of the sacred in particular and the role of transcultural concept-formation in general have undergone an obvious crisis. For the most part, “the sacred,” if not an empty label, has been linked with theologism, and transcultural concepts have been condemned for their general non-comparability and colonialist intent.

Yet I am convinced that without comparative modes of analysis the study of religion would be vacuous, lacking its defining ingredient, and that without any concept of sacrality we would have lost a crucial lens for describing, analyzing, and interpreting our subject matter. I believe we therefore need to reconstruct an understanding of cross-cultural perspective and its employments so that they are adequate to complexity and difference, as well as to commonality. We cannot take a step without concepts, and even thickly-described historical and ethnographic studies will not escape them. No object is noticed without a directing category.

Here, then, I would like to approach the matter of transcultural templates through an analysis of certain concepts of sacrality. Like the Finnish scholar Veikko Anttonen, with whose work (1996a, 1996b) I am in much sympathy, I not only think the old model of this concept has served its purpose but that analytical approaches are promising, and will discuss here some of my attempts to think through aspects of the issue. The format includes 1) proposing a decentering, differentiating and secularizing of the category of sacrality, 2) describing one of its subtypes that needs more attention and which I call “sacred order,” and 3) examining some of the key conceptual and methodological functions of that category.

I. De-centering Sacrality

With some exceptions, the discourse of sacrality has indeed been dominated by a single model, where “the sacred” became a reified noun—a substantive term for a supernatural reality, a label for the transcendent, or even an epithet for divinity, mystery, the wholly other. As such, the expression has functioned to bestow a sense of unity to the diversity of cultures, link that unity with a transcendent reality, and offer a simple way of making sense of otherwise foreign beliefs and practices by giving them a familiar, generic referent. These purposes are of course no longer taken for granted.

While critics take the sacred as a hopelessly privileged religious category, I consider it too important a behavioral and structural component of religion to abandon, and would make the case that sacrality should be semantically recontextualized as a toxic indicator for certain ranges of cultural actions.

Before the category of the sacred became a staple of the phenomenological movement, Émile Durkheim had already construed it as a behavioral category, a socio-religious “fact,” a pattern of an “irreducible” kind, and a part of the nuclear classificatory apparatus of any religious system (cf. Paden 1994). His primary use of the word was as an adjective, as in “sacred things,” and these objects comprised data to be explained. For Durkheim the sacred was not a term for the “wholly other” or for a supernatural force, but a socially ordained sign that marked off a class of objects which required ritual respect and access. In Mary Douglas’s phrase, “The sacred for Durkheim and Mauss was nothing more mysterious or occult than shared classifications, deeply cherished and violently defended. That is not all: this idea of the sacred is capable of analysis” (1987: 97).

Because of his sociological stance Durkheim’s system was shunned by historians of religion, who were inspired more by R.R. Marett’s correlation of mana and “the sacred,” and took the development of that trajectory through Nathan Söderblom, Rudolf Otto and the phenomenologists of religion. I will not elaborate here on my view that Mircea Eliade’s concepts of sacrality have more links with the French secular discourses than with Otto’s *Das Heilige*, or my view that Eliade’s idea of the *sui generis* nature of the sacred as a world-forming category has more in common conceptually with the Durkheimians than with the Protestant phenomenologists, but only note that a current of secular discourse about the sacred does exist, that Eliade’s notion of sacrality appears to straddle the secular and religious schemas, and that a fuller genealogy of the concept of the sacred itself will be helpful in sorting all this out.

I employ the class-term “sacrality” to cover a range of behavioral domains connected with objects, states and processes deemed sacred or holy. That is, I believe we need to take a polythetic approach to the whole cluster of actions to which these terms point, and that we will find then that they form quite heterogeneous regional patterns and logics, and presumably are even subject to different explanatory frames and cognitive transmissions. Religiously endowed objects come in every genre and correspondingly evoke a variety of behaviors, e.g. respect, loyalty, defensiveness, purity, as well as numinous awe.

Analysis of the notion of sacrality and its behaviors could and should take place along any number of conceptual lines, crisscrossing the terrain with as many mappings and scannings as possible. Some typologies of sacrality have already been suggested: the sacred as either the pure or the unclean (W. Robertson Smith); as either the tabued or the unrestrained (Durkheim, Roger Caillois 1959); as either the locative or the utopic (Jonathan Z. Smith); as either the extraordinary or the nomic (Peter Berger); as either the quality of ritualist, discursive “unquestionableness” or as the affective, numinous sense of the holy (Rappaport 1979: 208–217); as either respect for cultic tradition or the sense of numinous power (Baetke 1942). Émile Benveniste’s etymological analysis (1973: 445–469) showed that words for sacrality lined up into two main semantic vectors, the meanings of 1) “to be marked off” (e.g. *sacer*, *qadosh*, *hagios*), or 2) that which manifests health, power, good omen, or luck (*heil*, *spenta*). Other secular models stress a particular feature of sacrality, like the “sanctity of cognitive boundaries” (Mary Douglas); or the transgressive destruction of self-contained order (Georges Bataille); or violence (René Girard); or the “safeguarding of identity” (Hans Mol); or a bounded threshold separating realms of cultural potency (Arnold van Gennep, Veikko Anttonen); or the hierarchic (François-André Isambert).

These types and polarities suggest that sacrality may have more dimensions than otherness. Classically, when theories of the sacred either stretched the word to the service of a singular conceptual template like otherness, or, in contemporary use, when textbooks simply take it as a general label for “the religious,” the concept is either limited to a metaphor or drained of content altogether. I would argue that sacrality is too rich and strategic a behavioral territory to be so limited, and that the more lenses we use and the more we complicate the topic the more religious behavior we will see and be able to explain.

II. Sacred Order as a Type of Sacrality

As a point of focus and exercise in analysis I will briefly examine one such lens, the concept of system-inviolability or sacred order (Paden 1996).

Sacred order here refers to behaviors that defend and restore the integrity of one's world. In contrast with the idea of experiencing or mediating otherness, what is central here are the practices and allegiances of upholding a world against threats and incursions. A sacred object is not only a source of awe, but of loyalty and commitment. As alluded to, some theoretic resources for this concept are available in Peter Berger's connection of nomos and sacrality (1967: 3–52), Mary Douglas' idea of system purity (1966, 1975), Jonathan Z. Smith's notion of locative order (1978: 129–171), and Hans Mol's assimilation of sacralization and the protection of identity (1976). An emic prototype is the Hindu concept of *dharma*, from the root *dhr*, "to uphold." An etymological prototype is *sancire* or *sanctus*, "ordained or secured as inviolable," and also some of the earlier pre-Christian senses of the category "holy." While the development of the term "holy" from its Indo-European base (*hailo*) is not entirely clear, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* it is with some probability assumed to have connoted "inviolate, inviolable, that must be preserved *whole* or intact, that cannot be injured with impunity" (Holy 1989: 318). Though theologians appropriated the terms holy and holiness as attributes of the divine, the concept of sacred order in some ways resonates with these pre-theological connotations of inviolateness. I would contrast *sanctus* here with terms that connote an empowered object, like *heil*, *numen*, Slavic *suyat* or even *mana*.

The relation of sacred and profane here is completely different than in the conventional mana model. In the latter the sacred represented the extraordinary or transcendent and the profane represented the mundane. But with sacred order, the sacred represents order and the profane is what violates it. In this second sense, they are dynamically oppositional. The profane is not just what is "outside the temple" (*pro-fanum*) but rather what subverts it. With sacred order, the sacral is not what points to the beyond, but to ways world-order is kept intact, and profanity is isomorphic with whatever actively threatens or offends that order through moral or ritual transgression, dishonoring infractions, apostate disloyalties, or chaotic anomaly. In this template, then, sacred and profane are not different zones of experience but poles of a tension by which the system itself is kept honorable, clean, right and whole (Paden 1996: 5).

World, here, as the normative, inhabited program of highlighted or bounded categories, is not just a matrix where transcendental powers shine through, but one which humans uphold by keeping things rightly in place. As such, sacred order has at least the same level of urgency and strategic importance as encounters with the numinous. The one who reaches out to touch the holy Ark of the Covenant must die not only because of the mana of the Ark, but because of the profound system-violation.

Sacred order is not specific to religion, but is a factor in all social worlds, a basic set of responses related to the cognitive contrast, system/anti-system. This is to say that it is a fundamental structuring mechanism linked with the need for self-maintenance in the natural behaviors of any organism. Religions, however, form prototypical cases because of their explicit interpretation of system boundaries in cosmicized, superhuman terms, their ontologized coding of the system in social hierarchies and categorizations, and their inhibitory threats of supernatural punishment. As Peter Berger put it, "To go against the order of society is always to risk plunging into anomie. To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated, however, is to make a compact with the primeval forces of darkness" (1967: 39).

Naturally the threat to order comes in degrees. There are life-threatening matters and passing disturbances, threats to one's religious identity and daily annoyances. The degree to which order is sacred is expressed in the weightiness of the rules and observances which guard its infraction, in the state of horror, confusion or despair that occurs when boundaries are disturbed, and in the extremity of the purgative, restorative measures exacted once violation has in fact taken place. Sacred order, then, is not simply a template for cosmic design and organization but rather a dynamic process of territorial maintenance in the face of threatened or actual impurity, wrongness, or guilt. The world, above all, must be kept "right"—understanding "rightness" here as always culturally defined.

There are a large number of natural and social forms of commitment which are isomorphic with sacred order and constrain the sense of inviolate boundaries. In some respects these are the generating forces for constructing and transmitting this type of sacrality. Just as the classical phenomenologists identified the various forms of nature in which hierophanies can occur—such as sky, earth, stones, mountains and trees—so the very different expressions of sacred order also have typical matrices and zones, such as territory, bonding, tradition, hierarchy, social roles and memberships, and honor.

Territory. Habitation is a fundamental form of life, and for humans territorial behaviors, "place" and ownership take numerous genres.

In these spaces, humans, like other organisms, make worlds prone to danger and ambiguous boundaries, and devise techniques for self-defense and for expelling invaders. Here, most evidently, "the sacred" is not supernatural but biological, driven by the circuitries and instincts of self-preservation and species-survival; here sociobiology and the study of sacrality join interests; here inviolability is a strategy of life-space and self-maintenance.

Bonding. W. Robertson Smith described the first form of sacrality as "the sanctity of the kindred bond," where "all sacred relations and all moral obligations depend on the physical unity of life," and where the bond with the god is a reflection of the bond with the clan (1956: 47, 400). It is, he said, "...the one sacred principle of moral obligation" (1956: 53). The very nature of belonging to a group has an elemental obligatory character, whether in ascribed membership in a family, clan, ethnic group church, or nation, or in elective group affiliation. Nor is it surprising to find biologists noting that "the basic infrastructure of human solidarity is rooted in a biogenetic capacity and predisposition for bonding" (Bolin and Bolin 1984: 15). Loyalty to one's survival unit is surely one of the primordial, albeit raw, forms of sacrality.

Tradition. By tradition I do not mean a vague, disembodied world view of ideas, but the behavioral commitment of "doing things the way they have been done," and thus maintaining the normativeness of lineage-categories. In this sense, tradition, like territory, is best understood when disrupted. Tradition-behaviors replicate maps and scripts that ascribe defined identities and behavioral prototypes, and to break with these exemplars and guidelines is to rupture the world's a priori coherence. For example, it is believed by adherents that since its founding in the tenth century, every initiated monk in the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism has faithfully practiced a daily iteration acknowledging the continuous transmission of the dharma from each and all of the successive teachers in that tradition. This obedient ritual chain of the "River of Consecration" has ostensibly never been broken. One could cite similar examples of system-allegiance elsewhere. We have here I think an important modality of sacrality, but one paid scant attention in the works of the phenomenologists.

Hierarchy and authority. Hierarchy creates the behaviors of fealty, submission, levels of unapproachability, scales of deference and loyalty, and degrees of status purity. The phenomenon of subordination and rank has links with pre-human behaviors (Burkert 1996: 80–101). Political centralization ritualizes and mythologizes the sacrality

of its own authority, the violation of which puts world foundations at stake.

Social roles. In traditional societies, essentialized internal classifications of social structure embody cosmic order, and these ordained roles constrain behavioral boundaries. Faithfulness to role and the sacrifice of individuality to its requirements are strong factors in the production of systemic order. "High grid" societies create strong internal gradations of status (Douglas 1982: 183–254; Dumont 1980). Role subversion provokes system subversion and may lead to the creation of wholly new groups, as we see in the controversies and schisms over the ordination of women. One also thinks of the sacrality of ordained relationships of obligation in Confucianism, and again, its non-inclusion in western versions of the so-called phenomenology of the sacred.

High-definition membership. Some groups also operate by strong criteria of exclusive memberships, requiring clear-cut definitions and practices differentiating the insider's world from the non-insider's. Monasticism, new religious movements or revival movements, and separatist communities show this factor. Again, the identity markers—what one wears, eats, or avoids—become synecdochic codes for world maintenance, and become weighted and protected accordingly.

Honor. Finally, a promising area of research on sacrality would be to investigate its relation to the phenomenon of honor, understood here as a form of critical integrity (rather than as acclaim). The extremities people have performed and the lives sacrificed in the name of honor—whether personal or institutional—should be another clue to the compelling nature of sacredness as system inviolability.

Clearly none of these factors which generate the possibility of sacred order are specific to religion. But religion puts its own cast on sacred boundaries through its pre-eminent superhuman ethos, its strong, persistent ritualization (which in itself imposes stability on a chaotic universe), and certainly its hypostasized and institutionalized emic versions of sacred order. Indeed, if interpreters claim to find a structuring, constraining concept or norm at work in religion, but religions themselves have no categories that correspond to it, one might be suspicious of the concept. But religions abound with such terms. Apart from the already mentioned Hindu concept of *dharma*—the eternal, divinely endowed socio-cosmic order, upheld by righteousness, duty and law—one could also note the Muslim *Sharia*, Jewish *Torah*, general monotheistic notions of "the Word of God," the Confucian "Order of Heaven" (*T'ien*), the ancient Egyptian *Ma-at*, or the Greek *Themis*.

III. Issues

At this point we may turn to examine directly some of the conceptual factors embedded in the use of such a category. How does it function, what are its schematic purposes and linkages, what is it "good for"?

At the outset, skeptical questions arise. Isn't sacred order just an abstraction, an academic invention? Isn't it hopelessly malleable, non-unitary, and ambiguous at the edges, and thus incapable of clearly defining its own limits? As a comparative concept does it not merely impose itself on cultural data rather than illuminate their complexity? Is it not just one more hegemonizing reflex attempting to corral the universe into a singular form? Doesn't the idea of "order" or "system" obscure the reality of plural systems of authority and of behavioral expectations that obtain within a single society?

I would like to show that a concept like this, while not a perfect descriptor in a tidy world to be sure, carries a useful and complex agenda of employments and networkings. It can operate in many contexts, and as a starting point for inquiry, heuristically uncovers and generates others, more or less productively differentiating and complicating itself along the way. As Nelson Goodman puts it, "For a categorial system, what needs to be shown is not that it is true, but what it can do" (1978: 129).

Here, then, are some of its relevant functions:

1. As with any interpretive concept, it is a device for "taking notice" (Saler 1992: 254). What we notice depends on the mappings we bring to the field. As describers of religion we cannot see something that we do not first have a category for. Without a word for it, most of the universe just goes by. Looking comes with a program, and the history of the study of religion is the history of generating themes and concepts that show us what to look for.

As a pointer in such study, the category of sacred order calls attention to areas of behavior that have a place and function in the construction of worlds that parallels the role of empowered, numinous objects in strategic effect. Thus we need to look for sacrality not just in the sky, in the hierophany, in the encounter with the gods, but in other places too, like the domains of bounded loyalties, fidelities and commitments. In this sense, the category has a topographic function, profiling additional regions and subregions to be explored.

2. A concept like sacred order forms a matrix of *comparative* inquiry that both connects and differentiates. On the one hand it shows common, analogical factors in human behavior, finding linkage between data that would otherwise remain isolated by culture and foreignness. Recurring patterns of human action are comparable here

not because they manifest the same transcendental reality, “the Sacred,” but because humans behave in common ways around the world. On the other hand, a comparative concept like this sets a standard against which cultural differences may be highlighted, and to that point I will return.

3. The concept of sacred order is a relational entity that works by virtue of its contrastive and juxtapositional linkage in a larger spectrum of kinds of sacrality, and in this network gives them all better delineation.

For example, any object could have both manic and nomic functions. The realms of sacred order and numinous objects have a circular relation: Systemic authority grounds the reality of the object of belief while the object itself grounds that authority. And if the gods lend prestige to the system, without the authority of the system as a whole they have no existence (Isambert 1982: 270). To uphold the order of the system is then to uphold the reality of the gods themselves.

Sacred order also forms a contrastive concept with several kinds of anti-order. If there is category maintenance, there is also sacred opposition to regnant norms. Not all religiousness is conserving or defensive any more than it is all about otherness or numinousness. Order can become profane, and the system evil. Thus, counter-hegemonic sacred objectives emerge which are liberative or salvific, antinomian and levelling, and inviolability becomes a feature of those freedoms—freedom from tyrannical orders, suppressive captivities, or even the banality of structured norms. Here, in anti-order, factors like systemic honor, hierarchy, territory and social status can become perceived as traps to be abandoned, and authority something to be overthrown in the emergence of new identities. Enter the practices and mythologies of category reversal, the sacralities of world renunciation and salvation, of the interstitial spirits and their free play, of prophetic revitalization movements.

Insofar as sacred order is conservative and rigid, it also has another opposite: tolerance for disorder, adaptability to anomaly and integration of otherwise threatening worlds. Such factors, which invite diachronic analysis, will be of as much interest for historians of religion as is boundary maintenance per se.

4. The concept of sacred order, we have seen, bridges or joins with categories that otherwise would not contribute to discourse about the sacred, for example, territory, authority and honor. It is linked in interesting ways with the notions of integrity and identity. Connected with and amplified by these other categories, a richer, more complex understanding emerges. The very connection of sacrality

and "order" draws attention to the sacral dimension of social and political orders, and at the same time the socio-political element in religious order. Likewise, the study of law and of "rights" becomes a resource and field for the study of sacrality, and vice-versa.

5. Sacred order generates subtypes and subset questions. First, there are different phases of system maintenance: establishing order, defending it, restoring it if violated. Each of these has endless variant forms and cultural inflections. Order can be defended by suppression of enemies or by self-isolation. Restoring order can be done through burning heretics or through accepting apologies.

Each subtype or successive trait of sacred order serves as a point of comparison which invites and enables the perception of differences relative to that common trait. In this sense, the theme or point of comparability functions not to obliterate differences but as a format for highlighting them.

6. A theme like sacred order can be used as a stable point against which to examine not only differences in type, but differences in *content*. The theme or subtheme is not just an *a priori* idea that only replicates itself in example after example, as though the variations were just clones, so that all we ever really see is just the idea of "sacred order" exemplified—as a cookie-cutter mold reproduces itself over and over again in rolled dough. One thinks of many kinds of classical comparativism where the exemplum only exists to say, "here is our theme one more time, here is another *axis mundi* and another, and another," or "here is a world tree in India, and there is one in China, and there is one among the Kwakiutl," as if the only function of the comparative mode were to establish the general ubiqity of its topic, to illustrate only itself, to write its homogenizing signature across the world of many cultures.

What can one learn, by putting the theme to the data, that is not already pre-given in the theme? We can, I believe, see sacred order not just as a feature that every community "has" in some mode of intensity, some style of defense, or some type of pollution-riddance, but also as something of interest because of the particular nature or content of that which constitutes the sacred order itself. Just because sacred order is a function and not a content does not mean one will not be interested in the content. One may want to ask *what* it is that cannot be violated, or *what* it is that people think they are defending. What inviolable objects does a society protect with its greatest precautions, and for which infractions does a group reserve its severest punishments?

Here is one of the important differences between Durkheimian and Eliadean ideas of sacrality. For Eliade, the things that are sacred

tend to be instances of eternal archetypes, but for the Durkheimian model, societies attribute sacredness to specific social objects and values, and these have cultural content. For example, both Marcel Mauss and Durkheim wrote about how modern societies attributed sanctity to the individual person, the human being *per se*, and the rights of the individual, and how it safeguarded these objects from violation with the same respect given religious categories (Durkheim 1975: 61–67; Mauss 1979: 90). Normative principles like equality, democracy, and justice are further examples, and then, from this point of view, secular and humanistic norms become analogous to religious norms like the divinity of the monarch, the Samgha of the Buddha, the apostolic authority of the church, or even the decrees of a paranoid cult leader. It is all social teachings or values, but the *actual* values change and vary even within a culture and it is a central function of the history of religion to study those changing ingredients and local adaptations.

Thus, as the old comparative templates drew attention “upward” to the recurrent religious archetypes embodied in the data, the newer ones may be said to draw attention laterally or even downward to reveal the structures, empowerments and values of social existence. Presumably, in this vein, each society will manifest sacred order in a way that shows us not only something about sacredness but about itself and its culture-specific contents and strategies.

It also follows that sacred order, and this goes for sacrality generally, is not necessarily benign but has its raw, malignant contents and its pathologies. Sacred does not mean good. Sacred norms can be used to subordinate people on the basis of race, gender and ideology. The self-imputed sacredness of one group can automatically make other groups despised and impure. At the individual level, inviolate order can amount to a compulsive or obsessive component of neuroses and psychoses. In the many pernicious forms of self interest, sacrality inflates the ego, social status, the nation state, the group leader, with fear-laden, oppressive borders and unhappy consequences. We had better get used to the idea that the sacred—which was an adjective widely used in the rhetoric of the Third Reich, along with the language of “purifying and defending the honor of the Volk”—can manifest as a divisive behavior and is not necessarily something admirable or socially functional, and that the most outrageous human behaviors have been enacted under its constraints.

7. How to maintain control of such a broad topic? Conceptual control is needed both of the aspectual nature of the inquiry (Poole 1986) and of the contextual nature and function of the exemplum (Paden 1992: 110–124). Regarding the first, one builds in awareness of de-

limited focus and purpose. Thematic pursuits are always governed by specific goals which determine the choices of data. Are we interested in the institutional, aggressive sides of sacred order? That is one line of inquiry. Or, alternatively, are we interested in the power of the sacred to solicit the ultimate in individual *self-sacrifice*, thinking perhaps of martyrs who give their own lives to *protect* the honor of their sacred categories—their Sabbaths and Korans, Daimyos and Christs—from desecration? Reflexive awareness of one's delimiting choices and positionings of interest helps clarify and guide the otherwise rampant and complex nature of generalizing about a topic like this.

Grasping the context of the actual data of sacred order is of course most challenging and methodologically problematic. One is faced right away with the situation that any society has multiple forms or contexts of order, that these domains and matrices overlap identities in a way that cannot definitively be untangled, and that they are in large part culture-specific. There are physical and mental orders, private and public, domestic and national, ritualistic or linguistic. The possibility of control lies in generating a conceptualization of order that acknowledges plural systems of order and their relative functions in a given case. The complexity of order is then an opportunity as well as a challenge—it ultimately forces students of religion to understand how world systems and identity formations work and interact on the ground.

8. The behaviors of sacred order have both humanistic and scientific implications, and lend themselves to sociological, phenomenological, psychological, and cognitivist scrutiny. Though outlining a research program is not the burden of this essay, one can see that lines of questioning abound: How is systemic sacrality a reflex of social structure? How does its intensity correlate with the subversive presence of alternative systems, or with male authority patterns, or with territorial insecurity? Under what social conditions does it disappear as a salient category?

9. The way in which sacrality is a category of *behavior* can now be reiterated, because it is in this sense that it creates a framework of cross-cultural comparability based not on meanings, significations, or the noumenal, but on what humans do. By the same token, sacred order does not refer to world views but to what could neologically be called “worlding,” thus putting the configurative features of culture in a verbal form and emphasizing the adverbial dimension of sacredness itself. People *do* things to prevent and remediate violation, and this is a different level of analysis than noting that all cultures have beliefs in a cosmic or superhuman order. In this way I see

sacred order within the context of the notion of worldmaking, understanding the latter to have the same naturalness as building nests, spinning webs, defending stamping grounds, expelling invaders, or returning to one's streambed of origin. Walter Burkert's recent work, *Creation of the Sacred*, illustrates well this natural mode, as in this sample:

"Life's achievement is self-replication, self-regulation, and homeostasis. Hence the gods are the most persistent guarantors of order, the forceful regulators. Life needs seclusion for its own protection, building up cells to separate what is inside from the outside; the religious worldview usually adopts some privileged center to keep in touch with the divine despite chaotic or diabolical surroundings". (Burkert 1996: 33)

I see here a certain trend in the study of religion. It goes from looking at religions of the world, to looking at the phenomenological world of religion, to looking at the social construction of religious worlds, to looking at the naturalism and universality of worldmaking processes, in which religion plays a prototypal role. This suggests prospects for thinking about universals in religion in terms of behavioral commonalities rather than in terms of common objects or ideas. The extent to which the various domains of sacrality per se or sacred order in particular are successful material for scientific theory or the epidemiology of behaviors remains to be seen (cf. Boyer 1994: 227–262; Sperber 1996).

The concept of worldmaking forms a mediating ground between the idea that behavior is explained by world views and the idea that behavior is explained by built-in cognitive transmissions. Constraints on behavior seem to work in both directions. But the mind is always an inhabitant in a world of objects, an actor in a world to be organized and bounded, not a disembodied thought machine. Understanding mind and world as a single environment, we note that humans evidently form and develop strong relationships to empowered objects, make sacrifices to maintain stability, guard and restore classifications which protect the foundations of the life-world, and disengage from those same boundaries to form new identities and potencies. "World" is then both a determiner and a precipitate of these conducts: It is a determiner because behavior is guided by institutions and norms and it is a product because the cross-cultural recurrence of these behaviors suggests that a disposition to form them is natural.

In sum, a recontextualized, de-centered approach to sacrality will take seriously its diversity of forms and types, and its flexibility of

application. We have seen one such example. In the end, the factor of the sacred might even stand to gain back some of its role in the history of religions, in a new key, providing a wider source of materials, without the levelling of a one-dimensional hermeneutical purpose, and with an expanding repertoire of theoretic fronts and comparative lenses, each geared to its appropriate setting and form of inquiry.

References

Anttonen, Veikko

- 1996a Ihmisen ja maan rajat: "pyhä" kulttuurisena kategoriana. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 646)
- 1996b Rethinking the Sacred: The Notions of 'Human Body' and 'Territory' in Conceptualizing Religion. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A. Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and its Scholars: Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data*; pp. 36–64. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religions, 73)

Baetke, Walter

- 1942 Das Heilige im Germanischen. Tübingen: Mohr.

Benveniste, Émile

- 1973 Indo-European Language and Society. Trans. London: Faber and Faber.

Berger, Peter L.

- 1967 The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. New York: Doubleday.

Bolin, Robert, and Susan Bolton Bolin

- 1984 Sociobiology and Sociology: Issues in Applicability. In: Patricia R. Barchas (ed.), *Social Hierarchies: Essays Toward a Sociophysiological Perspective*; pp. 3–22. Westport: Greenwood Press. (Contributions in Sociology, 47)

Boyer, Pascal

- 1994 The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Burkert, Walter

- 1996 Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Caillois, Roger

- 1959 Man and the Sacred. Glencoe: Free Press.

Douglas, Mary

- 1966 Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- 1975 Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- 1982 In the Active Voice. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- 1987 How Institutions Think. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Dumont Louis**
- 1980 *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, Émile**
- 1965 *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- 1975 Individualism and the Intellectuals. In: W. S. F. Pickering (ed.), *Durkheim on Religion: A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies*; pp. 59–73. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Goodman, Nelson**
- 1978 *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Holy**
- 1989 Holy. In: *The Oxford English Dictionary*; vol. 7; p. 318. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [2. ed.]
- Isambert, François-André**
- 1982 *Le sens du sacré: Fête et religion populaire*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Mauss, Marcel**
- 1979 *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*. London: Routledge.
- Mol, Hans**
- 1976 Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Paden, William E.**
- 1992 Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion. Boston: Beacon Press.
- 1994 Before “the Sacred” Became Theological: Durkheim and Reductionism. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A. Yonan (eds.), *Religion and Reductionism: Essays on Eliade, Segal, and the Challenge of the Social Sciences for the Study of Religion*; pp. 198–210. Leiden: Brill. (*Studies in the History of Religions*, 62)
- 1996 Sacrality as Integrity: “Sacred Order” as a Model for Describing Religious Worlds. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A. Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and its Scholars: Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data*; pp. 3–18. Leiden: Brill. (*Studies in the History of Religions*, 73)
- Poole, Fitz John Porter**
- 1986 Metaphors and Maps: Towards Comparison in the Anthropology of Religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54: 411–457.
- Rappaport, Roy A.**
- 1979 Ecology, Meaning, and Religion. Richmond: North Atlantic Books.
- Saler, Benson**
- 1993 Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories. Leiden: Brill. (*Studies in the History of Religions*, 56)
- Smith, Jonathan Z.**
- 1978 Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions. Leiden: Brill. (*Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 23)

Smith, W. Robertson

1956 *The Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. New York: Meridian Books. [2. ed.]

Sperber, Dan

1996 *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.

On Divination. An Exercise in Comparative Method

At the end of his famous essay 'Religion as a Cultural System', Clifford Geertz (1993: 125) had occasion to make the point that studies of the role of e.g. divination in reinforcing social control "with but the most general, common-sense view" of what divination is as a religious pattern seemed to him "not particularly promising." What is needed, he concludes, is "a theoretical analysis of symbolic action comparable in sophistication to what we now have for social and psychological action..." Divination is only one of his examples, and his call for theories of symbolic action has certainly not been fruitless. What I have to offer is not a new theory of symbolic action, but a modest attempt, on a comparative basis, to arrive at a slightly more sophisticated idea of divination 'as a religious pattern'. This attempt will be made with a view both to illustrate and to discuss comparative method. I shall therefore try to be very explicit about every intellectual operation involved, I hope not to the point of boredom.

Some comparative methods aim at establishing universals, others seek human causes that will account for cross-cultural or transhistorical resemblance. The sole aim of the comparative method I shall present is to improve our questionnaire. The professionalism of any discipline consists in the intelligent questions it is prepared to ask. All theories, including those claiming universals, contribute to our professional questionnaire; and that is how, in spite of the theoretical monsters we have to kill every year, our discipline has been making some progress throughout its history. Time may have come, then, to concentrate our comparative endeavours on questions to ask.

Divination is the production, observation and interpretation of signs in order to obtain a religious basis for decision and action. This working definition excludes ecstatic prophecy and straightforward clairvoyance and concentrates on what is sometimes called inductive divination. We shall consider a few divination systems from different

parts of the world¹, but before doing so we should make clear what we are after. If we want to arrive at an idea of divination as a religious pattern, I suggest that we study the structure and content of each divination procedure, giving priority to the question of how it makes sense to its users as a true basis for making decisions.

To make sense means to articulate local cosmology. The relation between divination and cosmology is perhaps easiest to grasp in the case of prodigies: In his Roman history, *Livy* is very fond of reporting prodigies alleged to have heralded the more dramatic events. He is concerned to demonstrate how observant the *maiores* were when faced with negative articulations of cosmology. When lightning had struck the temple of *Juno Lucina* in Rome and rain had fallen from a cloudless sky in Nursia and elsewhere a mule was reported to have foaled, no political action could be taken before propitiatory rites had been performed (*Ab Urbe condita* 37.3). The obvious meaning of these prodigies is that the order and equilibrium of the world, the *pax deorum*, was endangered.

No less observant were the ancient Assyrian kings in the 7th century BC. They had specialists posted all over the kingdom in order to observe and interpret prodigies and to make sure that propitiatory rituals were performed. There was a whole learned literature they could consult, whenever an unusual event seemed to herald that the normal order of things was endangered. The signs observed were sometimes considered of merely local relevance, sometimes interpreted as affecting the whole country.

In Assyria as well as in ancient Rome, the interest taken in prodigies implies the idea that single events bear witness to more general tendencies in the course of the world. A very similar idea is vaguely implied by even the simplest forms of divination, in which a question is answered with 'yes' or 'no' through some binary procedure like heads or tails. Whenever a single observation is taken to have a bearing on some different area of life, the idea of a coherent and law-bound world is appealed to. In this vague and general sense, divination will always somehow imply cosmology.

It is, however, from the study of less conspicuous and highly technical systems of divination that we may expect to arrive at the more sophisticated questionnaire we are looking for. It is also, as I hope to show, in dealing with such less conspicuous systems that a professional questionnaire will be useful. Let us consider three elaborate systems of divination:

¹ For world-wide surveys, see Caquot and Leibovici 1968; Loewe and Blacker 1981.

One of the most famous books of divination is the Chinese classic *Yi Jing*. The book as we know it today is the product of more than two millennia of elaboration and refinement, but the elementary traits of the divination procedure and the system of divination it codifies date back as early as 1000 BC. The classical method of consulting the *Yi Jing* consists in a play with yarrow stalks. After carefully stating the problem, the diviner takes his 50 sticks, returns one to its case and divides the remaining 49 into two heaps. Removing one stick from the right heap, he puts it between the fingers of his left hand and goes on to remove sticks from the left heap, 4 by 4, until 4 or less are left. This remainder of the left heap he puts between the fingers of his left hand and repeats the same procedure with the right heap. The entire content of the left hand is then put aside in a new heap, and the whole procedure is repeated twice with the remaining sticks, so that three 'left hand' heaps result from three experiments. The numerical combination created by the number of sticks in each of the three heaps will then point to either an unbroken or a broken line. According to a well known Chinese system of classification, unbroken lines are called *yang* and broken lines are called *yin*. The whole procedure is conducted six times to produce a hexagram, a figure of six horizontal *yin* or *yang* lines. Each of the 64 possible combinations of six lines has a chapter of its own in the *Yi Jing*.

The numerical combinations of the three heaps that generate a line also decide whether a line is 'young' or 'old'. According to cosmological ideas of regeneration and renewal, 'old' lines tend towards their opposite, i.e. an old *yang* line is considered to be about to change into a *yin* line and *vice versa*. This means that whenever 'old' lines are present in a hexagram, the diviner must take into consideration also the hexagram that would result from turning these lines into their opposites. In addition, each chapter of the *Yi Jing* also considers the meanings of the numerical combinations that have produced each line in the hexagram.

The system is thus fairly complicated, and the chapters themselves are obviously the product of many layers of tradition. Meaning is attached to each hexagram in quite a number of different ways. The hexagram as a whole may be interpreted as a figure and given a corresponding name, e.g. no. 50 *Ting*: a sacrificial vessel. This important ritual object offers a basis for further meanings: if the bottom line was generated by a numerical combination called no. 6, the following proverb will be relevant:

"To rid it of decaying remnants of meat, the vessel is turned upside down."

This is further qualified by the addition of a parallel proverb:

"It is not shameful to take a concubine for the sake of bearing sons" (Blofeld 1968: 183).

The general advice to be gathered is that a noble purpose may justify or necessitate what looks like an act of sacrilege or voluptuousness.

Another source of meanings is the fact that all 64 hexagrams are combinations of two out of eight possible trigrams. The trigrams are associated with a whole system of classification; they denote heaven and earth, fire and water, the cardinal points, family relationships etc. etc. Thus hexagram no. 50 is *fire over wood*. Combined with the idea of the sacrificial vessel, the hexagram points to the important activity of cooking meat for sacrifice. Sacrifice and, on the whole, ritual is what makes the world go round, and the pious, exemplar sage or holy man who sacrifices is also one who adheres to the decrees of Heaven.

Thus by way of associations which articulate and combine cosmology and morals, the text of *Yi Jing* offers a rich and differentiated basis for prediction and advice. Each hexagram provides the diviner with a set of cosmological and moral constellations in terms of which the problem stated at the outset may be interpreted. The commentaries strengthen and qualify the older basic text, giving reasons for the meaning attached to hexagrams and offering abstract predictions. The diviner must carefully steer his course through the learned book and its commentaries to obtain maximum correspondence between its cosmological symbolism and moral teachings and the case in question.

A divination system of similar complexity, but based on oral tradition, is found in West Africa among the Yoruba, who call it *Ifa* and the Fon who call it *Fa*. The diviner takes 16 palm nuts in his right hand. Holding the nuts in a firm grip he places the right hand on the palm of the left hand. Relaxing his grip a little, he lifts up his right hand again. This will make one or two palm nuts drop into the left hand. Two nuts will be noted with one line in a tray with sand, one nut with two lines. This procedure is repeated eight times to generate a pattern like this:

I	II
II	I
I	I
II	I

To each of the 256 possible combinations corresponds a set of texts which the diviner knows by heart. Learned diviners will even know

several alternative texts for each combination. The texts are mythical or exemplar narratives, in which divination often has a role to play. Another important theme of these narratives is sacrifice, since the divination procedure usually ends up with the prescription of certain offerings to secure success. Like the texts of the *Yi Jing*, the narratives are treated as exemplars of the matter in hand and interpreted *ad hoc*. In some traditions, the diviner is kept ignorant of both the question and the situation of the client, so that the client will have to undertake the *ad hoc* exegesis himself.

Less complicated and certainly less institutionalized are the various types of biblical divination still in use in the fringes of the protestant churches of northern Europe. The Bible is a canonical text, and outside elitarian historical and critical theology it is often straightforwardly considered as the infallible word of God, valid as a guide in any human situation. Jonathan Smith (1982: 36–52) has justly compared canon exegesis with divination. What I call biblical divination, however, includes a stochastic procedure to select a particular biblical text for guidance. The simplest technique is to open the Bible at random and take advice from whatever verses meet the eye. A slightly more sophisticated type of biblical divination is called ‘manna-grains’. Abbreviated biblical references on very small pieces of paper — almost like the flakes or grains on which the people of Israel survived in the desert — are put in a tray. The diviner picks one at random and looks up the reference in his Bible. This may be done as a variant of regular devotional reading, but also to seek advice in a particular situation (Balle-Petersen 1982). The biblical text will then be interpreted as divine advice, pertinent to the matter in hand.

Although taken from three continents, three examples will not suffice to establish universals; neither would three thousand. They will, however, enable us to develop a questionnaire to be used in future studies of still other systems of divination. We have observed that all three systems of prediction take their point of departure in unpredictable observations. There is an experiment, the result of which is at least in principle impossible to determine. But as soon as the result is obtained, it gives access to an exemplar text (and we shall understand ‘text’ in the broadest possible sense, as any pattern subject to interpretation). This text will then be considered relevant and pertinent to the case in question and interpreted *ad hoc*. This means that we may structure an inquiry into a process of divination according to the following questionnaire:

1. The experiment
2. The exemplar text
3. The *ad hoc* interpretation.

It takes no genius to arrive at this very simple questionnaire, but what exactly are the intellectual operations that take us this little step forward? The very juxtaposition of the three examples made us look for common structures and common denominators. Thus we became involved in a process of abstraction and formalization which enabled us to formulate a questionnaire that will apply to divination systems in spite of many differences in detail.

The questionnaire is, however, still a very simple one which does nothing but structure a first inquiry. To develop it further, we must consider the role played by cosmology and the ways in which the verdicts of divination acquire authority. The two questions are closely related, as it is perhaps most easily seen in the case of biblical divination. Canonical texts are, of course, authoritative, and even without appealing to logos theology the very idea of the Bible as a complete, fixed canon implies that in a religious sense the world is not deeper or bigger than revealed in the text of the Bible. The sacred book is considered the complete and ultimate key to the world, perhaps even to the extent that future events and conditions preexist in its text.

In the case of the *Yi Jing*, we have already observed how its text moves from the cosmic and ritual constellations to the moral order. Thus it presents the outcome of divination as a necessary result of that eternal and coherent process of transfiguration, which is the *dao* of the world.

In the case of *Fa*, it is considered the writing of the creator god Mawu (Herskovits 1938 II: 203), in which the present and the future preexist. Divination gives access to this matrix, or rather puts its stamp on the world, thus formulating rules to be followed. Fon narratives account for mythological exemplars of the technique and the process of divination. In one of these narratives (Herskovits and Herskovits 1958: 173–176), divination is a bisexual divinity, Gbadu, created by Mawu after the gods of the three kingdoms of earth, sky, and sea had appeared. Gbadu has 16 eyes and sits in a palm tree in order to watch the three kingdoms. Legba, the trickster god and the only one who understands the language of Mawu as well as the languages of all three kingdoms, has the task of opening Gbadu's eyes when she awakes. If she wants two eyes opened, she gives him one palm nut; if she wants one, she gives him two.

The roles of Legba and Gbadu in this text are due to the basic idea that, as a *deus otiosus*, Mawu governs the world in an indirect way. The world is divided into the three kingdoms, which speak different languages and do not understand the language of Mawu. Legba the linguist must act as a mediator and, according to the wish of Mawu, Gbadu is now given a similar mediating position: She receives the keys to the future, which is a house with 16 doors, corresponding to her 16 eyes. At the same time, a knowledge of the language of Mawu is given to some men (sc. the diviners). Through the technique of divination with the 16 nuts, men may thus open the eyes of Gbadu, which correspond to the doors of the house of the future, and thus see their fate. The number 16 connects the manipulations of the diviner with Gbadu, and through her with the house of the future. Another narrative (Herskovits and Herskovits 1958: 180) makes a similar point when it speaks of the 16 'secretaries' of the creator god.

The mythological role of divination is, as we have seen, that of mediating between Mawu and the world, thus replacing a more direct divine government. Fa, or Gbadu, is there to bring order to the world, for she is given her mediating position when Legba reports that the three kingdoms are in disorder, because they do not know the language of Mawu. Fa is also the origin of sacrifice (which it prescribes) and of "all the stories of the world". This refers to the vast fund of myths and narratives used as exemplar texts in divination, but in a mythological perspective it serves to emphasize the ordering and cultivating role of Fa. The role and the authority of the exemplar texts in regulating human behaviour find salient expression in the passages immediately following: Fa has brought all these stories from the sky, and "everything that happens on earth, has happened in the sky before. So Fa and Legba can advise human beings, because they themselves have discovered how to meet every possible situation in the sky." (Herskovits and Herskovits 1958: 180). The celestial and mythical order, the 'writing of Mawu' is accessible on earth through the fund of exemplar narratives administered by the divination. Thus in a double sense, Fa-divination is cosmology in practice. Its very technique is founded in myth, and through its experiment, the celestial and mythical exemplar of any human situation are found.

Added to the questionnaire we already have, the question of cosmology and authority brings out differences in the cosmologies, but at the same time serves to identify the very *raison d'être* of a divination system.

There is, of course, much more to each local system of divination than this simple questionnaire can ever bring out. No doubt it will be possible to improve and refine it, but I hope it is already visible how

it may serve as an analytic tool in the historical study of a single religion, when divination is involved.

By the very simplicity of the matter I have presented, it is my hope to have demonstrated how a comparative exercise may, through the process of abstraction and formalization that it implies, lead to the formation of notions and categories that improve our professional questionnaire.

References

Balle-Petersen, Margaretha

1982 Den brede og den smalle vej. In: Divination. *Chaos*, Særnummer: 77–87.

Blofeld, John

1968 The Book of Change. A New Translation of the Ancient Chinese I Ching (Yi King) With Detailed Instruction for its practical Use in Divination. London: Allen & Unwin. [2nd ed.]

Caquot, André, and Marcel Leibovici (eds.)

1968 La divination. Études. 2 vols. Paris: P. U. F.

Geertz, Clifford

1993 The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays. London: Fontana Press

Herskovits, Melville J.

1938 Dahomey. An Ancient West African Kingdom; vol. 2. New York: Augustin.

Herskovits, Melville J., and Frances S. Herskovits

1958 Dahomean Narrative. A Cross-Cultural Analysis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. (Northwestern University, African Studies, 1)

Loewe, Michael, and Carmen Blacker (eds.)

1981 Oracles and Divination. Boulder: Shambhala.

Smith, Jonathan Z.

1982 Imagining Religion. From Babylon to Jonestown. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

M I C H A E L P Y E

Methodological Integration in the Study of Religions

Methodological clustering

These pages present a call for an integrated approach to the academic study of religions which does justice to its specificity, but without separating it artificially from other related avenues of research. For a discipline to reflect upon its methods is a normal part of academic endeavour, and this applies to the study of religions (or *Religionswissenschaft*¹) as much as to any other scientific research. This statement implies, and is intended to imply, that the study of religions may be regarded as a "discipline". "Religions" constitute a field of study and accordingly "the study of religion (or religions)" is a discipline. What is a discipline, that is, in the scientific sense? It is no more, and no less, than a methodically ordered approach to the study of a field. The field "religion(s)", no less than any other fields, requires a methodically ordered approach for its study. The methodically ordered approach, the discipline, takes on particular characteristics as required for the best study of the field. Consequently, the discipline of the study of religion(s) is not necessarily quite the same as the discipline required for the study of other fields, though it may be rather similar to the discipline required for the study of closely related fields.

The view of the field and the understanding of the discipline interact with each other. A stable methodological perspective corresponds to a stable view of the field. The destabilisation of either leads to the destabilisation of the other. However, an advance in methodology

¹ The German term (like its equivalent in various languages) has the advantage of including the element "science" in it, but the disadvantage of referring to religion in the singular. Care should be taken to avoid the term which puts the sciences into the plural, namely *Religionswissenschaften*, for this suggests on the one hand that "religion" is one, idealised entity, while on the other hand avoiding the strenuous task of being clear about what the appropriate science for its investigation is.

may lead to a correction in the view of the field, and on the other hand, newly perceived or newly emergent features in the field may lead to pressures on currently held understandings of method. While openness to the recasting of perspectives is desirable, one may hope nevertheless for a certain, relative stability in the understanding of both field and discipline, for otherwise the critical interaction between individual investigators typical of a "science" cannot function at all. It is to be hoped that conferences on the subject of methodology in the study of religions, as famously held in Turku, contribute to the stabilisation process.² When there is relative stability, the discipline can be learned, practised, taught, corrected and developed.

The understanding that there is, and indeed must be such a process of methodological development and reflection does not imply that the study of religions has some one special method, unique to itself. At the same time the discipline of the study of religions requires its own particular gathering, or as we might better say, clustering, of methods. Though the methods at our disposal are in themselves known in the context of other disciplines, they are brought together in a particular way in order to facilitate the study of the precise field in question, namely religions. The resultant discipline is not quite the same as the disciplines required for the study of other fields, or of fields differently defined.

It is desirable to clarify, at this point in the argument, the nature of the specificity which the discipline requires and the reasons for which it should be affirmed. It arises firstly for the simple reason that there does not seem to be any other one, single discipline which could plausibly claim to be, alone and precisely, the discipline required for the study of religions. For example, "history" does not quite fit the requirements, because it does not usually include the methodological niceties of carrying out fieldwork among living people. Nor however does "sociology", because in general, quite correctly in its own terms, it subordinates the study of religious ideas and behaviour to wider questions about the nature and functioning of society. Such questions are of course valuable, but there are other questions of interest concerning religious idea-complexes, for example questions about their internal structure and dynamics, which are not necessarily "sociological" in nature. For analogous reasons the disciplines of

² I am referring to the IAHR conferences on methodology in 1973 (see Honko 1979) and in 1997. On the whole I believe that these conferences have in fact tended to stabilise methodology, even though some contributions in each case might provide illustrations for some of the difficulties discussed in the next section of this paper.

anthropology, art history, archaeology, political science, and so on, also do not amount to just that discipline which is required, overall, for the study of religions. Unfortunately the use of the words "autonomy" or "autonomous" have sometimes been subject to misunderstanding or to misuse in this connection. This is because they have frequently been associated with an "essentialist" or "sui generis" view of religion as a unitary phenomenon, that is, with the idea that behind all the various religions there is some unifying essence which only specialists in religion can understand and which makes their study different in kind from the study of anything else. This position is by no means adopted here. Nor shall it even be discussed at this point, since such a view of religions is not relevant to the argument being advanced.³ It is quite a different matter to point out that none of the other disciplines currently practised in the human and social sciences specifically and adequately relate to the field of "religions". In some way or other they fail adequately to explore or elucidate the subject matter. Some do too little, and some, it might be said, do too much. This does not mean that the study of religions requires a special method which is unique to itself. What it does mean is that the right selection of available methods must be made and that these must be clustered together in a manner appropriate to the subject matter.

While it is necessary to realise that a specific clustering of methods is necessary to maintain and develop the discipline of the study of religions, it is not necessarily important to achieve complete agreement about what this clustering of methods should look like. Consequently there is no intention to offer a dogmatic statement about it here. Nevertheless, after clearing the way with some notes on present difficulties and the reasons for them, the following presentation will seek to show what such a clustering of methods might reasonably be expected to look like. The statement is formulated in what may appear to some to be disappointingly uncomplicated terms. However, this is intentional and is regarded here as an advantage. Simplicity is a strength, not a weakness. It is anticipated that those who are themselves engaged in the study of religions, in practice, will find it relatively easy to reach broad agreement along these lines. And indeed it is important, while continuing the methodological discussion

³ To avoid any misunderstanding it may be added that the intention behind the usage in the phrase "The study of religion as an autonomous discipline" (Pye 1982) is consistent with the approach being taken here. Unfortunately the word "autonomous" may have too many misleading associations and so should perhaps be avoided.

within the discipline, that there should be a widely recognisable tradition of study which can be identified as "the study of religions" (or whatever formulation is preferred). Indeed, it may be maintained that to some extent there is already such a recognisable tradition of study, even if it is in need of greater crystallization.

Reasons for some present difficulties

Unfortunately, in spite of much attention to methodological questions in the study of religion there continues to be uncertainty, vagueness, and even irresponsibility in not a few quarters. Why is the methodological identity of the study of religion so widely misunderstood? There are various reasons.

First, it is deplorable that basic distinctions which ought to be easily understood continue to be slurred over or dismissed as trivial. A classic example of this is the difference between studying religious statements and making religious statements. It is remarkable, but true, that even today, after decades of methodological clarification, it is still necessary to make this distinction clear. Again and again, theologians appear who confidently assert that they are making statements which pertain to *Religionswissenschaft*, when they are in fact giving a *religious* analysis of some cultural situation. It is not surprising that other members of the public, even of academe, cannot take the trouble of making this distinction. However, as most real specialists in the study of religions would agree today, it is quite significant for the study of religion that it should not be identified with the making of religious statements. That would be a matter for theologians, Buddhist apologists, neo-shamans, and many others.

Second, there is a certain amount of intellectually obstinate compartmentalization furthered by the use of conventional phrases such as "comparative religion", "phenomenology of religion", "anthropology of religion", "psychology of religion" and so on. Though these are usually recognised to have a certain history, which is rehearsed from time to time, it is not so common to see them assessed conspectually and critically, with a view to their correlation, integration or abandonment as might be required. More commonly they are just listed as options which people may take up as they please. However if the field is regarded as coherent, then a greater degree of methodological co-ordination, or even integration, is intellectually desirable and ought therefore to be sought. For example "comparative religion" or "comparative study of religions" cannot really exist by itself. Nor can "ethnology of religion", in spite of the immensely valuable contribu-

tions of those working at the interface between ethnology and the study of religions.⁴

Third, persons coming freshly to the subject often bring with them methodological perspectives which have been strongly formed in other disciplinary contexts. This is often enriching, but can also perpetuate mistaken assumptions and misunderstandings about the study of religions. Thus it sometimes happens that a person who has been trained as an anthropologist or ethnologist, and who goes on to specialise in religion, simply does not go to the trouble of acquiring a methodological orientation in the discipline of the study of religions. Humanly speaking, this may be acceptable in itself, depending on the case and the situation, but it becomes irresponsible when younger students, new to the subject, are told that the study of religions as such has no particular method. In such cases it appears that the researchers in question feel a professional need to continue to be identified above all as whatever they were before. Anthropologists, for example, once they have undergone their double initiation through field work and first publication, are sometimes a bit like boy scouts who have the saying "Once a scout, always a scout". The result is a failure to achieve "discipline identification"⁵ or integration with respect to specialised, or new fields of study such as "religions".

A fourth reason for a certain amount of confusion is the development of serious methodological divergence as the result of an interest in new lines of thought which seem to make their own methodological claims. Sometimes new insights in a particular direction seem to demand to take over the methodological discussion entirely, while earlier gains are despised or forgotten. For example, because it is interesting to consider religion as a pattern of brain operations, we are tempted to regard cognitive science as *the* appropriate method for studying religions. If we are not careful, the need for fieldwork, for textual studies, and for disciplined comparison may then be forgotten. Putting it more generally, it is not infrequent for interesting figures such as Claude Lévy-Strauss or Michel Foucault to make the running, creating a bandwagon effect which disregards some of the everyday methodological requirements of the study of religions. The impact of various intellectual currents must surely be taken up

⁴ Phrases built on the pattern "ethnology of x" and equivalents in other languages such as "X-ethnologie" are easily framed but usually very imprecise in their meaning.

⁵ Although it may sound somewhat forbidding, this phrase (Pye 1991) refers to a normal and appropriate process in any discipline which is enriched by recruits from varied quarters.

keenly by specialists in religion, as in the case of other disciplines, but at the same time it is necessary to work out carefully where the possibilities of integration lie. Otherwise tested and worthwhile methods will simply be scorned or forgotten in favour of a series of fashions.

Fifth, in recent years there has been an increasing recognition that the "history of religions" is not, and indeed never really was quite the same as "history" in a looser or more general sense. The adumbration within the field of history implied by the adjunct "of religions" implies an incipient theoretical horizon. It has therefore been asserted not infrequently that "history of religions" somehow brings along with it the systematic, comparative or typological study of religions. However, this is not enough. Simply to make this connection does not provide the methodological integration which we require. Moreover this stance deflects attention from the possibility of extremely valuable field research among the numerous religions open to direct study today. It is adopted, typically, by those who prefer to reject out of hand the methodological contributions of the various social sciences in favour of "the historicoo-philological" method. The approach also obscures the important point that "comparison" may be carried out both with respect to the internal characteristics of religion (leading to the typologies typical of the phenomenological school) and also with respect to functionalist explanations over the much wider range of sociological and psychological research. One cannot simply say that it is the "comparative" part of research which somehow makes the study of religions systematic and therefore scientific, or that this feature in itself makes it a distinctive discipline.

Sixth, the argument has moved forward in recent years. It has become widely accepted, contrary to the last mentioned trend, that "history of religions" can only stand in a full sense for the "study of religions" if the latter itself is also understood to be located within the overall range of the social and/or cultural sciences. Nevertheless these two major wings, the historicoo-philological (often with an emphasis on the study of texts) and the social-scientific, are still sometimes contrasted, as if inimical to each other. The recent debate over the name of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), conducted during the years 1990–95, reflected these tensions, although it also had pragmatic aspects. In general it may be said that, because of their varying academic formation throughout the world, representatives of various trends in this discussion did not always find it easy to understand one another. This was the case

even when some important positions were in fact shared, as in the contributions by Ugo Bianchi and Donald Wiebe.⁶

For all of these reasons uncertainty and lack of direction is often sensed by students and younger researchers. Nevertheless, it is argued here, considerable agreement can be perceived in the experience of specialists about how to go about studying religions. We will now turn, therefore, to strategic considerations for the development of an integrated methodology for the study of religions.

Strategic considerations

It is no longer sufficient simply to set out in a miscellaneous list, as has often been done, the apparently varied tasks of history, comparison, phenomenology, hermeneutics, sociology, psychology, phenomenology and so on. What is needed is to make the necessary effort to correlate and integrate clearly those features of academic (or in some languages "scientific") method which are particularly necessary in the study of religions. This will make truly inter-disciplinary discussions with specialists in other disciplines far more fruitful. What, then, are the key strands in a methodologically integrated study of religions? Without claiming finality, this paper will now continue by giving a broadly conceived answer to this question. Three focal points in the articulation of an integrated methodology for the disciplined study of religions will be first briefly mentioned and then treated in more detail below.

First is the relation between subject-matter and method. Certain methodological orientations arise out of the simplest available morphology of the subject-matter, namely in terms of four elementary aspects of religion. This amounts to an adumbration of the field to be studied rather than a pointed definition of the object of study. The four aspects to which attention is drawn are: the behavioural, the conceptual, the subjective and the social. This enumeration is reduced here to a form which is as simple as possible without gross omission, and further details and argumentation thereon may be found elsewhere (Pye 1972; Pye 1994). It will also be noticed that these four elementary aspects are enumerated at such a level of abstraction that they can also be discerned in other subject-matters, e.g. sport or politics. However as soon as the pattern is filled out with

⁶ Their statements, and other related contributions, are preserved in the informal IAHR bulletins between 1990 and 1995, when the discussion was taking place.

an example (or "a case") of religion, certain methodological requirements emerge quite clearly which may not be applicable in quite the same way to all other fields of research. These will be explained below.

The second focus is the relation between sources and method. Sources are not the same as subject-matter. The subject-matter is a complex set of socio-cultural data for which sources provide evidence. The methodological question here is, therefore, how the sources in question should be studied. Thus the focus on sources gives rise to secondary methodological orientations arising out of the threefold nature of the primary sources available for study, namely written, oral and material sources. There is no unique method here which is particularly characteristic of the study of the religions. However there is a characteristic clustering of methods which arises out of the particular grouping of the sources which are relevant. As will be seen, one of the most important requirements in this regard is to achieve a coherent correlation between the "historico-philological" method and the methods typical of fieldwork in "living" and "oral" situations.

The third focal point lies in the methodological requirements of theory formation. It is necessary to distinguish between "theory" and "method", because an interest in new theories has often been mistaken for methodological advance. For example, a theory on gender relations in religion, or an interest in semiotics or cybernetics, does not necessarily imply an advance or a change in methodology as such. Admittedly, new theoretical positions may lead to *some* methodological adjustment. However there are two major aspects of method which contribute in particular degree to the development of categories and theories in the study of religions, namely: comparison and contextualisation. Since these are not exciting, like new theoretical approaches learned from elsewhere, they are sometimes neglected and scorned. Sometimes, too, they are over-emphasised. The main problem here, as a third step, is to correlate them appropriately with the requirements which emerge from the subject-matter and from the sources available.

Subject matter and method

These three focal points will now be explained in a little more detail. As indicated above, the enumeration of the conceptual, behavioural, social and subjective aspects of religion is regarded here as being the briefest possible indication of the subject matter which maintains a

holistic view of it. That is, the enumeration enables us to think of the subject matter at once aspectually and conspectually. It may be that the same enumeration could be applied to other subject-matters, but the picture takes on colour in the study of religions when a particular religion or religions are regarded in this way. Any further delineation leads into increasingly complex questions of morphology and typology, about which differences of view might increasingly arise. However, the disagreements would be theoretical, not methodological. At the level of methodological reflection currently entertained it does not matter if views differ about the way in which morphological theories might be developed in greater detail, e.g. by listing more "dimensions", as done by Ninian Smart for example (Smart 1996). It should be noted therefore that, at this point, I am concerned only with the elementary methodological principles which arise from the simplest possible delineation of the subject matter.

The first requirement is that as far as possible, that is, as far as the available sources and research facilities permit, all four of these four elementary aspects should be considered in their integral relation to each other. Stating it negatively, for example, religious ideas should not be studied as if they had no relation whatever to religious behaviour. If this is done the researcher is likely to end by simply contributing to the further development of the religious tradition in question (as many pursuing "religious studies" in fact do). Similarly, the subjective aspects of religion cannot be completely separated from their conceptual accompaniment, a point which it has still seemed necessary to argue quite recently, and widely, in connection with mysticism.⁷ Or again, the social forms of religion should not be studied as if it does not really matter what the people involved think, feel or do. That is to say, the conceptual, subjective and behavioural aspects should be taken into account at the same time. For practical purposes a partial study may be undertaken, concentrating on one aspect by itself, but at least it should be recognised that the other aspects are latently relevant. In other words religion should be studied both aspectually and conspectually.

The second methodological requirement arising at this same level of analysis is that the poly-aspectual subject-matter should be studied, in the first instance, in terms of its integral meaning for the believers or participants in question. That is to say, it should be studied without reference to the value orientation or possible explanatory hypotheses of the researcher. If this is not attempted, the emergent

⁷ See *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (Katz 1983), a multi-authored work in which all contributors take this view.

characterisation is very likely to be misleading in some significant respect. Naturally, it is perfectly legitimate, and indeed desirable, to proceed at a later point to questions of explanatory theory, and indeed later still into questions of truth and value which go beyond the task of the study of religions (*Religionswissenschaft*) as such. But in the first instance the study of religions should be **recognitional**, that is, the integral meaning of the subject-matter for the believers or participants in question should be recognised in its own right. It is this which requires to be elucidated and characterised in the first instance. Otherwise mistakes will surely be made which will vitiate any other forms of enquiry or debate. The word "recognitional" is newly coined to express this because of problems with other previously used terminology, as will be illustrated in the next paragraph. This feature of the necessary method includes a) elucidation and b) characterisation, two steps for which the wider discussion of hermeneutics is relevant.

This second methodological requirement has in fact been a commonplace in the study of religions since the emergence of the phenomenological tradition (in the study of religions), the term "bracketing" having become popular to express it. Unfortunately the point has often been obscured because it has been found necessary to reject other emphases found in the work of those who supposedly espoused it. In particular, it has been shown many times that leading representatives of the "phenomenological" school did not in fact proceed phenomenologically in this sense, or at least not consistently. Rather, they pushed and pulled their materials into more or less theological categories derived from or characteristic of Christianity. G. Van der Leeuw and Friedrich Heiler are prime examples of this.⁸ In spite of this deficit it is very important that specialists in the study of religions should continue to attempt to study them as systems which have meaning for their believers or participants. Previously I have tried to preserve at least the adverb "phenomenologically" to indicate this important methodological requirement. In view of the dense forest of potential misunderstandings, however, I have now decided to abandon it altogether. That is the reason for the introduction of the word "recognitional". Earlier, like others, I have usually stressed the importance of the "self-understanding" of the believers, and I believe that Jacques Waardenburg has been making a similar point by re-

⁸ It is hardly necessary to go into this in detail, but attention may be drawn to recent assessments of van der Leeuw (by Jacques Waardenburg) and of Heiler (by myself) in Axel Michaels' *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft* (1997).

ferring to their "intentionality" (Waardenburg 1986: 241 ff.). However both of these terms focus a little too heavily on the conceptual aspect of religion. The term "recognitional" means that the researcher gives full recognition to the complex of experience covered by all four main aspects of religion for those who are involved in it.

This argument includes the idea that "specialists in the study of religions should continue to attempt to study them as systems which have meaning for their believers or participants", to repeat the phrasing already used. The word "attempt" is used deliberately here, for it is commonly held today that total objectivity or non-subjectivity simply cannot be achieved. This is not the place for a general discussion about the viability of a "value-free" science. However I firmly reject the oversimplified view that, because it is difficult to study religious systems in their own terms, this should not, and may not be attempted. To accept such a view would lead away from science into mere arbitrariness, and simply allow old prejudices to be replaced by new ones. However sophisticated the epistemological discussion becomes, there remains a difference between achieving a good elucidation and characterisation of the religion of a specified group of people, or getting it all wrong because one's own beliefs and values continually get in the way.

The third methodological requirement arising out of the subject-matter as delineated above is that, even while proceeding on the one hand recognitionally, attention should also be given to the potential emergence of questions or insights which stand in tension to, or cut across, the self-understanding of the believers or participants. This tension increases with the move from elucidation towards characterisation and into explanation. As a result the tension arises for the following three reasons, which may amount to a particular characteristic of the methodology appropriate to the study of religion as a complex, but integrated enterprise.

- a) Within any one example studied, a structure may appear which is not apparent, or only partially apparent, to the believers or participants in question. The researcher's perception of this structure may therefore be more "correct" than that of the believers or participants (in so far as they are interested in the matter at all). At this point therefore the first degree of tension arises over against the idea (which used to be designated as "phenomenological") that the believers are "completely right" (Kristensen 1960: 14).
- b) The structure of any one religion may be rendered more visible as the result of comparative studies, that is, the as yet continuing, recognitional study of further cases. Though any one study in it-

self will continue to be recognitional, the theoretical perspective resulting from comparative knowledge may not be visible to the believers or participants, and if it becomes visible it may not be acceptable. This is the second degree of tension.

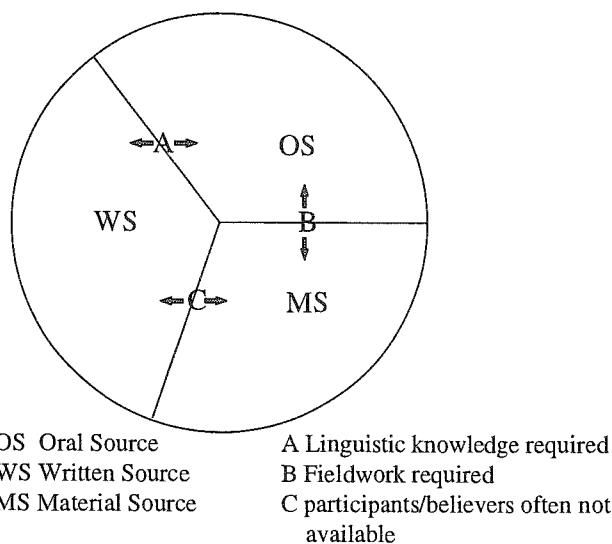
- c) Finally, the intersections of any one of the four aspects set out above with related historical or socio-cultural contexts are likely to give rise to correlational reflections which require, and suggest, explanation in the stronger sense of the word. This is the normal task of those wider disciplines such as sociology or psychology which have a strongly explanatory orientation. However it also applies to other contextual studies such as intellectual history, in so far as it includes the history of religious ideas as part of a much wider whole, or to contextual behavioural studies of different kinds such as research into the operations of the brain.

Sources and methods

The enumeration of the four basic aspects of religion has allowed and required us to make the first steps in the definition of the necessary methodology for their study. As noted earlier, further delineation of the subject matter in detail leads into questions of morphology and typology, and only secondarily into methodological questions. The next major step in the identification of a correct methodology lies elsewhere, namely in a general view of the sources. Again, the simplest possible view which does justice to the whole is preferred. This is as follows. The sources for the study of religions fall into three major groups: written sources, oral sources, material sources. "Material sources" here includes artifacts, buildings, non-verbal symbols, bodily positions and movements, etc.. The order "written, oral, material" reflects nothing more than the order in which they have, historically, come to be perceived as relevant. It could be reversed or jumbled. However the perception of the importance of all three is important, and does not always occur. For example it seems to be rather neglected in the collected essays of Kurt Rudolph (1992). While each of the three major classes of source has attracted its own methodological debates in the past (hermeneutics, problems of access, and so on), it is important today to correlate them in an integrated fashion. Successful correlation at this level will help to stabilise the discipline of the study of religions.

Each of these three main kinds of source has leading characteristics which overlap with those of the others. Taken severally, the leading characteristics of the sources are as follows. (a) Written

sources are linguistic, mainly historical, and only to a lesser extent field-based. (b) Oral sources are linguistic, mainly field-based, and only to a lesser extent historical. (c) Material sources are above all field-based and historical, and only in a derived or contextual sense linguistic. Thus, it will be seen that each of the three main types of source shares a leading characteristic with one of the other two, the common leading characteristics being as follows. Written and oral sources are preeminently linguistic, when compared with material sources. Oral and material sources are preeminently field-based, when compared with written sources. Material and written sources are preeminently historical, when compared with oral sources. That there can be a natural integration of these perspectives in the service of the study of religions can be illustrated in an easily conceived diagram.



Some of these relations will seem immediately obvious, but others may be less so. Oral sources are primarily field-based, and in further detail attract the modes of enquiry developed largely in social anthropology and sociology. They are only "historical" in cases where they have been gathered and elucidated in the past. In a weaker

sense oral sources are also part of recent history. Material sources (buildings, ritual objects, bodily positions and movements, etc.) may be rather new, but most commonly they are part of a continuous history and may even be very old. Moreover, material sources are not themselves linguistic in character. (This aspect may be accentuated by referring to them negatively as "non-verbal sources".) Although they take on their meaning from contexts which have a linguistic aspect, which may be at least partly recoverable, it is methodologically important to draw in the appropriate methods of archaeology, numismatics, art history, and so on. It would be desirable to develop this sub-field of methodology further to take particular account of objects used mainly or only in religious contexts. There does not, as yet, seem to be any comprehensive name for this. Traditional terms like "iconography" only refer to a part of it. As to written sources, care is needed to perceive their full range. Written sources include both well-known texts, little known but formally impressive texts, inscriptions of many kinds and from many periods, and ephemeral texts. Such texts may be wholly, partly, or only indirectly religious in intention, a point which also applies to artifacts.

The most important point which arises out of an integrated grasp of methodology at this level is as follows. It is evident that the "historical" or the "historical-philological" method is not enough by itself to meet the methodological requirements of the study of religions. It should be realised however, that the "extra" which is required does not arise simply because of the tradition of associating "comparative" studies with the history of religions. The "systematic" requirements of *Religionswissenschaft* are more far-reaching and strenuous than this. Such a view does not do justice to the requirements arising from the main groups of sources. In particular, it fails to integrate the methods drawn from history on the one hand and social anthropology on the other hand, even though both of these are widely recognised to be of great relevance to the study of religions. When the methods are appropriately clustered and integrated the study of religions is much the stronger.

Methodology and theory formation

This section of the argument will be stated with particular brevity because it is really a different subject and there is no intention here of moving into theory as such. The detailed development of typologies, for example, belongs to the realm of theoretical reflection rather than to methodology as such. It was noted earlier that it is necessary

to distinguish between "theory" and "method", for the simple reason that an interest in new theories is often confused with methodological advance. However there are two aspects of method, or strands in the clustered methods which make up the discipline of the study of religions, which contribute in particular to the development of theoretical categories and models in the study of religion. These are, above all, comparison and contextualisation. Where do these methods, or aspects of method, belong in an integrated discipline for the study of religions?

In certain ways, comparison and contextualisation overlap with each other. A comparison may be developed on the basis of two or more cases of religion which are being studied recognitionally. That is to say, several religions or aspects of religions which have been effectively characterised can thereupon be compared. This will lead into the construction of thematic elucidatory categories (such as pilgrimage, tradition, mysticism) or of explanatory categories (such as syncretism) which are internal to religious systems. However, comparison may also be of great interest in the elaboration of explanatory hypotheses which correlate religious data with other social or psychological factors. This was massively exemplified by Max Weber, for example, whose work, while contextual, was also comparative. In summary, comparison is required both in the recognitional phase and in the explanatory phase of the study of religion. Contextualisation means, as may readily be understood, considering one or more of the aspects of a given case of religion in the setting of its historical, socio-cultural and even biological context. While this may have an instructive value in the recognitional phase, it becomes much more prominent and is indeed indispensable in the fully explanatory phase. Contextualisation is ambiguous in the recognitional phase of study. It may be necessary for the elucidation of what believers mean. Incorrectly handled, however, it may lead imperceptibly but mercilessly away from the self-understanding of the believers or participants. Explanatory theories, on the other hand, quite correctly, *only* make sense in context.

Conclusion

The purpose of this argument was to illustrate in brief that methodological integration in the disciplined study of religions can be achieved with relative simplicity. Of course there is a continuous need for clarification and discussion at specific points. Strategically however, what is needed at the present time is not so much discuss-

sion of the detail as a clear focus on those features of academic or "scientific" method which are necessary and fruitful in the disciplined study of religions. This will make it easier to carry on worthwhile methodological and theoretical discussions with specialists in other fields which themselves require distinctive methodological orientations. If the detail is left aside, some important clarifications have emerged. It has been seen that there is a need for coordination and clustering of the various methods corresponding to the sources which are in fact available for scrutiny. The undogmatic perception of these sources leads in particular to the correlation of fieldwork methods with historical methods, and relativises the latter considerably. It has also been seen that the special character of the discipline does not lie merely in a cross-fertilisation between historical and comparative method. This popular correlation is a mis-match which does justice neither to the appropriate clustering of methods as related to sources, nor to the ways in which comparison is related to both recognitional and explanatory research.

Finally, it is important to insist that, at the level of greatest generalisation, the procedures for the study of religions, though open to refinement, are not arbitrary or optional. Elucidation and characterisation are not optional. In the academic study of religions they should precede explanation. Moreover elucidation and characterisation must also be "recognitional", as explained above. Neither religious ingressions, for example in the form of theological debate, nor premature explanatory reductionism are acceptable in this phase of research. Again, the broad classification of sources is not really optional. The available sources cannot be pushed around on the basis of personal whim or university politics. There really are oral sources and material sources in the field as well as the well-known and less well-known written sources.

Methodological integration is envisaged here. The disciplined study of religion cannot be split down the middle, for example between history and ethnology, just because some people prefer to work with a certain kind of source material or prefer a certain kind of professional badge. It is an unduly easy alibi to say that the study of religion is "interdisciplinary", even if this is helpful in a preliminary way.⁹ All too often an emphasis on "interdisciplinarity" seems to suggest an openness to a variety of methods while it in fact allows the challenge of methodological reflection to be avoided. By contrast, as has been

⁹ C.f. Don Wiebe's criticism of "polymethodism" advanced during the 1997 Turku conference.

seen above, the discipline of the study of religions both requires and can find its own specific methodological integration.

References

Honko, Lauri (ed.)

- 1979 Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology. Proceedings of the Study Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, held in Turku, Finland, August 27–31, 1973. The Hague: Mouton.

Katz, Steven T. (ed.)

- 1983 Mysticism and Religious Traditions. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kristensen, W. Brede

- 1960 The Meaning of Religion: Lectures in the Phenomenology of Religion. The Hague.

Michaels, Axel (ed.)

- 1997 Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mirce Eliade. München: Beck.

Pye, Michael

- 1972 Comparative Religion: An Introduction through Source Materials. Newton Abbot.

- 1982 The study of religion as an autonomous discipline. *Religion* 12: 67–76.

- 1991 Religious studies in Europe: structures and desiderata. In: Klaus K. Klostermaier and Larry W. Hurtado (eds.), Religious Studies: Issues, Prospects, and Proposals; pp. 39–55. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (University of Manitoba Studies in Religion, 2)

- 1994 Religion: Shape and Shadow. *Numen* 41: 51–75.

Rudolph, Kurt

- 1992 Geschichte und Probleme der Religionswissenschaft. Leiden: Brill.

Smart, Ninian

- 1996 Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs. London: HarperCollins.

Waardenburg, Jacques

- 1986 Religionen und Religion: Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft. Berlin: de Gruyter. (Sammlung Göschen, 2228)

I L K K A P Y Y S I Ä I N E N & K I M M O K E T O L A

Rethinking ‘God’

The Concept of ‘God’ as a Category in Comparative Religion

Our argument consists of the following six steps:

1. Comparative religion should not remain isolated from other sciences;
2. To enable interdisciplinary dialogue with other fields of study, scholars in comparative religion should make use of precise scientific concepts;
3. ‘God’ is not a scientific but an emic concept used intuitively;
4. Behind our intuitions about the concept of ‘god’ there are implicit Judeo-Christian assumptions;
5. Substituting ‘superhuman agent’ for ‘god’ is no solution.
6. Some possible solutions:
 - A) We might use the concept of ‘god’ only as a loose heuristic or interpretative term and drop it from theoretical language;
 - B) We might also restrict the concept of ‘god’ only to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and conceptualize other traditions preferring their own emic terms;
 - C) ‘God’ is made to refer to a very broad category of all kinds of entities somehow violating people’s expectations of how entities ordinarily behave, and conceived of as superior to humans.

1. Comparative religion should not remain isolated from other sciences

There seems to be a dilemma concerning our academic identity: either we have a clear-cut identity based on ‘theological’ presuppositions concerning the *sui generis* nature (see McCutcheon 1997) of the object of our study; or we may aspire to a more scientifically rigorous approach. In that case, we cannot as clearly identify the object of our study, and therefore the independent scientific identity of our discipline becomes suspect (see Lawson and McCauley 1993b; Wiebe 1999).

Thus, comparative religion has all too often been understood in the scientific community as an odd humanistic enterprise somewhere between theology and real science. This we consider an unhappy

state of affairs. We think that comparative religion should be practised in dialogue with other fields of social science, and that religious phenomena offer a very significant field where various psychological, sociological and cognitive theories may be tested — even if there is no such ‘thing’ or entity as religion as a clearly demarcated object.

2. To enable interdisciplinary dialogue with other fields of study, scholars in comparative religion should make use of precise scientific concepts

If we take comparative religion to be a humanistic and social scientific discipline (as we think it should be taken), we have to accept that in describing and explaining religion we must make use of precise scientific concepts. As comparative approach implies concepts that are universally applicable, we should not remain satisfied with mere emic concepts, be they our own emic religious concepts or emic concepts of another culture. Although scientific concepts can, in the last analysis, be shown to rest on folk categories and assumptions without ultimate foundation (Saariluoma 1997: 11–12; see also Milligan and Clark 1996), they, nevertheless, are precise and effective in the context in which they are primarily used. Thus, if we use emic folk categories as starting point, we should at least be able somehow to transform them into analytic, etic categories (Saler 1993: 1).

3. ‘God’ is not a scientific but an emic concept used intuitively

Although almost all other central concepts by which scholars in comparative religion operate have by now received careful analyses, the use of the concept of ‘god’ is still guided by nothing but the scholars’ subjective intuitions. Such concepts as ‘tabu’, ‘sacred’, ‘totemism’, etc. have all been lifted from religious contexts and have already been quite carefully problematized and thus made into etic categories for comparative use. Only ‘god’ is still used without any well formed criteria for its operationalisation. This may, perhaps, be because problematizing ‘god’ is considered to belong to philosophy of religion, not to comparative religion which is an empirical science. However, problematizing ‘god’ does not necessarily mean doing normative ontology, but only conceptual clarification. This is what we are calling for.

4. Behind our intuitions about the concept of ‘god’ there are implicit Judeo-Christian assumptions

If we do not have any clear idea of what exactly constitutes the category of ‘gods’, we are implicitly guided by the Judeo-Christian and

Islamic traditions¹. This is largely because our discipline originated in Europe, and various nineteenth-century European debates on religion are still shaping our field. Thus, we may think we are using neutral concepts when we speak of 'African gods', 'American Indian' gods, etc., because we think there is a category of 'gods' in which the Christian God is only one member. We imagine that we can simply forget the Christian connotations of 'god' when we deal with Indian gods, ancient Finnish gods, etc.; and yet the whole *category* of 'gods' is built on Christian presuppositions. Thus, the attributes of the Christian God are silently smuggled into other traditions by naming various kinds of mythological beings as 'gods' (see, e.g. Haavio 1959; Davidson 1986; Sjoestedt 1994.)

As to the Judeo-Christian concept of 'god', we should, first of all, be careful to notice that there is no such entity as 'Christianity' (or 'Buddhism', etc.), only a rather heterogeneous tradition (see Boyer 1987; Pyysiäinen 1993: 15–17) and culture (see Sperber 1990; Sperber 1996) referred to by the words 'Christian(ity)' (see also Boyer 1992: 39–40, 48–49). This tradition may have partly very ancient roots, but its now prevalent official versions are mostly an outcome of the mingling of Greek philosophy and Judaic mythology.

The traditional Christian doctrine of 'god' took its definitive form in the Middle Ages, and is best represented by St. Thomas of Aquinas who follows the traditions of Philo, the Neoplatonists and Pseudo-Dionysius in thinking that we can only know that god exists, not his essence. Therefore his description mostly consists of negations saying what god is not. This gradual elimination of predicates finally leads us to distinguish God from all other beings. Yet Thomas emphasizes that denying predicates of God does not mean that he lacks them, but that he exceeds them. God also has such positive predicates as 'good' and 'wise', which, however, only describe him in so far as our intellect can know him, and thus represent him only imperfectly (Copleston 1985/2: 347–362.)

According to Aquinas (1962–63/1: Q III art. 1–8):

- 1) God does not have a body (*Deum non esse corpus*)

¹ Benson Saler (1993) is willing to accept Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the most prototypical religions upon which our theorizing about the concept of 'religion' primarily rests. Timothy Fitzgerald (1997: 93), for his part, argues that the concept of 'religion' "picks out nothing distinctive and ... clarifies nothing", merely distorting the field, as it is so intimately tied to the idea that there is "one ultimate reality, God or the Transcendent, and a multiplicity of ways or paths and manifestations of this One."

- 2) God is not a composition of matter (*materiam*) and form (*forma*)
- 3) God is one with his essence (*essentia*) and nature (*natura*)
- 4) God is not only his essence but also his existence
- 5) God does not appear as a species in any genus (*Deus non est in genere sicut species*) or as a cause (*sicut principium*)
- 6) There can be no “accidents” (*accidens*) in god
- 7) God is totally one (*Deum omnino esse simplicem*)
- 8) God cannot be combined with anything

Such theological attributes of god have partly found their way into the Christian folk religion in which God is now understood as great, good, creator, even omnipotent and all-knowing, to be in the heavens, to love us, etc. (see also Barrett and Keil 1996).

5. Substituting ‘superhuman agent’ for ‘god’ is no solution

Expressions such as ‘superhuman agent’ (Lawson and McCauley 1993a), ‘nonnatural entities’ (Barrett and Keil 1996), and ‘extrahuman entities’ (Boyer 1993: 4) are often used to refer to superior beings “that humans religiously engage”, or to “points at which humans relate to ‘the other’”, as William Paden puts it (Paden 1994: 121–122). (Paden, however, also says that the study of gods requires “phenomenological analysis that is not governed by Western, theistic premises.”) These concepts are problematic, however.

It has been pointed out long ago, that the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ are always culturally determined (e.g. Durkheim 1960; see also Pyysiäinen 1996a: 25–51). In the West, the concept of ‘nature’ has from the 14th century onwards been strongly shaped by the natural sciences. The idea of a lawfully governed natural universe, as opposed to supernature, has been formed in a long dialogue between science and Christian theology (see Crombie 1959/2). Even in popular Western language, ‘supernatural’ usually covers everything that is not subject to empirical testing and scientific observation. It is usually agreed in particular that gods do not belong to the category of the empirical.

Now, our idea of ‘supernature’ is of course tied to our idea of what is natural, and as this depends on our own culture, ‘supernature’ is also not a universal notion. Plato, as Arthur Lovejoy once observed, is the real ‘father of otherworldliness’ in the Western tradition. He postulated the existence of a Completely Other supraworldly reality as the necessitating ground of the sensible world (Lovejoy 1964: 39–50), and St. Thomas then finally established the adjective *supernaturale* in theological vocabulary.

Substituting ‘superhuman’ for ‘supernatural’ is no solution, unless we mean by it something that transcends what the particular people in question consider human, i.e. humanlike beings with certain counterintuitive properties (see Boyer 1994: 113–123). But, even that is not enough. If we ask “in what sense precisely gods are superhuman?”, we also have to ask “in what sense do they differ from *other* superhuman things?” In realizing that there are different senses to the notion of ‘superhuman’, we may begin to sense some implicit assumptions behind the idea of a superhuman agent as a necessary element in religion (as suggested in Lawson and McCauley 1993a: 61, 82, 89, 112, 124, 165).

Computers, for example, can be said to be superhuman as they far exceed human capacities for calculation. Also many animals are superhuman in that they can perform all kinds of feats we humans can only dream of. Should we, then, categorize computers, tigers, elephants, etc. as peculiar kinds of gods? And if we do not allow this, we must ask ourselves “why not?” We believe that the reason lies in our implicit assumptions. If the superhumanly intelligent computer were also nonmaterial and eternal, perhaps we would not hesitate to call it a god.² Thus, the concept of a mere ‘superhuman agent’ is too vague as a necessary determinant of religion.

However, sometimes the word ‘god’ really is used in a broad sense, although then the user usually knows that he or she is merely using the Christian concept of ‘God’ as an analogy. Thus, if, say Bruce Springsteen, is considered superhuman because of his musical greatness, he is referred to as ‘god’. Or, when Paul Churchland (1995: 246) writes that if Gödel is right then there must be arithmetic truths that are beyond our “armory of algorithmic procedures, truths that some superior being with an even larger armory might be able to prove where we could not”, this no doubt sounds religious to some. The notion of a ‘superior being’ is clearly analogous to ‘god’ in a certain sense, and yet there is little reason to say on these grounds that

² Of course many gods at least occasionally appear in animal form, and Justin Barrett and Frank Keil (1996) replaced ‘God’ by a supercomputer called ‘Uncomp’ to see how god concepts differ from other nonnatural entities, as they conducted psychological experiments about people’s ways of conceptualizing God. (Also Uncomp was anthropomorphized but much less than God.) Should we then broaden the scope of the concept of ‘god’ to include everything somehow great but not human, or should we somehow differentiate it from some extrahuman beings such as animals and computers?

Churchland is ‘religious’ (see also McCauley 1996; cf. Pyysiäinen 1996b).

6. Some possible solutions

We have shown the category of ‘gods’ to be problematic in comparative religion. What should we then do with the concept of ‘god’? We have no definite answer. Among the alternatives are the following:

- 1) We may, of course, use the concept only as a loose heuristic or interpretative term without any ambitions to generalize. We might conclude simply that there are no common features in different religious beliefs concerning various entities and that there exists only some kind of family resemblance in accordance with which we may loosely employ the concept of ‘god’. Because of the centrality of the concept of ‘god’ in comparative religion, this solution would quite largely negate our thesis about the necessity of precise, scientific concepts in comparative religion.
- 2) We may also restrict the use of the concept of ‘god’ only to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In other traditions we should then likewise only use their various emic terms. This solution, however, implies that we also renounce all attempts to form general explanatory theories about these beliefs. This would multiply our explanatory attempts to an unhelpful degree as every case would require its own theory.
- 3) ‘God’ is made to refer to a broad category of all kinds of entities somehow violating people’s expectations of how entities in everyday world ordinarily behave (and are perhaps somehow ‘superior’ to humans). We would then be talking about beings that involve what Pascal Boyer (1994: 113–123) has called ‘counterintuitive claims’. In this case the category of ‘gods’ may become so large and so vague that it becomes necessary to employ some additional criteria, like ‘sacredness’ (cf. Anttonen 1996; Paden 1996 and Paden 1999: 165–180) in order to separate it from all kinds of lesser beings such as ghosts and spirits (see Pyysiäinen 1996b). This, however, would open up the question all over again. In other words, what separates gods from other kinds of superhuman beings? We consider this a rather pressing issue in comparative religion at the moment.

References

Anttonen, Veikko

- 1996 Rethinking the sacred: The notions of ‘human body’ and ‘territory’ in conceptualizing religion. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A.

- Yonan (eds.), *The Sacred and its Scholars*, pp. 36–64. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religions, 73)
- Aquinas, St. Thomas**
- 1962–63 *Summa Theologiae*, 3 vols. Ed. by Petri Caramello. Torino: Marietti.
- Barrett, Justin L., and Frank Keil**
- 1996 Conceptualizing a Nonnatural Entity: Anthropomorphism in God Concepts. *Cognitive Psychology* 31: 219–247.
- Boyer, Pascal**
- 1987 The stuff ‘traditions’ are made of: On the implicit ontology of an ethnographic category. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 17: 49–65.
- 1992 Explaining religious ideas: Elements of a cognitive approach. *Numen* 39: 27–57.
- 1993 Cognitive aspects of religious symbolism. In: Pascal Boyer (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1994 The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Churchland, Paul M.**
- 1995 *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul: A Philosophical Journey into the Brain*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Copleston, Frederick, S.J.**
- 1985 *A History of Philosophy*; 3 vols. Garden City: Image Books. [1946–1953]
- Crombie, A.C.**
- 1959 Medieval and Early Modern Science; 2 vols. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books. [1953]
- Davidson, H. R. Ellis**
- 1986 Gods and Myths of Northern Europe. Harmondsworth: Penguin. [1964]
- Durkheim, Émile**
- 1960 *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totemique en Australie*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France. [1912]
- Fitzgerald, Timothy**
- 1997 “A critique of ‘religion’ as a cross-cultural category”. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9:91–110.
- Haavio, Martti**
- 1959 *Karjalan jumalat: Uskontotieteellinen tutkimus*. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley**
- 1993a *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [1990]
- 1993b Crisis of conscience, riddle of identity: Making space for a cognitive approach to religious phenomena. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61: 201–223.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O.**
- 1964 *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [1936]

- McCauley, Robert N. (ed.)**
1996 The Churchlands and their Critics. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McCutcheon, Russell T.**
1997 Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Millican, P. J. R., and A. Clark**
1996 Connectionism, Concepts, and Folk Psychology. The legacy of Alan Turing; vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Paden, William E.**
1994 Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion. Boston: Beacon Press. [1988]
- 1996 Sacrality as integrity: 'Sacred order' as a model for describing religious worlds. In: Thomas A. Idinopulos & Edward A. Yonan (eds.), The Sacred and its Scholars: Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data; pp. 1–18. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religions, 73)
- 1999 Sacrality and Worldmaking: New Categorial Perspectives. In Tore Ahlbäck (ed.), Approaching Religion; vol. 1: pp. 165–180. Åbo: Donner Institute. (Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 17: 1)
- Pyysiäinen, Ilkka**
1993 Beyond Language and Reason: Mysticism in Indian Buddhism. Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Sciences. (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae. Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum, 66)
- 1996a Belief and Beyond. Religious Categorization of Reality. Åbo: Åbo Akademi. (Religionssvetenskapliga skrifter, 33)
- 1996b Jñānagarbha and the God's-Eye View. *Asian Philosophy* 6: 197–206.
- Saariluoma, Pertti**
1997 Foundational Analysis: Presuppositions in Experimental Psychology. London: Routledge.
- Saler, Benson**
1993 Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religions, 56).
- Sjöestedt, Marie-Louise**
1994 Gods and Heroes of the Celts. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Sperber, Dan**
1990 The Epidemiology of Beliefs". In: Colin Fraser and George Gaskell (eds.), The Social Psychological Study of Widespread Beliefs; pp. 24–44. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1996 Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wiebe, Donald**
1999 Appropriating Religion: Understanding Religion as an Object of Science. In Tore Ahlbäck (ed.), Approaching Religion; vol. 1: pp. 253–272. Åbo: Donner Institute. (Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 17: 1)

H E I K K I R Ä I S Ä N E N

Tradition, Experience, Interpretation

A Dialectical Model for Describing the Development of Religious Thought

Every scholar of early Christian thought will discover a great deal of variety and change, and many traces of conflict, in her or his sources (see e.g. Dunn 1990). On a smaller scale, similar features are observed by scholars of the Qur'an, my second area of interest (cf. Räisänen 1997, 125–130 on the phenomenon of "abrogation" within the Qur'an). In both cases one is faced with vivid processes of evolving thought. Ninian Smart has stressed that "there is a dialectic between experience and doctrine" (Smart 1971: 24). Yet this aspect of religion may not always receive as much attention as it deserves in the science of religion. A recent survey observes that, in general, the "mutable, processive character of a religion's ongoing life has tended to be overlooked by comparative religionists almost as much as it will probably be denied by the devotees of a tradition." (Lott 1988: 31.) The role of conflict in particular probably tends to be underestimated.

Both in trying to work out a history-of-religion account of early Christian thought¹ (see Räisänen 1990), and in trying to understand the Qur'an with empathy (Räisänen 1971; Räisänen 1997: 81–136), I have often found it useful to envisage religious thought in terms of a dialectic between tradition, experience and interpretation (Räisänen 1990: 122–136). This means that religious thought develops in a process in which traditions are time and again interpreted in the light of new experiences, and vice versa: experiences are interpreted in the light of traditions. In other words, elements of the tradition are reinterpreted, but this happens in the framework of the very tradi-

¹ The choice of religious thought as my topic does not imply that I regard the cognitive aspect of religion as the most important one; only that it is important enough to deserve attention in its own right.

tion in question.² The emphasis can be put on different sides, either on tradition or on experience. The point is to underline the "process" and its dynamics — to call attention to change, reinterpretation, actualization and reapplication of traditions.³

A comparison with the model of Wilfred Cantwell Smith

At first blush, such a model seems akin to Wilfred Cantwell Smith's scheme of "cumulative tradition" and personal "faith" which rightly stresses change, variety, and the dynamic character of the "dialectical process" (Smith 1964: 139–173).⁴ With this pair of concepts, "cumulative tradition" and "faith", Smith wants to replace the concept of "religion(s)" which he considers an abstraction (here I have no quarrel with him). He stresses the role of living persons: "one cannot understand the religious life of men unless one sees them as men, vividly; living, actual men in real — and differing — situations, participant each one in a religious tradition that in its concrete actuality is particular for him" (Smith 1964: 150). "Each person is presented with a cumulative tradition and grows up among other persons to whom that tradition is meaningful. From it... and out of the capacities of his own inner life and the circumstances of his outer life, he comes to a faith of his own... His faith is new every morning. It is personal..." (Smith 1964: 168–169; cf. Smart 1971: 24 f.) "A man's faith is what his tradition means to him. Yet it is, further, what the universe means to him, in the light of that tradition." (Smith 1964: 143; cf. Smith 1981: 47.)

More questionable seems Smith's "transcendentalist" approach, his equating of "cumulative tradition" with "the mundane" element (cf. Smith 1964: 145) and faith with "the transcendent" element in relig-

² "... experience and doctrinal interpretation have a dialectical relationship. The latter colours the former, but the former also shapes the latter." Smart 1971: 24.

³ The category of "experience" is not so crucial, although I shall plead for it too – if for no other reason than the lack of a better category broad enough to cover the range of the pertinent phenomena. But it will be seen that it is very important to understand "experience" in a comprehensive manner.

⁴ Indeed, when I long ago tried to find some theoretical underpinning for my interpretation of the Qur'an, Smith's model was the closest counterpart to my own intimations I could find (cf. Räisänen 1971: 100 n. 38). Yet it seemed to me that "experience" might be a more fitting (while more general) category than "faith".

ion (Smith 1964: 141). Faith is inner experience, “a personal quality”; there is an analogy between it and love (Smith 1964: 167). A religion works in human history as “a dialectical process between the mundane and the transcendent, a process whose locus is the personal faith and the lives of men and women ...” (Smith 1964: 168).

Apart from the “religionist” character of this description (cf. Smith 1981: 26, 30) an inherent problem is that “faith” is a category derived mainly from the (Jewish and) Christian tradition. It is not self-evidently applicable elsewhere (why focus on the “faith” of a Buddhist or a Hindu?). As for Christians, one person’s faith may seem unbelief in the eyes of another. A more neutral term seems desirable. One can speak of “personal adjustment” of religious beliefs, as Raymond Firth does (1996: 14–47; a definition is found in p. 16). But then it can be asked, What is it that makes such adjustment necessary? My answer is: experience.

What I mean by “experience” is, in accordance with a dictionary definition, *everything* “that happens to one and has an effect on the mind and feelings”. I am thinking specifically of anything new that happens to people, such events as call for adjustment.

“Experience”, then, is not just — not even primarily — an inner emotion.⁵ It can very well refer to an external event. In biblical tradition, the sack of Jerusalem (both in 587 BCE and in 70 CE) was a dramatic and most influential event which brought about vast adjustments in previous convictions. The Babylonian exile proved an extremely fertile situation for religious reorientation.⁶

The term “experience” points to that “something” which stands “between” a tradition and its reinterpretation. From one point of view that means new situations or new contexts. But reinterpretation is accomplished by persons and groups. “New experience” equals “new situation” as perceived by persons or groups. Tradition and experience are inseparably connected.

⁵ Here I seem to move beyond the position of Smart who identifies “the experiential dimension” of religion with the “emotional” (Smart 1989: 13), focusing on “religious experience” (see e.g. Smart 1971: 21–22).

⁶ The reorientation was not uniform: we find “universalist” ideas, as in Deutero-Isaiah, but also increased ethnocentrism.

A comparison with the model of Peter Berger

Speaking of experience in connection with religion inevitably evokes the Rudolf Otto — Mircea Eliade tradition of scholarship.⁷ I have drawn to some extent on the work of Peter Berger, but I want to make clear how my view differs from the “emotional-expressive” theory of religion.

Berger underlines the fundamental difference between religious propositions and religious experience. Propositions are products of secondary reflection which is caused by religious experiences. The “final objective of any inquiry into the religious phenomenon” must be the “core experience” in its various forms (Berger 1980: 50, cf. 59). Berger speaks of religious experience as “an experience in which a metahuman reality is injected into human life” (Berger 1980: 52). He reduces what really counts in religion to a timeless, individual experience of union with the infinite. In this he largely shares the “religionist” approach of Mircea Eliade.

I do regard Berger’s distinction between experience and its theoretical interpretation as crucial. But I find it important to understand “experience” in a much broader sense than “mystical core experience”.

The New Testament undoubtedly presupposes certain experiences that might qualify as “core experiences”, such as Paul’s “call vision”. On the basis of Paul’s few first-hand references (Gal 1: 15–16; 1 Cor 9: 1; cf. 2 Cor 4: 6; the narrative in Acts 9 is clearly secondary) it is hardly possible to reconstruct the experience. Instead, we can draw conclusions as to what that experience meant for Paul’s life and thought: his values changed, he felt he had received a new task. And yet it is hard to tell the immediate consequences of the experience for Paul’s life and thought from what dawned on him later on, under the influence of later experiences of quite a different kind, such as social conflicts caused by his new convictions. Consequently, scholars debate whether Paul developed his theology of “justification” immediately after his conversion or only much later in connection with intra-Christian conflicts (cf. Räisänen 1992: 15–47).

Core experiences do not suffice to explain why the new movement emerged as a new religion, distinct from Judaism. It is crucial to find out why Paul drew conclusions from his vision that were different from those that e.g. James, the brother of Jesus, and other Jewish Christians in Jerusalem drew from *their* visions (cf. the clash hinted

⁷ A similar emphasis, in the study of the Bible, was present in the work of the “history-of-religion school”; cf. Räisänen 1990: 13–31.

at in Gal. 2: 11–14). The interpretation of experiences (internal and external) in a given social context seems much more important for the development of early Christianity than “core experiences” in themselves.

Instead of searching only for a certain type of inner experience it seems worthwhile to examine the whole spectrum of experiences, including quite mundane ones, as reflected in the material. It does not seem appropriate to limit oneself to explicitly “religious” experience. In fact it is questionable whether “religious” experiences can be singled out at all as a distinct type of human experience (cf. Batson and Ventis 1982: 56–96).

Unlike Berger and Eliade, I therefore wish to outline a conception in which the “profane” everyday reality, bound in time and history, is taken with utmost seriousness.

Quite mundane events can have crucial significance. Thus both the sack of Jerusalem and the persecution of pious Jews by the Syrian monarch Antiochus Epiphanes deeply influenced Jewish thought.

The symbolic universe and its influence on experience

The relative weight given to tradition and experience respectively can vary, not only from interpreter to interpreter, but also from case to case in the mind of one interpreter.

Berger notes that “man is an empirical animal”; “his own direct experience is always the most convincing evidence of the reality of anything” (Berger 1980: 30). This does not mean, however, that man is a *tabula rasa*, covered little by little with new “knowledge” through new experiences. On the contrary, all experience and all perception is deeply coloured by existing “theory”.

A human being is born into a community, and a community has its own tradition. The attempts of previous generations to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order have been construed into an authoritative total vision of what the world is ultimately like. Berger and Thomas Luckmann introduced the concept of “symbolic universe” in their influential analysis of this vision (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

A community, then, provides its members with a framework into which the experience of the individual is integrated from the start. The process of learning the language of the group in particular is a process which prepares the individual to perceive the world in a certain way. His/her experiences are not “bare” ones, but laden with *interpretations*; we tend to experience what we have symbols for (cf.

Sundén 1982: 33, 39). An experience has to be related and accommodated to the inherited values and beliefs of the community; this process mostly takes place unconsciously. Thus the symbolic universe deeply affects one's experience, or makes experience possible in the first place.

The impact of experience(s)

On the other hand, tradition is exposed to changes. "All socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious." (Berger 1969: 38.) A person can pause to reflect on this or that experience which does not quite seem to fit with the tradition. To be sure, most experiences support, or can be claimed to support, the inherited symbolic universe; this universe is, after all, the accumulated result of earlier interpretations of earlier experiences within the community. But there is always also a chance that experiences render part of the tradition *questionable*. Then a tension between tradition and experience arises which has to be released in one way or another. This process is often unconscious; adjustment happens over a longer period of time without overt, conscious decisions.

In applying the dialectical model, the emphasis can therefore be put on different sides. One can stress the role of the tradition which affects all experience⁸ or, conversely, the importance of new experiences. When a time of rapid change (the Babylonian exile of certain Jews; the rise of Buddhism, of Christianity or Islam) is in focus, more emphasis will be put on new experiences which lead to changes in the tradition than would be the case in the study of other, more peaceful periods (cf. Lott 1988: 130–132; Paden 1992: 89–91).

⁸ Lindbeck 1984 presents a healthy corrective to the "experiential-expressive model" of understanding religion, but his account, too, seems oversimplified. According to him, religious change does not proceed from new experiences, but results "from the interactions of a cultural-linguistic system with changing situations". "Religious experiences in the sense of feelings, sentiments, or emotions ... result from the new conceptual patterns instead of being their source" (Lindbeck 1984: 39). Here too "experience" seems to consist only of feelings and sentiments. But in addition to *Erlebnisse*, *Erfahrungen* are also to be taken into account, and this leads to a more nuanced picture.

The relevance of tradition: examples

In Israelite tradition, the “law” of cause and effect, of sowing and reaping, had a central place. Attempts abound to adapt seemingly contrary experiences to this part of the symbolic universe (the book of Job is a case in point). Even the sack of Jerusalem was legitimated within the symbolic universe. A cause had to be found, and thus the Deuteronomic and Chronicistic works of history paint in dark colours the sins of Israel which *must* have been the cause of the national disaster of 587 BCE. A similar explanation was given by Jews and Christians alike for the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE (cf. Neusner 1984: 20).

In Roman Palestine “it was as much religious as socio-economic factors which led to the disturbances”; “it was the religious traditions themselves which fired the flames of dissatisfaction and gave a point of comparison with the inadequacies of the present.” (Rowland 1987: 18.) “Resentment would have been there, but it is hard to see that resentment being channeled into such revolutionary attitudes without the contribution made by the Scriptures themselves. The traditions about the glorious future... (were) itself a cause of disaffection”. (Rowland 1987: 15; cf. 99–100, 105–106). The present was assessed in the light of the (imagined) past; the traditions concerning the past of Israel may be seen as one reason for the war against the Romans.

The impact of experience: examples

The account of Peter’s dealings with Cornelius (Acts 10: 1–11: 18) describes *positive experiences* which lead to a new practice.⁹ Peter is preaching to Gentiles; the listeners start speaking in tongues. The “circumcised believers” are astonished, but Peter asks, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”¹⁰ This argument based on an ecstatic experience leads to a change in the symbolic universe at a strategic point (rejection of circumcision as an entrance requirement). This change was not accepted by the old community; accordingly it led to a

⁹ It does not matter that a great deal of the account must be ascribed to Luke’s rewriting of history. Whatever the historical Peter did and thought, the point is that such a reconstruction made sense to “Luke”.

¹⁰ Nils G. Holm points out (oral communication) that an analogous problem was faced in today’s “charismatic movement” by many Pentecostals when “heretic” Catholics started speaking in tongues!

host of attempts of legitimation¹¹ and, eventually, to the formation of a new system of orientation (“Christianity”).

A negative experience, too, or an experience of *crisis* can act as a mighty catalyst. The sack of Jerusalem in 587 BCE was still accommodated in the framework of the tradition. But, later on, the persecution of the pious by Antiochus Epiphanes was just too much to be adjusted to the old scheme. When the pious were systematically destroyed, while renegades saved their lives, the symbolic universe seemed to be upside down. A change was needed for it to survive at all, so the idea of an otherworldly retribution in the form of (at first, partial) resurrection made its appearance and was, in the course of time, accepted by (most of) the community. It is hardly accidental that the new idea, needed to overcome the problem of theodicy, stemmed from an alien (Iranian) tradition. It is often the encounter of traditions that brings about something novel in crisis situations. On a more general level it may be said that the whole biblical “doctrine” of eschatology — the hope for a great turn of history — is rooted in an experience of frustration in the present which is interpreted in the light of the tradition of God acting in history.

Another (smaller) crisis which came to have profound effects both on subsequent Christian thought and, indirectly, on the sufferings of Jews in Christendom, was the Christians’ experience of the rejection of the gospel by most Jews. Several early Christian writers try to come to terms with the problem. Paul’s struggle with this experience finds a moving expression in Romans 9–11 where he tries, as it were, three different solutions (divine hardening; human obstinacy; partial divine hardening as part of a plan for saving all and sundry, see Räisänen 1997: 17–32). One of them (double predestination) came to have far-reaching consequences (especially in Calvinism) when transferred to the status of authoritative tradition. Muhammad, too, started using predestinarian language when confronted with the unbelief of his audience (Räisänen 1997: 98–117); this move also came to have major doctrinal and practical consequences. In all these cases I would speak of *social experience*.

Again, it is observed by an interpreter of the fourth gospel that John’s “presentation of Christ as a divine Stranger, alienated from and antipathetic to his immediate environment, may articulate the social experience of the group that stands behind this document. This group sees itself as it sees Jesus: unique, misunderstood, under at-

¹¹ Cf. Paul’s claim that “we are the (true) circumcision” (Phil 3: 2) or his assertion that circumcision or non-circumcision are irrelevant matters (1 Cor 7: 19).

tack from the ignorant and demonic, isolated in this cosmos which belongs to ignorance, darkness and the Devil. Yet they, like their Jesus, are intrinsically connected with the realm of the Father. They could thus see themselves as they saw their Savior: alone in the darkness, yet the light of the world." (Fredriksen 1988: 26.)

I will only mention some very influential "experiences" from later religious history: the widening of horizons caused by the voyages of discovery which brought knowledge of unknown peoples and traditions to Europeans (and prompted a bold individual such as Isaac la Peyrière to rethink biblical history in the seventeenth century, cf. Räisänen 1997: 137–152); the new astronomical insights which caused problems for the world view based on the Bible; the confrontation of Muslims with Western constitutional states which has led to visions of a reformed *shariah* (cf. Räisänen 1997: 125–133); adjustment to modern conditions (the experience of "secularization") on the part of mainstream churches. For this, modern Protestantism is polemically criticized both by Smith (e.g. Smith 1993: 41–42, 82–83) and Berger, who speaks of "bargaining with modernity" (1980: 98–121); this indicates that their theories do not do justice to the whole range of pertinent phenomena. Demythologization may not be best characterized as "faith" (although it surely represents what a person's tradition means to him or her — Smith's definition of faith) — but it must be deemed a meaningful reinterpretation of a tradition in the light of one's total experience of the world. At the other end of the scale, the rise of various "fundamentalisms" is undoubtedly also due to social experiences, often to experiences of frustration.

If a change is accepted by (leading members of) the community, the symbolic universe will be modified. This often involves acts of legitimization that actually camouflage the change and suggest that none has occurred, or at least stress continuity with the past. If an innovation is not accepted, this may lead to a break with the community on the part of some of its members who are then forced to construct a new symbolic universe. In this process they may legitimate their stance by drawing heavily on elements of the old one and often stressing their continuity with the past. Not seldom will they be anxious to maintain that it is *their* interpretation, rather than that of the old community, which upholds true continuity with the great values of the past ("we are the true circumcision"; on legitimization with special regard to Luke-Acts see Esler 1987: 16–23 and *passim*).

Thus the dialectical interaction between tradition (symbolic universe), experience, and interpretation governs the way in which the world is perceived and interpreted by groups and individuals.

The dialectical model has the advantage of being universal, applicable to different traditions. Smith even suggested that by the use of his two notions (cumulative tradition and faith) "it is possible to conceptualize and to describe anything that has ever happened in the religious life of mankind" (Smith 1964: 141)! I resist the temptation to go so far; the dialectical model is hardly a universal key that opens every lock. For instance, a reflective person may theorize about his or her symbolic universe without any obvious experiential impetus.¹² Many features of Gnostic or apocalyptic speculations about heavenly secrets may belong to this category, and so may many patristic reflections on the Trinity.

Unlike Smith's model, mine is neutral: no transcendental categories such as "revelation" are needed. In a sense, though, "experience" functions here as the structural counterpart to "revelation" in a traditional theological scheme. The model also frees one from the need to define which interpretation is "religious" and which is not (and thus from the never-ending story of constructing definitions for "religion"). It could be utilized even in creative theology: as traditions have always been reinterpreted in the light of new experiences, why not do this consciously, and with good conscience?

The model is pragmatic and pedagogical in character: it can be presented in a simple manner, and it seems to make sense on an everyday level of discourse. No doubt questions can be raised, e.g., Does the term "experience" here cover too many diverse phenomena? The concept of "tradition", too, may need refinement (cf. Honko 1995: esp. 133). Nevertheless I find the model helpful, in heuristic terms at the very least.

References

- Batson, C. Daniel, and W. Larry Ventis**
 1982 *The Religious Experience. A Social-Psychological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, Peter L.**
 1969 *The Social Reality of Religion*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
 1980 *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*. London: Collins.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann**
 1967 *The Social Construction of Reality*. Garden City: Doubleday.

¹² This does not preclude the possibility, or even likelihood, that such theorization is supported by some social interest (e.g. the refutation of opponents).

Dunn, James D.G.

1990 Unity and Diversity in the New Testament. An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity. London: SCM Press. [2nd ed.]

Esler, Philip Francis

1987 Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts. The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Monograph Series / Society for New Testament Studies, 57)

Firth, Raymond

1996 Religion: A Humanist Interpretation. London: Routledge.

Fredriksen, Paula

1988 From Jesus to Christ. The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Honko, Lauri

1995 Traditions in the Construction of Cultural Identity and Strategies of Ethnic Survival. *European Review* 3: 131–146.

Lindbeck, George A.

1984 The Nature of Doctrine. Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age. London: SPCK.

Lott, Eric J.

1988 Vision, Tradition, Interpretation. Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. (Religion and Reason, 35)

Neusner, Jacob

1984 Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity. London: SPCK.

Paden, William E.

1992 Interpreting the Sacred. Ways of Viewing Religion. Boston: Beacon Press.

Räisänen, Heikki

1971 Das koranische Jesusbild. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Korans. Helsinki: Finnische Gesellschaft für Missiologie und Ökumenik. (Schriften der Finnischen Gesellschaft für Missiologie und Ökumenik, 20)

1990 Beyond New Testament Theology. A Story and a Programme. London: SCM Press.

1992 Jesus, Paul and Torah. Collected Essays. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. (Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series, 43)

1997 Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma. Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths. London: SCM Press.

Rowland, Christopher

1987 Christian Origins. An Account of the Setting and Character of the most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism. London: SPCK.

Smart, Ninian

1971 The Religious Experience of Mankind. London: Collins.

1989 The World's Religions. Old Traditions and Modern Transformations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell

1964 Meaning and End of Religion. New York: Mentor.

- 1981 *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*. London: Macmillan.
- 1993 *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*. London: SCM Press.
- Sundén, Hjalmar**
- 1982 *Religionspsychologie. Probleme und Methoden*. Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag.

T O M S J Ö B L O M

“Bringing it All Back Home”

Mentalities, Models and the Historical Study of Religions

1. In the beginning

A ninth century anecdote from the Book of Leinster relates how the poets of mediaeval Ireland were gathered together in order to find out if they could recall the epic poem *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in its entirety (see Táin 1990: 1, 255). The *Táin* is the national epic of the Irish which relates the story of the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn single-handedly fighting off an enemy army. But none of the poets knew the whole story, so the deeds of the past generations had to be reconstructed through fragments of information gathered from different poets. In early Irish society the learned class of poets (*filid*) also played the role of the historians of their community, and their task was to pass on the traditions of the community to coming generations (see, e.g. McCone 1990: 19–22).

Differing from their mediaeval predecessors, modern historians know that the *Táin* is not history. However, for a long time the basic working methods of modern historians were in fact closely following the methods described in the anecdote above. The basic methodological strategy in this so-called *historicistic* approach is to reconstruct the past “as it essentially was” (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*).¹ According to the scholars working with this approach, this is achieved simply by collecting and combining together the fragmentary evidence of different literary sources and revealing the past in this manner. Thus, the historicist tradition sees its task in purely descriptive terms. In such a framework, the methodological discussions concern mainly how accurate, or how complete, a reconstruction is —

¹ This statement that has become the motto of the historicistic approach was made by the German scholar Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), who was one of the main promoters of modern historical scholarship. See, e.g. Heikkinen 1996: 18–19.

or, in other words, how well does a reconstruction correspond with the actual past events.²

According to the aforementioned anecdote, despite the efforts of the *filid*, they were unable to reconstruct a satisfying picture of the past events from the available material, and in the end they had to summon from the dead Fergus Mac Roich, one of the leading heroes connected with the *Táin*, to recite the whole story for them (*Táin* 1990: 1–2). Modern historians cannot rely on ghosts as their sources, but we can comfort ourselves by noting that it did not do much good for the *filid*, neither, as three different recensions of the *Táin* have come down to us, all of them differing from the others not only in details, but also in the descriptions of some basic events in the tale.³ Historians of today are increasingly aware of the problems connected with the historicistic paradigm. The past is not something that can be reached independently from the interpretative decisions of modern scholars. Jonathan Z. Smith has argued that nothing is studied “just because it is “there”, but because it connects in some interesting way with something else” (Smith 1983: 216). Thus, the picture of the past is always a scholarly construction based on the background assumptions and research objectives of individual historians (see, e.g. Jenkins 1991: 5–26).

The historicistic approach was attacked from several directions already in the last decades of the last century. The main arguments of the critics were that by denying the possibility of a systematic approach towards the past, and by preferring the particular and the individual at the expense of generalization, the historicistic approach was leading historical scholarship into subjectivity and relativism, which in the end makes the scientific study of the past impossible altogether (see Barraclough 1991: 11–13). The critics were and are anything but united in their suggestions of how to proceed from the historicistic deadlock. Salo W. Baron is undoubtedly right, when he argues that this lack of consensus in historical methodology among modern historians stems from the vast incursions of methodological elements from related disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, an-

² Of historicism see, e.g. Sjöblom 1997: 131.

³ Recensions I and II of the *Táin* are edited and translated by Cecile O’Rahilly (1967; 1976). Recension III is translated by Feargal Ó Béarra (1996: 47–65). The *Táin* is by far the most frequently discussed early Irish tale among Celtic scholars. A good starting point to the scholarship concerning the tale is, e.g. the articles included in *Ulidia*, the proceedings publication of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales (Mallory and Stockman 1994).

thropology, archaeology, economics, and psychiatry. Among the different approaches to historical research those using philosophical, psychoanalytical and sociological methods found most support during the first decades of this century (Baron 1986: 38–50).

For example, the historian Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915) with his followers argued that historians should not simply describe past events, but use these events to trace and analyze cultural *ethoi* of different nations (Lamprecht 1971). His ideas have not gained wide support among most historians, but since the Second World War very similar claims have been put forward by the so-called psycho-historical school of thought, which mainly applies Freudian theory to historical explanation. The basic idea in psycho-historical research is to uncover certain less obvious aspects of the emotional life of certain individuals or collectives. One could say that at the present state of our knowledge, modern historians have difficulties in altogether ignoring psycho-historical scholarship, although they might agree with R. G. Collingwood that "it is not history, but natural science of a special kind" (Baron 1986: 50–58).⁴

A more influential critic came from the direction of sociology. According to it historians should turn their attention from the particular to the general, from events to uniformities, and from narrative to analysis (Barracough 1991: 51). Especially in France the influence of the Durkheimian sociology has had great importance for historians. For example, Marc Bloch, one of the founding fathers of the Annales school, always admitted his debt to the Durkheimians and, more recently, Fernand Braudel, a student of Bloch, ranks Marcel Mauss among the scholars who have taught historians to grasp the past in its totality (see, e.g. Bloch 1954; Braudel 1980: 72; Strenski 1993: 78).

Historicism was also criticized among the newly established discipline of the history of religions.⁵ The main argument of scholars like C.P. Tiele and the so-called German *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Sharpe 1986: 35; Rudolph 1992: 4–5) was that while the historicistic method of reconstructing past events might work in other realms of

⁴ The quotation from Collingwood is originally from his *The Idea of History* (1946) and quoted by Baron 1986: 51.

⁵ In this article I use the term 'history of religions' only of the historical approaches of studying religions, not of the whole discipline of *Religionswissenschaft*, in which much more than only historical methods are included. Following the same logic I write of 'the historians of religion' meaning only those scholars who work using historical approaches in their research.

historical scholarship, it certainly did not inside theirs.⁶ This was because the historians of religions were not interested in the past as such, but only to the extent that past religious events and patterns of religious behavior could reveal to them something about the nature of religion, as a (metaphysical) universal concept. Typically, most of these scholars, maybe because of their theological background, turned therefore to classical phenomenology in order to supplement the basic historical approach with more a more general framework, and a mechanism enabling comparison between different religious traditions with different spatio-temporal backgrounds (see, e.g. Tiele 1902-03: 1-20).

2. The “Comparative-Historical Approach”: A Methodological Deadlock

This dialogue with phenomenology gave birth to the so-called religio-historical⁷ method, or the comparative-historical method, which has been the trademark of our discipline. Although I do think that the comparative-historical method has been, and still is, very useful in illuminating the beliefs and religious practices of past cultures and communities, there is a basic problem with this method. To begin with, following the historicistic approach, the comparative-historical method is said to be based not on any *a priori* categories but on empirical evidence. Differing from the historicistic approach, the comparative-historical method is not satisfied simply to describe religious behavior of the past, but it purports to understand it, as well (Bianchi 1975: 3). Understanding requires interpretation, and interpretation requires theory. Methodologically speaking, comparison can be (and has been) made from several theoretical backgrounds, including philological, sociological and psychological theories (see, e.g.

⁶ *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* is the name that was given to a group of German Protestant theologians who consistently applied the historical methods to the interpretation of the Bible. The school of thought originated at the University of Göttingen and consisted of a number of students of Albrecht Ritschl with a critical attitude towards their teacher. The group was made up of Hermann Gunkel, Wilhelm Bousset, Johannes Weiss, Ernst Troeltsch, Wilhelm Wrede, Heinrich Hackmann, and Alfred Rahlf. See Rudolph 1987: 293.

⁷ Note that I use this term in a purely technical sense to distinguish the methodological tradition of the history of religions from the methodological traditions of other historical disciplines.

Paden 1988: 15–33). As argued above, historical scholarship in general has been aware of this since the early decades of this century, and historians have combined the theories and methods of neighboring sciences in order to produce the best possible result in each instance (Jenkins 1991: 26). Historians of religions make no exception (see Penner 1975: 52; Pakkanen 1996: 13). However, according to the historians of religion, what makes their work differ from the historical scholarship in its — so to say — profane state, is that it starts by presupposing and relying on the specific religious dimension of human existence (Pakkanen 1996: 13). All other forms of explanation are deemed reductionistic by the historians of religion.

Historians of religion might have a point here. After all, many psychological and sociological theories tend to view religion as a form of symbolic behavior concealing some more fundamental (and more "real") sociological or psychological functions and meanings. The anthropologist Pascal Boyer has ably pointed out that such interpretations are in sharp contrast to the views of the people studied (Boyer 1990: 46). After all, most peoples involved in religious communication would be very unhappy if they were told that in reality they are constructing social cohesion or building their self-esteem, even when they would be ready to admit that such meanings are included in the religious experience. However, problems arise when the historians of religions try to explicate what it exactly means to study religious behavior on its own terms, and what is meant by the "religious dimension" of human existence and when talking about methods of studying human behavior.

As stated above the resort to an *a priori* understanding of the concept of religion is closed to the historians of religions, as they want to hold fast to the empirical nature of their study. Instead, the interpretative framework is usually constructed through the principle of historical analogies. Forms of human behavior are analogically related to each other when they correspond in certain important respects but differ from another in other, equally important respects (Bianchi 1987: 401).

This methodological stance seems to imply that religion is a worldwide form of culture that needs to be understood before it is explained (see Paden 1992: 67). After all, how can we recognize our research object if we do not have at least a preliminary understanding of what we are looking for. But this is the same thing as to argue that historians of religions are equipped with some mysterious knowledge of religion which goes beyond the empirical historical data, and that this would be the reason why their explanations of religious behavior are in some very significant sense different from the explanations

that could be provided by other means. Naturally, this kind of argument is possible only if the *a priori* nature of religious behavior is accepted, so the principle of historical analogies is no way out of the methodological problems (Baird 1971: 6; Wiebe 1990: 209).

Moreover, recent studies especially on ritual behavior have made it perfectly clear that religious action is "no big deal" (Smith 1987: 195), and that they are in their general structure not at all extraordinary and, therefore, they can and should be explained in the more general framework of human behavior (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 6). If this is the case, the comparative-historical method appears to be in a deadlock, as it is paradoxical to assume that a concept of religion is at the same time a prerequisite for and a result of comparison.⁸

The concept of 'religion' as an analytical category is rooted in the academic milieu of the late nineteenth century Europe and it is motivated by a specific intellectual interest (see Sharpe 1986: 1–26; Bianchi 1987, 402). At the time it has undoubtedly been helping our discipline to achieve academic independence, but it has also differentiated our discipline from the general historical scholarship to the extent that most scholars, both historians and historians of religions, appear to be totally ignorant of the methodological and theoretical discussions and developments in the other field (see Penner 1989: 67).⁹ But if religious behavior as a form of human behavior is nothing extraordinary, there should be no reasons why the history of religions could not — and should not — apply the same methods and same theoretical views in its research, as historians in general (see Rudolph 1993: 55–78).

3. History and Cognition

The situation has not gone unnoticed and several different solutions have been put forward. William Paden, for example, promotes a multidisciplinary approach, where methods and theories from different human and cultural sciences are combined in order to gain a

⁸ This deadlock, or "impasse" is discussed in more detail, for example, by Penner 1989.

⁹ For the sake of fairness it should be reminded that this ignorance might not be as total as it looks. There are many examples from both sides that some overlapping exists. However, the well-attested lack of interest for theoretical and methodological discussions in all historical scholarship (an inheritance from historicism) has greatly enhanced the existing gap between these two fields of study. See, e.g. Thomas 1975: 91; Dray 1993, 1–7.

more complete picture of the research object (Paden 1988: 161–170; 1992: 125–135). On the other hand, as argued by Kurt Rudolph, since the 1960's new insights have also gained ground in historical scholarship in general and historians of religion could gain a lot simply by (so to say) bringing it all back home.¹⁰ According to Rudolph, two fields especially, that of historical sociology developed by German historians and the historical anthropology of the French Annales-school, should be exploited to get new impulses in the historical study of religions (Rudolph 1993: 61–68).

Rudolph himself goes on to examine the impulses that can be found in the so called *historische Sozialwissenschaft* developed by German historians.¹¹ According to him the theoretical discussions of this school have presented clues to such old problems as the relation between 'understanding' and 'explaining'. In his discussion he mentions in passing also the French Annalists, but do not dwell in their contributions in any detail. In the rest of this article, my intention is to look more closely into the French tradition and to the impulses the so called *histoire des mentalités* can offer through its discussions concerning the relationships between human cognition and human acts for to what might be called a *cognitive history of religions*.

It is somewhat surprising that the history of mentalities have not gained much attention among the historians of religions, as they share many features which should make them appeal to each other. For example, studying cognition is something many historians find mystifying and dull. After all, historians claim to be dealing with empirical evidence which can be observed and reconstructed empirically, and human cognition is something which at first sight appears not to belong among such empirically observed entities. Recent advances in the applications of cognitive science to different areas of cultural studies, like linguistics, anthropology and psychology have clearly demonstrated that the first objection is more or less unfounded, and that there are a multitude of methods that can be used to reveal cognitive processes of the human mind. According to Jacques Le Goff, the founder and main promoter of the *histoire des men-*

¹⁰ I myself have made a similar claim later, but independently from Rudolph, as I was not aware of his article when I wrote mine. See Sjöblom 1997, 129–159.

¹¹ This tradition has its roots in the works of Max. Weber (see, e.g. Ketola, Pesonen and Sjöblom 1997: 94–96). In general one can say that different forms of historical sociology are the most popular approaches suggested for reformulating the theories and methods of the historical study of religions. See, e.g. Baron 1986: 66–94; Wiebe 1990: 205–220.

talités, historians have in this respect much to learn from other disciplines (Le Goff 1992: 97).¹²

For example, in modern linguistic theory a distinction is made between the speaker's competence (what he knows about the language) and what he does (performance) (see Chomsky 1971: 73). Both of these are present in any particular linguistic performance, and a satisfactory explanation of linguistic performances requires that both competence and performance are taken into account. According to Le Goff, this model of explanation can be extended to historical analysis, as well, where the distinction can be drawn between the historical event (or performance) and the *mentality* influencing and framing that event. The last mentioned is the object of study for the history of mentalities.¹³ In my mind this model is very close to the implicit methodological assumptions made by most of the historians of religions in their efforts to explain and understand religious behavior.

Additionally, historians often claim that as cognitive science is promoting a theoretical and universal approach it is incompatible with historical scholarship, which according to them is more interested in the uniqueness of different cultural processes and forms of behavior (Buckley and Buckley 1995: 343–352). Both historians of religions, and historians of mentalities make an exception. As stated above, many historians of religion argue for the existence of a universal religious dimension shared by all people alike. Applying the theories of structural and biological anthropology, historians of mentalities, in their turn, argue for the existence of universal and shared structures of mentalities, based on the basic biological nature of human existence (see, e.g. Ginzburg 1986: 62–63; Dressel 1996: 29–62).¹⁴ They also claim that the background culture constrains the

¹² There is no good translation for the French word *mentalité* in English. According to Michael Gismondi the English term 'mentality' is semantically close to *mentalité*, but differs from it in some essential points. (Gismondi 1985: 211–230). Still, for the sake of simplicity, 'history of mentalities' is the chosen English translation of *histoire des mentalités* in this study.

¹³ An early and impressive example of research in "Le Goffian" paradigm is Georges Duby's *Le Dimanche de Bouvines* (1973), where the writer considers both the actual battle of Bouvines and the memory it has left behind.

¹⁴ The Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg is the leading representative of the so-called 'microhistorical' research. He himself wants to make a clear distinction between microhistorians and historians of mentalities. However, their research objects are largely the same – the human mind, and both are much influenced by anthropology, especially the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Moreover, Ginzburg also writes that the basis of microhistorical research is in the history of mentalities. Ginzburg 1996: 177–181.

ways humans view the world, an argument also familiar to anthropologists, and the existence of cultural constraints frames the cognitive processes available in any single group of peoples. Thus, like the constraints born from the use of a shared language, a shared tradition with all its differing aspects, creates constraints for cognizing the surrounding world (see Le Goff 1987: 1–35). This approach does not require the use of such higher-level categories as 'religion' in the explanation of different forms of cultural behavior. Nevertheless, as cognitive processes follow more or less universal patterns, historians of mentalities can still hold fast to the heuristic value of the comparative method which they are using. In this respect they have an apparent advantage over the historians of religions, who stubbornly cling to the outdated ways creating heuristic concepts for analyzing religious behavior.

The basic problem with the history of mentalities is that its understanding of the concept of 'mentality' is imprecise to the extent of making historical writing impressionistic (Gismondi 1985: 229–230; Winberg 1970, 15). As a scholarly concept it appears to defy clear definitions. For example, Gert Dressel defines mentalities as "frames of mind that include the whole repertoire of possible representations, thought patterns, senses, meanings and perceptions used in the cognizing processes of world construction" (see Dressel 1996: 264), and one of the many definitions given by Le Goff himself is that mentalities are "the quotidian and the automatic, that which eludes the individual subjects of history because it throws a light in the impersonal content of their thought" (Le Goff 1974: 85). What these definitions really mean for a construction of meaningful methodology in historical scholarship is a moot point.

This vagueness is partly deliberate. According to Jacques Le Goff the imprecision of the term may be its strongest attribute, as it makes possible a very reflective approach towards very different kinds of materials and research problems (Le Goff 1974: 84–86). However, to grasp 'mentalities' as something "embracing what is not formulated, what remains apparently 'insignificant' as well as what remains deeply buried at the level of unconscious motivations" (Gismondi 1985: 229), does not mean that the concept itself should be placed outside empirical discussions, in the same quasi-autonomous class of cultural artifacts, where 'religion', 'politics' and other comparative concepts are usually also placed. The central problem born from this imprecise use of 'mentality' is that the historians of mentalities use the term to refer sometimes to an innate and tacit cognitive frame and at other times to its products whose forms it constrains. Surly, it is the products that historians of mentalities are

more interested in, but I would like to argue that their reluctance to offer clear descriptions of the nature of 'mentalities' has severely invalidated the case of the historians of mentalities.

4. Towards a Cognitive History of Religions

It appears that the best way to approach Le Goff's 'mentality' is to connect it with what in anthropology has been referred to as 'cultural models'. Cultural models have been one of the basic objects of study in cognitive anthropology since the pioneering work of Lévi-Strauss. Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland define them as 'presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it (Quinn and Holland 1987: 4). In a similar vein, Le Goff writes that the same individuals operate on the basis of different mentalities in different contextual situations. As an example he mentions the French king Louis XI, who according to Le Goff, shows in his political thinking "a modern, "machiavellian" mentality", but in his religious life is bound by an "superstitious, extremely traditional mentality" (Le Goff 1978: 256). The important point with cultural models is that they should not be understood as some kind of norms which every individual in the society has to follow, but as limiting cases constraining the amount of choices of cognitive acts possible in a given culture (Sperber 1996: 106). Thus, contradictory acts and beliefs are quite possible inside one cultural models, as they only frame experience and its interpretations instead of restricting one to follow a preordained path of cognitive deduction (Quinn and Holland 1987: 6; Boyer 1994: 21–28).¹⁵

If we want to look for differences between 'mentalities' and 'cultural models', the basic difference is the same as that between anthropology and history. The first mentioned is usually more interested in synchronical processes, and cultural models are therefore usually constructed from a network of cultural information existing in a synchronical relationship with each other. Historians, on the other hand, are more interested in diachronical processes, and mentalities are

¹⁵ A good collection of historical studies using the theories and methods of cognitive science and the concept of 'cultural models' is, e.g. Olson and Torrance 1996.

constructed from a background of cultural information existing in a diachronical relationship to each other (see Augé 1995: 7–18).

If historians of mentalities are studying cultural models of the past, the cognitive historians of religions are in their turn studying religious models.¹⁶ It goes without saying that the line between these two areas is fuzzy, due to the above mentioned lack of commonly accepted definition of how the concept of 'religion' should be defined. However, as a general rule, one could argue that the historians of religions are focusing on those mentalities which are constructed from the "peculiar conceptual commitments which characterize religion generally" (see Lawson and McCauley 1990: 79). For scholars working in the neo-Tylorian vain this simply means mentalities operating with culturally postulated superhuman agents (see Penner 1989:7; Lawson and McCauley 1990: 5). In many respects this definition is more than satisfactory from the viewpoint of historical scholarship. After all, a large portion of the sources of working historians of religions consists of narrational, philosophical, ritual, etc. descriptions of such agents, and certainly they play a part in most of the cultural traditions known to us. However, personally I do not find this definition entirely satisfactory, as I believe that much religious behavior can be performed without any necessary involvement of superhuman agents. A more useful definition for religious mentalities would therefore be those cultural models which involves representations based on counterintuitive claims, as discussed by Pascal Boyer (Boyer 1994: 29–60).

From this perspective, the history of religions would methodologically be something like a specialized branch of the history of mentalities, and it would be necessary for them to work in close relationship, as applying cognitive approaches to cultural materials always relies on the principle of holism, that is, that all cultural representations should be viewed as parts of the cognitive network system they are found in (see, e.g. Penner 1994: 977–996). A methodological and theoretical dependency on other historical disciplines does not mean that the academic study of religions would have to loose its academic autonomy. Academic disciplines change, as do their subject-matters, and the historians of religions have already for a long time been applying methods and theories from other cultural studies in their

¹⁶ The theory of religious models and a very preliminary suggestion of the principles of defining them are available in Pyysiäinen 1988: 87–97. It is a good starting point for a general discussion concerning the relationship of cultural- and religious models, although it more or less ignores cognitive approaches and discussions on the topic.

work. The autonomy of an academic discipline is therefore not a question of theoretical and methodological independence, but a political question (see Strenski 1994: 105–107). On the contrary, relying on problematic *a priori* notions and understandings concerning the subject-matter of our discipline is in the end doing much more harm in what comes to the scholarly values of our research work and, more dangerously, it certainly keeps us from truly grasping the essential features and the diverse nature of our topic(s) of research.

References

- Augé, Marc**
1995 Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. London: Verso.
- Baird, RobertD.**
1971 Category Formation and the History of Religions. The Hague: Mouton. (Religion and Reason, 1)
- Baron, Salo W.**
1986 The Contemporary Relevance of History: A Study in Approaches and Methods. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Barracough, Geoffrey**
1991 Main Trends in History. New York. Holmes & Meier. (Main Trends in the Social and Human Sciences, 2) [1979]
- Bianchi, Ugo**
1975 The History of Religions. Leiden: Brill.
- 1987 History of Religions. In: Mircea Eliade (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Religion; vol. 6; pp. 399–408. New York: Macmillan.
- Bloch, Marc**
1954 The Historian's Craft. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Boyer, Pascal**
1990 Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology, 68)
- 1994 The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Braudel, Fernand**
1980 On History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Buckley, Jorunn Jacobsen, and Thomas Buckley**
1995 Response: Anthropology, History of Religions and a Cognitive Approach to Religious Phenomena. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63: 343–352.
- Chomsky, Noam**
1971 Topics in the theory of Generative Grammar. In: J. R. Searle (ed.): The Philosophy of Language; pp. 71–100. London: Oxford University Press.

Dray, William1993 *Philosophy of History*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. [1964]**Dressel, Gert**1996 *Historische Anthropologie: Eine Einführung*. Wien: Böhlau.**Duby, Georges**1973 *Le Dimanche de Bouvine: 27 juillet 1214*. Paris: Gallimard. (Trente journées qui ont fait la France, 5)**Ginzburg, Carlo**1986 *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.1996 *Johtolankoja: Kirjoituksia mikrohistiotiasta ja historiallisesta metodiasta*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.**Gismondi, Michael A.**1985 'The gift of theory': a critique of the histoire des mentalités. *Social History* 10:1, 211–230.**Heikkinen, Antero**1996 *Menneisyyttä rakentamassa*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.**Jenkins, Keith**1991 *Re-Thinking History*. London: Routledge.**Ketola, Kimmo, Heikki Pesonen, and Tom Sjöblom**1997 Uskonto ja moderni yhteiskunta. In: Kimmo Ketola et al., *Näköaloja uskontoon: Uskontotieteen ajankohtaisia suuntaukset*; pp. 89–128. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.**Lamprecht, Karl**1971 *Einführung in das historische Denken*. Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen. [1912]**Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley**1990 *Rethinking religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**Le Goff, Jacques**1974 Mentalities: a new field for the historian. *Social Science Information* XIII; pp. 64–86.1978 Mentaliteterna, en tvetydig historia. In: J. Le Goff and P. Nora (eds.), *Att skriva historia: Nya infallsvinklar och objekt*; pp. 244–262. Stockholm: PAN/Norstedt.1987 Introduction: Medieval Man. In: Jacques Le Goff (ed.), *Medieval Callings*; pp. 1–35. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.1992 *History and Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press.**McCone, Kim**

1990 Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature. Maynooth: An Sagart. (Maynooth Monographs, 3)

Mallory, J. P., and Gerard Stockman (eds.)

1994 Ulidia: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Belfast and Emain Macha 8–12 April 1994. Belfast: December Publications.

Ó Béarra, Feargal1996 *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension III*. *Emania* 15: 45–65.

Olson, David R. and Nancy Torrance (eds.)

- 1996 Modes of Thought: Explorations in Culture and Cognition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Rahilly, Cecile (ed.)

- 1967 Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. (Irish Texts Society, 49)

- 1976 Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension 1. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

Paden, William

- 1988 Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion. Boston: Beacon Press.

- 1992 Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion. Boston: Beacon Press.

Pakkanen, Petra

- 1996 Interpreting Early Hellenistic Religion: A Study Based on the Cult of Isis and the Mystery Cult of Demeter. Helsinki: The Finnish Institute at Athens.

Penner, Hans

- 1975 Creating a Brahman: A structural Approach to Religion. In: Robert Baird (ed.), Methodological Issues in Religious Studies: pp. 49–66. Chico: New Horizons Press.

- 1989 Impasse and Resolution: A Critique of the Study of Religion. New York: Peter Lang. (Toronto Studies in Religion, 8)

- 1994 Holistic Analysis. Conjectures and Refutations. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62: 977–996.

Pyysiäinen, Ilkka

- 1988 Perimmäiset kuvat: Buddhan elämäkerran merkitys theravadan kaanonissa. Helsinki: Missiologian ja ekumeniikan seura. (Missiologian ja ekumeniikan seuran julkaisuja, 53)

Quinn, Naomi, and Dorothy Holland

- 1987 Culture and Cognition. In: Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn (eds.), Cultural Models in Language and Thought; pp. 3–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rudolph, Kurt

- 1987 Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. In: Mircea Eliade (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Religion; vol. 12; pp. 293–296. New York: Macmillan.

- 1992 Geschichte und Probleme der Religionswissenschaft. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religion, 53)

- 1993 Hvad religion er, fortæller historien os: Om forholdet mellem historievidenskab og religionsvidenskab. *Religionsvidenskabeligt tidsskrift* 23: 55–78.

Sharpe, Eric

- 1986 Comparative religion: A history. London: Duckworth.

Sjöblom, Tom

- 1997 Menneisyyden malleja. In: Kimmo Ketola et al., Näköaloja uskontoon: Uskontotieteen ajankohtaisia suuntaukset; pp. 129–159. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Smith, Jonathan Z.

- 1983 No Need to Travel to the Indies. In: Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Take Judaism, for Example: Studies toward the Comparison of Religions*; pp. 215–226. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1987 The Domestication of Sacrifice. In: Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard & Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*; pp. 191–235. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Sperber, Dan

- 1996 *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Strenski, Ivan

- 1993 Religion in Relation: Method, Application and Moral Location. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- 1994 Reduction without Tears. In: Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Edward A. Yonan (eds.), *Religion and Reductionism: Essays on Eliade, Segal, and the Challenge of the Social Sciences for the Study of Religion*; pp. 95–107. Leiden: Brill. (Studies in the History of Religion, 62)

Táin

- 1990 *The Táin*. Transl. by Thomas Kinsella. Oxford: University Press. [1969]

Thomas, Keith

- 1975 An anthropology of religion and magic, 2. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6: 1–29.

Tiele, Cornelius P.

- 1902–03 Inledning till religionsvetenskapen; 2. vols. Stockholm: Fahlcrantz.

Wiebe, Donald

- 1990 'History of religions' in the context of the social sciences: from history to historical sociology. In: Witold Tyloch (ed.), *Studies on Religions in the Context of Social Sciences: Methodological and Theoretical Relations*; pp. 205–220. Warsaw: Polish Society for the Science of Religions.

Winberg, Charles T.

- 1970 Några anteckningar om historisk antropologi. *Historisk tidskrift* 4: 1–29.

E I N A R T H O M A S S E N

Is Philology Relevant?

'The history of religions ... is, with regard to its method, a philological discipline, working with the interpretation of texts. In addition to that, it is also an ethnological and an archaeological discipline.' These words are a quotation from an elementary introduction to the study of the history of religions published in Swedish in 1963 by Erland Ehnmark, professor at the university of Lund (Ehnmark 1963: 20). They are no doubt typical of a certain generation of scholars, of a certain moment in the history of our discipline. Research in the history of religions very much meant in those days a study of texts, and of words. The scholar had to be fabulously good at languages (especially dead languages) and a virtuoso in the handling of vast masses of diverse and difficult text materials. This picture is certainly true for Scandinavia, and probably for most other countries too which have strong traditions in our discipline. For instance, Günter Lanczkowski, in his *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft* from as late as 1980—a book dedicated, by the way, to Geo Widengren—insists that, 'Es ist sinnlos, hinwegdisputieren zu wollen, daß *Religionswissenschaft zu einem guten Teil Philologie ist*' (Lanczkowski 1980: 39). And twenty-four years ago, at the previous IAHR conference on methodology here in Åbo, Kurt Rudolph took a similar position: 'For history of religions as a whole, the basic method is the "philological-historical"' (Rudolph 1979: 99).

For the young student who considered a career in the history of religions in this part of the world at the end of the sixties, the history of religions did in fact present itself as very much a philological discipline. As an essential part of our training we were expected to learn the languages necessary to deal with texts in their original languages—preferably *many* languages. Familiarity with Latin and Greek was only where you started—until you were conversant with Syriac you were still an amateur.

But there were other voices too, which began to be heard more and more loudly at the time. There was, for instance, the statement of Eliade, in one of his best articles, 'Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism,' from 1959, that

One is a historian of religions not by virtue of mastering a certain number of philologies, but because one is able to integrate religious data into a general perspective. The historian of religion does not act as a philologist, but as a hermeneutist. (Eliade 1959: 91)

Eliade argued that the philological method is not conducive to the formation of general theory. Philology can only yield specialist research, and therefore misses the comparative perspective which is the *sine qua non* element of the discipline of the history of religions. Here, then, was one area where philology was judged deficient, and a field where the proponents of its methods faced opposition—we had a battle between the philologists and the comparativists, specifically the phenomenologists.

But there were other battlefields too. In 1973, Åke Hultkrantz published a book, in Swedish, on methods in the comparative study of religions. On page 1 of that book he attacks the view of Ehnmärk which I started out by quoting, and allies himself with Eliade against the belief in philology as the essential method of the discipline. His own grievance against this belief, however, was another. A specialist in the indigenous religions of North America, he made the observation that there are vast areas in the world of religion which cannot be accessed through the study of written documents. Actually living religion, whether in distant illiterate tribes, or in the present time of modern societies, must be studied instead by way of observation in the 'field.'

So this second battle was between philology and 'fieldwork,' especially such fieldwork as was carried out by the social anthropologists. Hultkrantz' book can plausibly be seen as in part a reaction against what he saw as the imperialist dominance of the philological approach to the study of religion at the time. He wanted, I guess, to cut the philologists—especially in Sweden—down to size. In so doing, it must be added, he did not avoid revealing a little imperialist design of his own: 'In essence, the study of religion ... is to be described as an anthropological type of activity' (Hultkrantz 1973: 3–9).

In this sentiment, he was not alone. In the seventies it was fashionable to be a social scientist, and many a historian of religion of a more traditional training was in those years to develop the uncomfortable symptoms of an inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* social anthropology.

Well, then, the historian of religion working as a philologist was to learn that he was no good as a comparativist, and that he was unfit to do fieldwork. In addition, there were the voices that insisted that religion expresses itself in images as well as in texts—'iconography'

was the catch-word here—and there were of course the archaeologists, always predisposed to distrust textual sources as a matter of principle over against the *in situ* physical evidence of the past.

All these battles form part of the politics of the discipline—different parties competing for influence over its shape, and struggling over the power to describe what the discipline is. Today it is probably correct to say that these conflicts have calmed down, and that there exists widespread recognition of the necessity and naturalness of a diversity of methods and approaches in the discipline. It is my belief that we should look at this diversity as a boon and a source of continual enrichment in our work. For there is hardly another discipline in the faculties of arts and social sciences which aims to encompass both historical and contemporary evidence, as well as systematic and cross-cultural theorization, all at once. In other subjects within the human sciences these various types of interests have tended to split into distinct disciplines, and even into separate faculties. The history of religions is relatively unique in still trying to negotiate the tensions between these interests within the project of a shared discipline.

It is possible to see the methodological tensions within our discipline as a reflection of the development of the human sciences as a whole. In the 19th century, philology, and primarily classical philology, had the position as the ruling paradigm of the human sciences. This was above all the case in Germany, which played the leading role at the time. Philology was by no means then conceived as a narrow pursuit. According to such highly influential figures as F.D.E. Schleiermacher and August Boeckh, the methodology of philology was to be divided into two parts. There was on the one hand *Kritik*, which was the effort to look beyond the transmitted texts of manuscripts in order to sift what was older and more original from the later accretions in the transmission. The second task of philology, however, deemed to be just as essential as the first, was called *Hermeneutik*—this was the matter of the proper interpretation of the texts. Under this heading, Boeckh listed linguistic interpretation (syntax and lexicon), interpretation through consideration of the literary form, interpretation with regard to historical context, and, finally, individual interpretation, by which he had in mind the characteristic peculiarities of an author, as far as these could be ascertained from a corpus of documents.

The object of this kind of study was not merely the texts as such, but the totality of a given culture. Therefore you had to know as much as possible about this culture in order to work with the criticism and the interpretation of the texts, while the texts in turn

served as the sources for understanding the culture and reconstructing its history. These were all parts of a necessary hermeneutical circle, which justified a notion of philology as a comprehensive science of culture. And even more than that, philology was the articulation of something very basic and universal, the drive to understand the thoughts of other people—*das Verstehen*. And so Boeckh, with no intention whatsoever of being ludicrous, could arrive at the statement that, ‘Philology is one of the primary conditions of human life.¹

This vision of philology as an all-embracing human science did not work, of course. What happened was that in the course of the 19th century, first history established itself as an independent discipline, and then various specialist disciplines with systematic programmes broke loose, some of which went on to become social sciences. The underlying reasons for this breakup were, as I see it, two: First, there was an incongruence between the object of study and the methods proposed for studying it—put simply, the study of culture could not be reduced to a study of texts. And secondly, the approach was individualizing and historicizing, and did not sufficiently provide for comparative theory formation. The humanities were conceived as an idiographic form of science, different in principle from the nomothetical concerns of the natural sciences.

In my view, the human sciences today all still exist as the effect of the breakup of the philological paradigm. The gains and losses of their emancipation from this paradigm can be discussed for each of them separately, but that will not be done here, for obvious reasons. Anyhow, as far as the history of religions is concerned, the philological paradigm continued to maintain itself more strongly than in other disciplines. Why?

One major reason is that language and texts are generally conceived as playing a very great role in the study of religion. Religious ideas and sentiments are probably more difficult to translate than any other part of a culture, so in order to understand a religion from the agents’ point of view you must get into their language codes. This I take to be intuitively true, and will not argue the point further.

If you add this observation to the fact that historians of religion, like all historians, need to work with written sources, you are in a working situation which is philological: You need a high degree of linguistic competence in order to deal with sources for religion—source criticism and linguistic interpretation go hand in hand.

¹ “...dass die Philologie eine der ersten Bedingungen des Lebens ... ist” (Boeckh 1886: 11). I have discussed the hermeneutics of Boeckh and Schleiermacher in Thomassen 1990.

Moreover, many religions are themselves strongly text-oriented, so that for this reason the study of texts becomes a way of studying these religions. And finally, religious texts typically have long and complicated histories of transmission and redaction, which present the scholar with formidable tasks of reconstruction.

In such work, the classical canons of philological methodology hold true. Textual criticism, from the 'lower' criticism of the edition of texts to the 'higher' criticism of sources and redaction history, must go hand in hand with the interpretation of what the texts are saying. This is one reason why some historians of religion at least must also be philologists. To do critical work on religious texts you need also to be a scholar of religion.

However, the application of the philological paradigm in the history of religions also introduces pitfalls and problems into the discipline. Within the limited space still available, I shall briefly comment on three areas of problems: the object of study, the models of historical explanation, and the relation of the particular and the general, i.e. comparison.

First of all, with regard to the object of our study, it must be observed that in an important sense, texts are not religion. Ideally, what we should be looking for when writing the history of religion is the history of religious *practice*. Writing history on the basis of texts tends to divert our vision, first, into placing too much emphasis on religious *ideas*, which of course are more readily represented in writing than are the practical realities of religion, and, secondly, into foregrounding the religion of the literary élite at the expense of that of the mass of the common people. The philological orientation in our discipline has too often walked hand in hand with a prejudice taken over from theologians: that the history of a religion is its history of dogma. But why should we assume, for instance, when writing the history of early Christianity, that an intellectual like Clement of Alexandria, whom very few people at the time read, is a better representative of Christianity in Egypt around the year 200, than the people appearing in the magical papyri from the same period, invoking Christ and the archangel Michael against the demons of sickness? (Meyer 1994) And, to take a different example, why do books on 'Islam' in the modern period tend always to focus on a certain number of modernist and fundamentalist writers, rather than on the beliefs and practices of the average Muslim? Why do we not write the modern history of Islam from their point of view?

What has been said so far in no way implies a criticism of the philological method as such. On the contrary, it implies that greater source-critical awareness is needed with respect to what we are

writing the history of when we are writing the history of religion. There are source-materials which should be given greater prominence, such as demographic data, epigraphic and archival materials, artifacts, popular literature, sources illuminating rituals and institutions etc., whereas the significance of the literature of the intellectual élite should be correspondingly toned down. It is true that we often will lack the sources which we need in order to write such social histories of religion. That in itself, however, is not a good enough reason for failing to observe that that is the sort of history we ideally should write.

Having said this, I must modify my statements on an important point. There is a kind of philological work which properly belongs to the history of religions although it does not directly illuminate the social history of a religion. This is the critical work on sources which are important because of their *Wirkungsgeschichte*. This potentially applies to all historical sources, because every source left to us invites an interpretation some way or another by posterity. But it is a particularly important task with regard to sources which have acquired a degree of canonical status in the course of history. (Canon is a relative thing, as we all know.) There are reasons which justify that more resources are spent on studying, say, the Bible, than on other documents from the past, reasons which do not simply have to do with the value of the Bible as a historical source for the religious situation at the time when its various documents were written. For such sources are being used to construct versions of history today, and also to create norms on the basis of these constructions. In this regard, the proper role of the history of religions has always been that of an independent investigator. It has applied the tools of philology to the study of the canonical literature of the religious traditions and of their formative periods, and thereby provided a critical perspective from the outside of these traditions themselves.

This critical outsider's role is undoubtedly one of the constitutive impulses of our discipline. In this area there is still very much more to be done, especially if one compares what has been accomplished in the study of the Bible and early Christianity, for example, with where we are in the study of the canonical writings and early literature of other traditions. To give only one example: We still lack a critical edition of the Qur'an, and it is only a few years ago that Gordon Newby published a first, tentative reconstruction of the whole historical work of Ibn Ishaq, which enables us to see better how this author constructed his biography of Muhammad on the basis of the stories of the preceding prophets (Ibn Ishaq 1989). In conjunction with the work of Crone, Cook and Wansbrough, Newby's work has

created a situation where the early history of Islam now invites major reconsideration.

A second deficiency of philological methodology is with regard to historical explanation. Studying the history of religions on the basis of texts has sometimes given rise to the notion that that history could be written as the diffusion of ideas. 'Where does this idea come from?' has been a typical question asked in our discipline. Such studies of 'influences' do undoubtedly provide a hermeneutical perspective which is helpful for systematizing religious history and analyzing religious ideas as transformations of previously existing patterns. But they do not have much explanatory force when it comes to understanding why actual people in given circumstances choose to think and act the way they do. Thus, for instance, the historian of religion trained as a philologist was unable to explain why the Iranian revolution happened in 1979. (Though the political scientists did no better, it must be added.) With regard to events of this type we need explanatory models which cannot be derived from the exegesis of texts, but rather from a study of social processes.

Thirdly, and finally: the question of comparison. This is a large issue, but let me just say this. Eliade, as we saw, demanded a 'general perspective' which was somehow situated above the philological work of the specialists. Here, he expressed a disagreement which is also epistemological in nature. For the philological paradigm emphasizes the differences between cultures and moments in history, as well as the context-sensitive nature of linguistic meaning. According to this view, each cultural datum must be understood on its own terms, and has an interest in itself. This is the opposite of a position which approaches such data as only so many examples of the same general phenomenon. This I perceive to be the approach of Eliade, as well as, to cite a more recent example, that of Jonathan Z. Smith, who states, in his *Imagining Religion*: 'For the self-conscious student of religion, no datum possesses intrinsic interest. It is of value only insofar as it can serve as exempli gratia of some fundamental issue in the imagination of religion' (Smith 1982: ix).

The epistemology of the philological paradigm assumes, on the contrary, that data do possess intrinsic interest. One reason for this has already been pointed out. It is the hermeneutical significance, in the Gadamerian sense, of historical data, or, the fact of their *Wirkungsgeschichte*: that data are interesting because they are perceived to relate to 'our own' history in special ways (regardless of how one

might wish to construe the 'we').² Not only philology, but disciplines such as history and ethnography too are meaningful enterprises primarily on this basis. Correspondingly, data about religion as well possess various degrees of intrinsic interest based on the relative historical significance accorded to them.

A somewhat different matter, however, is that of the status of individual data with regard to the operations of comparison, generalization and theory formation. Whether such operations are desirable is not the issue. The formation of general concepts is a property of the synthetic faculty of the human mind. Without them, thinking itself is impossible. The point is, rather, that the formation of concepts in the human sciences depends on semantically pre-formed data, which may be translated into analytical languages of relatively higher generality, but cannot be fully accounted for as identical instances of the operation of general laws or principles formulated in a universal metalanguage independent of the semantics through which the data are accessible to us. The various criticisms of objectivism in the human sciences formulated in the last thirty years (critical theory, hermeneutics, post-structuralism) all seem to make this observation one way or the other. The conclusion to be drawn from this, however, is not unequivocal. We need general terms in order to think about and describe our data in a disciplined way. In this respect the question, 'What is this an example of?' is always appropriate. On the other hand the serious scholar will never be content to reduce the meaning and the interest of his or her data to their being simply another instance of a common phenomenon, one more example of 'the same.' There will always be alternative ways of looking at the data, extra features which remain unexplained by the model, and additional reasons for finding the data interesting.

The mere fact that philology, and other disciplines which deal primarily with the specific, still continue to exist alongside disciplines founded on systematic programmes, offers so to speak an empirical confirmation of this methodological situation in the humanities. History still exists as a separate discipline as well as sociology, and the study of individual languages and literatures still have their legitimate places alongside the disciplines of general linguistics and literary theory. Is this not in itself an indication that the explanatory power of the available general theories is limited, and that these

² This is implicitly recognized by Smith, when at one point he describes the operation of *exempli gratia* as making comparison by means of 'an arsenal of classic instances' (Smith 1982: 113). The qualifier 'classic' obviously connotes intrinsic interest.

theories do not satisfy all legitimate interests in the human sciences? On the other hand, the existence of distinct disciplines which aim for theory and the systematic testify to the continued impulse of the human mind to put the mass of its knowledge into general categories.

The question of comparison in the history of religions is then, again, a variation on a problem which runs through all the human sciences. It is a problem which is constitutive of these sciences: On the one extreme we find the meaninglessness of the purely empirical, on the other, the emptiness of the tautological *a priori*. The humanities, and our discipline among them, live and breath in the interstice between these two ends of the scale, the space where meaning is produced only through the perpetual interplay of the specific and the general, of difference and sameness.

References

Boeckh, August

- 1966 Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften; vol. 1: Formale Theorie der philologischen Wissenschaft. Ed. by Ernst Bratuschek. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. [1886]

Ehnmark, Erland

- 1963 Att studera religionshistoria. Stockholm: Svenska Bokförlaget.

Eliade, Mircea

- 1959 Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism. In: Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (eds.), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*; pp. 86–107. Chicago: University of Chicago Press..

Hultkrantz, Åke

- 1973 Metodvägar inom den jämförande religionsforskningen. Stockholm: Esselte Studium.

Lanczkowski, Günter

- 1980 Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Meyer, Marvin

- 1994 Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Newby, Gordon Darnell

- 1989 The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press.

Rudolph, Kurt

- 1979 The Position of Source Research in the History of Religions. In: Lauri Honko (ed.), *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*; pp. 94–109. The Hague: Mouton. (Religion and Reason, 13)

Smith, Jonathan Z.

1982 *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thomassen, Einar

1990 Vitenskapsbegrepet i filologien. In: Odd Einar Haugen and Einar Thomassen (ed.), *Den filologiske vitenskap*, pp. 37–64. Oslo: Solum.

D O N A L D W I E B E

Appropriating Religion

Understanding Religion as an Object of Science¹

I want to begin by saying I consider it an honour to address this conference devoted to the methodology of the Study of Religion. And I would like to thank the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion and the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History for the invitation to be here and for making arrangements to permit further analysis and debate of the methodological problems of our field. I must admit, however, that as I prepared for participation in these discussions I had second thoughts because I am not myself actively engaged in the kinds of scientific studies of religious phenomena to which participants in this conference have been asked to give attention. I am not a historian of religions; nor am I an anthropologist, sociologist, psychologist, phenomenologist, or cognitive scientist. I am, rather, only a philosopher of religion, and it occurred to me that for reasons of intellectual integrity I ought perhaps to withdraw my initial acceptance to participate. Before airing my concerns in this regard, however, I took time to re-read the proceedings of the first Turku conference on methods in the study of religion, edited by Lauri Honko (1979), to see if I might find some justification for my involvement after all. My concern in this regard, I was happy to discover, was sufficiently mitigated by C. J. Bleeker's observation at Turku 1973 "that the average historian of religions should abstain from speculations about matters of method which can only adequately be solved by students of philosophy and of philosophy of religion" (1979: 176). But this, unfortunately, presented me with a further problem. In a subsequent review of the proceedings of that conference I expressed surprise that in fact no philosophers of religion or

¹ I wish to thank Tom Settle for his critical comments on earlier drafts of this paper and to Luther Martin who took it upon himself to comment on several drafts. I also thank Martha Cunningham for her generous editorial assistance.

philosophers of science had been invited to participate; and I ventured hastily that “[i]f progress is to be made in our methodological discussion [of this field] this oversight must surely be corrected” (Wiebe 1980: 633). Furthermore, I had been disappointed that the results of the conference did not provide the kind of framework for the study of religion which would allow it to take its place among the other sciences. It appeared to me, therefore, that arriving in Turku for the current conference I might be expected—at least by those who could recall my rather presumptuous comments—to be able to suggest some resolution to our methodological problems. Indeed, for a time I expected this of myself, and fearing utter failure I was tempted to withdraw from the conference—although by that time it was too late to admit to having cold feet. Fortunately, I was reassured about the propriety of my participation when I recognized that despite approving Bleeker’s general call for involvement of the philosopher I had expressed reservation about his suggestion that our problems could be resolved by the student of philosophy alone. And, incidentally, I should admit that I have already published a few methodological essays which fall short of resolving our central problems; nevertheless there might be some merit in approaching the issue from yet another angle.

It is, then, as a student of philosophy—a generalist of sorts—that I enter the conversation here this week. I shall present for discussion and debate proposals for action which I hope will make a positive contribution to the discipline. I will not focus attention on specific techniques or procedures in any one of the disciplines (or sub-disciplines) of the field of Religious Studies *qua* academic undertaking, but will instead concern myself with the need for a clear understanding of the framework of assumptions and presuppositions of such academic techniques and procedures—a framework left undefined if not taken for granted in most of our discussions. In other words, I shall direct my attention to the study of religion as a scientific project, for it is the scientific interest in religion which has constituted the grounds for admitting the study of religion into the curriculum of the modern Western university. Despite that academic legitimation, however, the study of religion in the setting of the modern research university is not held in high esteem relative to the other sciences. This, I have suggested elsewhere (1984), is due to a “failure of nerve” on the part of those who succeeded Max Müller and C. P. Tiele, the founders of the science of religion;² their successors

² I have made a case for Müller and Tiele as founders of the modern Science of Religion in separate essays; see Wiebe 1995; Wiebe 1996.

failed to follow through on that nineteenth-century scientific agenda for the study of religion by rejecting its implicit reductionism, and they have espoused instead a return to a so-called scholarly approach which substitutes understanding religion for explaining religious phenomena—the former being arguably humanistic in intent and therefore more gentle than the latter in affirming the value of religion. Such an approach, that is, appropriates religion for the benefit of self and society and to the detriment of academic advancement. I argue here, therefore, that if the scientific study of religion is to be legitimately ensconced in the modern research university, the notion of religion will have to be wholly appropriated by science; only then will we be able to establish a conceptual foundation from which to make valid knowledge claims about religion on a level commensurate with the pronouncements of the natural and social sciences. Indeed, to go one step further, given the hold on the concept of religion by those committed to the humanistic study of religion, we might need to talk here not of the appropriation but of expropriation of religion by science—that is, of wresting ownership of the concept from the humanists by using it solely as a taxonomic device to differentiate and explain a peculiar range of human behaviour demonstrated in religious practices.

It may be surprising to some that I invoke the notion of appropriation from Robert Friedman's history of the development of modern meteorology in the early decades of this century. But I turn to Friedman's account in my attempt today to propose a methodological framework for the study of religion because an understanding of the work of Vilhelm Bjerknes in the construction of modern meteorology by, as he puts it, "appropriating the weather," may be of assistance to us in defining our own task. According to Friedman, Bjerknes established a new foundation for atmospheric science by moving beyond the purely empirical method of "statistical-climatological understanding dominant since the late nineteenth century" to the larger theoretical "dynamic-physical comprehension of the atmosphere" (1989: xii). Friedman claims Bjerknes was successful in creating the new science because he was able to "appropriate" the weather for his own interests, incorporating it into the domain of theoretical physics and thereby making predictions of weather patterns possible. And it seems to me that the study of religion requires a similar "appropriation" of scientific theory if it is to provide the unification needed by research in our field.

It is interesting that, despite this account of Bjerknes's appropriation of the weather, Friedman seems to insist on a constructivist

reading of the emergence of the new meteorological science—interesting and of some relevance to our field, in which well-intentioned methodological ideals are too often undermined by personal engagement or other less-than-scientific occurrences. Friedman states: "Hard facts were not waiting in nature to be uncovered," rather, new concepts and models were created "by drawing upon analogy, metaphor, existing theory, and ad hoc construction [...] [thereby transforming] insights, speculations, and hypothetical entities into stable scientific 'reality' by integrating them into a structure of meaning and by devising analytical techniques with which the constructs could be regularly reproduced" (1989: 243). He claims, furthermore, that the concepts and models of the new Bergen school of meteorology "were not the inevitable result of observation and theory" (1989: 243) but that they were theory-laden and even practice-laden; they were the result not only of simple interaction with nature, but also of complex interactions between scientists and society. Some examples given by Friedman show why he might have arrived at a constructivist interpretation. Enormous changes in the social relevance of weather, significantly influenced the development of this science. Military operations during World War One, for example, obviously made improvements in prediction of weather conditions extremely valuable. And, subsequently, as Friedman points out, "the understanding of weather as a resource for rational military operations suggested new possibilities for meteorology in peacetime" (1989: 142). And of course the impact of accurate prediction of weather conditions on market forces—with respect to the shipping and fishing industries and the emerging air travel industry—are almost too obvious to mention. Lastly, Friedman even draws on references to personal matters in the development of Bjerknes's career which directly influenced the development of this new science, including the "dead end" he reached in his research in physics, his attendant anxiety in taking up a new line of research in the field, his appreciation for the interest members of the international meteorological community took in aspects of his work in physics relevant to theirs, his anxiety at being too closely associated with them because of the lack of rigor in (most of) their work, and his strong desire for international recognition. Friedman summarizes Bjerknes's position (1989: 237):

[He] made history, but not the history of his choosing. His career developed in a manner he had never envisioned; so did the science of the atmosphere he endeavored to shape. Both his professional evolution and the science he established were shaped by unexpected exigencies. He learned early that curiosity, vision,

and innovative work were not sufficient to secure success in professional science. Success would depend as well on convincing other scientists to adopt his research problems and methods and on placing his disciples in authoritative situations where their reputations could contribute to both his prestige and his program.

Despite Friedman's constructivist reading of Bjerknes's development of a scientific model, I think it would be going too far to claim that the new Bjerknes meteorology differs substantially from science as traditionally conceived. Friedman aside, Bjerknes was not merely engaged in subjective and constructivist work. His legitimate concern was to use meteorology to be able to predict the weather rationally; and the theory upon which the predictions would be based was to be open to empirical test. Bjerknes did not somehow manufacture the reality and adapt it to his theory, for he was well aware that appropriating the weather required that it also be appropriate by non-scientists—that is, for commercial as well as academic interests. It is clear, I repeat, that the creators of the new science, despite their complex interactions with society, were not responsible for the reality commanding their attention; for there were indeed "hard facts" in nature and they had already been discovered by a wide range of interest groups—hard facts which could legitimately be exploited and discussed with reference to their newly devised methodological framework. Friedman notes correctly, "[...] Bjerknes and his school ably managed to combine the search for knowledge with the imperative to serve public interests" (1989: 240), and he is well aware that this required Bjerknes's bringing "the erratic and seemingly random phenomena of the seas, atmosphere, and solid earth into the domain of exact physical science" (1989: 34). Let me be clear: in seeing this science as constructive, Friedman is not necessarily denying that meteorology made discoveries. But he seems to be asserting that the science is nevertheless in some sense creating the reality with which it is dealing. He concludes by saying that "[t]hrough Bjerknes's own quest to know and to succeed professionally, these issues [such as the expansion of the state's role in commercial activity and the growth of regular commercial and military flying] played a constituent role in shaping a new meteorology" (1989: 246). There is, however, a considerable difference between shaping the new meteorology and shaping the weather itself.

I trust it is obvious that I have not rehearsed Friedman's account of the development of modern meteorology because I am proposing an affinity between the weather and religion—although I can imagine someone being ready to remind me of a Christian text comparing the

Spirit of God to the unpredictable movements of the wind. I do think, however, that in this one particular study there are important general lessons to be learned about methodology in science, and, by extension, methodology in the study of religion. It is fair to say, for example, that even though Bjerknes was concerned with the refinement of empirical techniques and methods necessary for predicting the weather, he was also concerned in a much more general and theoretical way with the research program as a whole; he held very clear ideas about the nature of the scientific enterprise which enabled him to appropriate the weather—that is, to provide an explanation of it, permitting predictions of meteorological patterns which made the weather in turn capable of appropriation by others.

Students of religion, I suggest, do not have a similarly cogent idea of what constitutes scientific knowledge of religion and have been unable to frame a research program to unify their field. We are partly to blame: having minimized the value of theory we have too readily espoused polymethodism (if I may so put it) as an essential aspect of our study, and as a consequence we have failed to establish firmly the science of religion envisioned, as I mentioned earlier, by Max Müller and C. P. Tiele. Furthermore, I am convinced that this polymethodism has gained, and maintains, its strength as a methodological position in the field—whether explicitly expressed or implicitly assumed—because of what amounts to a certain kind of “pollyanna-ism,” by which I mean the insistence that as students of religion we must assume the goodness and “value” of religion and that we are consequently responsible for the welfare of society in which religion plays a role. I direct my attention in turn, therefore, to an adequate response to the prevalence of polymethodism in the field, and to an understanding of the proper role of theory as a unifying framework in the academic study of religion. On the former matter, it will be useful, I think, to cite several religious studies scholars to indicate the differing forms this “approach” to the study of religion assumes and I shall point to the rather remarkable methodological—that is, quasi-methodological—tasks imputed by them to the student of religion which warrant comment.

I refer first to the position taken up by Ninian Smart in his essay “Some Thoughts on the Science of Religion” in a volume recently published in honour of Eric Sharpe. Although Smart acknowledges here that most departments and programs of Religious Studies indulge in theological reflection, he nevertheless maintains that there is solid ground for optimism about the future of the Science of Religion. For despite their involvement in matters religious, such depart-

ments he maintains at least provide room for a Science of Religion to exist (Smart 1996: 24), — all this assuming, apparently, that alternative institutional arrangements are impossible. And in fact he sees an advantage in blending the two, “steer[ing] a middle channel between the Scylla of secret theology and the Charybdis of reductionism” (1996: 20). Such a blending, he mistakenly asserts, would yield “genuinely scientific and objective” results. And despite the danger that “the outside world in academia may [...] misunderstand [...] what the field of Religious Studies is all about—and, categorizing it as some form of tertiary Sunday school, [...] resist it and despise it,” (1996:24) he nevertheless insist that we not narrow our conception of the nature of the field, since in so doing we may forfeit valuable philosophical insights. Where Smart’s argument breaks down is in the implicit independent status of the two enterprises—(theologically informed) Religious Studies and the Science of Religion (*Religionswissenschaft*). He may seek to combine them by means of philosophical reflection (Science of Religion + “presentational concerns” = Religious Studies) but fails to identify that the very effort at reconciliation points to a fundamental difference in the essence of and approach to the two subjects. To be fair, what has been referred to here as the Science of Religion doubtless involves scientific study from a number of disciplinary angles—that is, in a variety of sub-disciplines relevant to the study of a range of religious phenomena: religious texts, beliefs, experiences, ritual practices, etc.—and is referred to in the literature, appropriately in this case, as polymethodic or polymethodological. In each of these disciplines, of course, the techniques and methods of analysis are at least empirically or theoretically grounded. Whereas the so-called “discipline,” described by Smart, created by the blending of Religious Studies and the Science of Religion involves a profusion of imprecise methods derived from incompatible philosophical and ontological frameworks, and I therefore refer to the methodological stance of those who support such a study of religion as polymethodism; briefly put, it signifies an attempt to combine within one methodological framework both cognitive and non-cognitive agendas. Nor is Smart’s “blending” approach innocuous; for on the theoretical front, to claim that the Science of Religion is found at the core of Religious Studies is to taint the former and cause disciplinary confusion within university departments; and on another—financial—front, one must consider the potentially damaging effect upon funding efforts and resource-management when what claims to be a legitimate academic enterprise shows itself participating in realms of social engagement beyond its mandate.

In an essay entitled "South Africa's Contribution to Religious Studies" Martin Prozesky similarly urges the student of religion to stray beyond the academic framework. According to Prozesky, the academic study of religion includes considerably more than the Science of Religion; but his call is not just for a more fulfilling personal engagement—he goes so far as to advocate involvement in socio-political action in order to be true to the discipline. With reference to the political climate in South Africa he writes (Prozesky 1990: 10–11):

Amidst all this [political oppression], Religious Studies in our context will damn itself [...] if it imagines that all it must do is document, analyze, interpret, and explain the reality of religions in South Africa, for the situation cries out for something more. It cries out for *a new ethic of religions, a new, creatively critical interrogation of religion in relation to both socio-personal liberation and oppression*. [...] [T]he field cannot now be credibly studied without prioritizing the problem of religions in the struggle for a more human world order in general, and in the apartheid state in particular.

According to Prozesky, therefore, the task of the student of religion (in South Africa and elsewhere) must go beyond mere description and explanation to "a genuinely liberative praxis" (1990: 18), and it is, therefore, anything but a-political. For Prozesky, such involvement is a natural by-product of religious commitment; grasping "Truth" and propagating it in a political context can only come to one who is beneficially related to the ultimate and deepest truth of religion; religion is a "humanizing" force so that the study of religion cannot limit itself to the acquisition of objective knowledge about the religious world.

However, Prozesky's insistence upon religious and political "correctness" as corollaries for scientific inquiry—just as Smart's concern for philosophic reflectiveness—will be the undoing of our science, because it is not possible within the framework of our knowledge about religion to muster and mobilize a concerted opinion on political and religious values. A blending of scientific, theological, and political interests, such as would result by adopting the combined ethos of Smart and Prozesky, does not produce scientific knowledge; extending our intellectual interest beyond cognitive matters alone may promote an ideology but never a science. Consequently, the task of the scientific student of religion as a scientist is not a moral or social one; it is merely to describe and explain as comprehensively as possible the phenomenon of religious behaviour. If we are to avoid

the decomposition of the academic study of religion into a pseudo-science we must leave broader Religious Studies—with its political and social agendas—to the humanists and religious devotees concerned with their place as public intellectuals in the life of society.

Consider in this regard the deliberations of William Dean, in his *Religious Critic in American Culture*, where he advises “public intellectuals” who currently work in the university—including that religious critic whose primary concern is for religion as it pertains to the well-being of society—to consider the possibility of claiming the universities for themselves should “third sector” organizations outside the university (that is, voluntary as opposed to governmental and commercial institutions) prove an unsatisfactory home for their activities (Dean 1994: 172):

[i]f voluntary organizations of the third sector do not offer the best venue and vehicle for the religious critic, and they may not, then what does? Should more hope be placed in the prospect of a deprofessionalized university? Should greater energy be lodged, after all, in reforming the university, in the effort to make it a viable psychological home and vehicle for the religious critic?

Most ironic—if not downright frightening—is that many who wish to reclaim the university for their own religious, political, or other ideological agendas do so under the smoke screen of being even more truly scientific than those who hold to a naturalistic concept of science. Kieran Flanagan, for example, argues for an enchantment of the sociology of religion—that is, for a transformation of the sociology of religion into a form of theology—because, he says, “[...] a non-praying sociologist is [...] a contradiction in terms” (Flanagan 1996: 28). “The study of religion,” he maintains, “demands a price of understanding which other belief systems and ideologies do not require. To understand the significance of a religious object or ritual is to contemplate an implication that can be transformative. Knowing what to see and what to read involves a grace of enlightenment, a point illustrated in the case of Phillip and the eunuch” (1996: 30–31). He castigates the strictly non-confessional study of religion as “pseudo-science,” “untenable in the context of a reflexive sociology that is becoming positively confessional [and] a hairline away from religious belief and commitment which religious studies spurns” (1996: 92).

A further example: Much like Flanagan, Andre Droogers tries to fashion a methodological position for the student of religion—in this case the anthropology of religion—transcending “religionism and reductionism” and making possible a place for methodological theism. His personal interest in such a perspective is admittedly tied to his

dual status as scholar of religion and religious scholar (Droogers 1996: 51) (and of course it is the insistence on maintaining a dual status that is a central focus of my remarks today) (1996: 51):

As a Christian working in an ecumenical university, holding the chair of the cultural anthropology of religion, and standing in a secular science tradition, it is my job to make sense of religion. It may cause no surprise that I take the religionism/reductionism debate as my test-case and seek to go beyond the established options.

The secular science tradition apparently sits lightly on him since he claims to have found a way of managing contradictions. Helpful to him in this regard is postmodernism, for by deconstructing science it "has eroded the contrast between science and religion as forms of knowledge" (1996: 60), and in criticizing the dominant scientific meta-narrative it has led "to experiment and openness, with carnival as a leading metaphor" (1996: 60). How this contributes to a scientific study of religion and a cumulative growth of knowledge about religion is hard to determine for according to Droogers, this methodological ludism, as he calls it, entertains various equally valid types of explanation of religion "even though contrasting and exclusive among themselves [...]" (1996: 61).³

Perhaps the most sustained effort to reclaim the university for a religio-political agenda is exerted by George Marsden in his *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* and his subsequent *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. In the earlier volume Marsden wonders "whether there are adequate grounds for most academics to insist on naturalistic premises that ignore the possibility of fruitful religious perspectives" (Marsden 1994: 430). Marsden maintains that with the devaluation of neutral science there is no longer a reason to exclude religiously-based claims—even divine revelation—from our research and teaching. As he puts it in the later volume, religious people can "reflect on the implications of such revelation within the bounds of

³ The entire volume in which Droogers's paper appears is committed to the claim that "at the level of the disciplines there is no unquestioned belief in the conflict-transcending objectivity of the social sciences" (Droogers 1996: i) and many of the authors take this judgment as grounds on which to intrude their religious commitments into their academic work. For example, Droogers's colleague in the Free University of Amsterdam, Philip Quarles van Ufford, leaves the reader in no doubt about his position: "Knowledge at its most reliable arises when silently we open ourselves and acknowledge our contingencies, allowing for the presence of God" (Ufford 1996: 42).

the mainstream academy by talking about them conditionally" (Marsden 1997: 52). They should at least have rights, he insists, similar to those who advocate "feminist, Marxist, liberal democratic, neoconservative, or purely naturalistic views," (1997: 53) ignoring among other things the danger of a concomitant balkanization of the university community into various interest and advocacy groups. This risk he is ready to accept for the sake of his own religious ideals. He insists protectively (and somewhat contradictorily, as it turns out) that, as scholars in the university setting, Christians must live up to "common standards" of practice, but (1997: 56, 57, 58)

[a]t the same time, there are limits to one's allegiance to such rules. Christians cannot play some of the games of society and they cannot accept some of the prevailing rules of other games. Nonetheless, there are many social conventions to which Christians can give limited allegiance. [...] Christians must remember that, much as they may value liberal institutions they are participating in them on an ad hoc basis, limited by higher allegiances. [...] Deeply religious people should be participating fully in [the] academy and they should be working to improve its rules, particularly those that tend to marginalize their own views.

As for the study of religion in the academy, he laments what he sees as the attempt to raise the academic credibility by treating religion purely as an object of study and permitting a definition of the field in scientific terms only (1994: 414; 1997: 22). The remedy he seeks is to bring religion with its (Christian) salvific agenda back into the university. And that of course would effectively make the university not only unscientific but actually another kind of church.

With the resurgence of religion in modern Western societies and the dominance of postmodernism and deconstructivism in humanities faculties' undermining the prestige and role of science and scientific rationality, current conditions on many of our university campuses are most hospitable to the humanist and the religious devotee. And this situation can only hamper the progress of the Science of Religion. A central task for the methodologist in this latter field, therefore, must be to offset the deleterious effects of these developments wherever possible. In part, our response must involve refuting the arguments presented by religious apologists and postmodernists, but this will not in itself suffice; for it is unlikely that an argument drawing upon the resources of the very rationality they have rejected will be accepted as a properly grounded criticism of their stance. We will need to show, I think, that a broader but less-disciplined importation

of political, cultural, or other non-cognitive criteria in the adjudication of scientific research simply opens the field to the articulation of individual interests and results in the accumulation of contradictory propositions or unsubstantiated claims about the nature of religion. There can be no cumulative growth of knowledge about religions with such lack of structure and our response to this methodological poverty must begin with identification of its insidious presence in our institutions.

Yet this may not be enough. I believe that we will need to intensify our response and to do this we might here take a cue from Bjerknes's activity in the re-founding of meteorological science. To recall Friedman, Bjerknes saw his problem in political terms; he "[...] grasped the outlines of a political economy of institutionalized science, and adapted his strategies to the ecological relations within and among disciplines" (Friedman 1989: 237), and paradoxical as it may sound given my comments above, we too will need to be politically active in our own way within our universities and professional associations if we are not to see our field of research and analysis overcome by politico-religious forces, becoming the avenue through which an ultimately religious agenda is re-established in the curriculum of the modern Western university. According to Friedman, moreover, "[p]assivity was never part of Bjerknes's strategy for achieving professional success" (1989: 179), and we will have to be as active if we are to re-establish the Science of Religion and counteract the "failure of nerve" which has characterized our enterprise for far too long.

First of all, we need to recognize that there is clearly a sense in which the sciences possess a political quality; that is, the very founding (or re-founding) of a science—in this case, the Science of Religion—constitutes a political act. The founders of a science are in some sense political actors because they create the framework—social and economic—within which a particular form of collective life is carried out; they determine acceptable presuppositions, assumptions, and criteria in an attempt to minimize idiosyncrasy and bias in the search for knowledge.⁴ The activity which establishes a science is not

⁴ On this matter see Sheldon Wolin's treatment of Max Weber as founder of the social sciences (Wolin 1981). For him, founding is political theorizing and he maintains that for Weber methodology served "not simply as a guide to investigation but as a moral practice and a mode of political action" (1981: 414) because it was primarily concerned with "the disenchanted world and its meaninglessness" (1981: 417). Wolin writes (1981: 416):

The inherent limitations of science, its inability to make good the deficiencies of the world's meaning, provide the backdrop to the political role

itself scientific, to be sure, but that does not imply that the action is political in the narrow—party-political or practical—sense of the word. In fact, in establishing a science one creates a discourse about methods for the attainment of knowledge about the world rather than a substantive discourse on behalf of a particular set of cultural-political values within the world.⁵

of the methodologist. His task is not to undertake scientific investigations or even to instruct his co-workers on how best to conduct research, much less to offer a special field of study. Rather it is to show them that significant action in their chosen realm is possible. It is, therefore, a form of political education in the meaning of vocation. Its politicalness comes from the seriousness, even urgency, of the relationship between vocational action and the world.

I disagree with Wolin's interpretation of Weber's "Science as a Vocation" but there is no need to deal with that matter here.

⁵ Knut Erik Tranøy (Tranøy 1976), although accepting that "[p]rofessional knowledge seekers are a sub-culture [and therefore] one of the specialized tribes of the world" (1976: 7), insists that (what he calls) the "ideology of inquiry" must involve both internal and external norms of inquiry, that is, both methodological norms and policy norms. The former govern scientific research while the latter relate to issues of education and the application of the results of research. "Methodological norms and values," he writes, "do not suffice to legitimate all types of actions and activities involved in inquiry defined as the search for, and the acquisition and communication of knowledge" (1976: 3). He does not, however, provide a persuasive argument for adopting such a definition of inquiry but merely suggests that "no reasonable person ever [thought] that science and educational policies could and should be *wertfrei* and 'value neutral' [...]" (1976: 4). It seems to me, however, that this is precisely what Ernest Gellner (1973) maintains in his argument that the establishment of science entails the creation of the new value of objective knowledge, wholly unconnected with other political, cultural, and religious values. For Gellner, science only emerges because it has somehow obtained a "diplomatic immunity" from other values; science is knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone and is, therefore, discontinuous with other cultural values. (I have dealt with this matter at greater length in my book *The Irony of Theology and the Nature of Religious Thought* [1991]). If this kind of argument is persuasive, then Tranøy is ready to concede the argument I develop here (Wiebe 1991: 5, 6):

If these two sub-sets of the ideology of inquiry, methodological norms and policy norms, are completely separate, then a traditional and now so often disputed view of science is not only defensible but incontrovertible. [...]. If the two activities are thus normatively distinct, this means that responsibility in science can be divided between two distinct sets of people. The active scientist is and should be guided and legitimated by

Maurice Cowling's comments about politics and political science are helpful in sorting out the issues involved in the politics of the study of religion (Cowling 1963: 209–210):

Professors of Political Science who want to engage in political practice (by standing for Parliament, writing in newspapers, advising governments or joining the City Council) are free to do so. But they are, so far as they do this, abandoning their academic function for a practical political one. To do so may, if they are lucky, help them to illuminate the academic subject-matter. But the only rational action to which scholars are committed, the only moral action to which they are commanded and the only "social responsibility" to which their *professional* position compels them, is to use their energies in order to explain in its full diversity as much as they can of the nature of the world in which they live.

According to Cowling, therefore, failure or refusal to demarcate the study of political behaviour from political behaviour itself is to preclude all possibility of a political science. It goes without saying that to explain the character of the world constitutes a form of action and is therefore comparable in some broad sense to a form of political action; but explanation carries with it, as Cowling puts it, its "own conventions, rules, and institutions" (1963: 210) which distinguish it from everyday political action. Thus Cowling writes: "[...] it is desirable to rid university faculties of the pretension to be schools of political practice, not because of the confusions this induces in the conduct of politics, but because of the damage it does to universities themselves" (1963: 120).

This confusion of politics and political science is mirrored by the confusion of religion with the study of religion—in both cases we encounter the necessity of distinguishing between partisan action and theoretical discourse. And this confusion is damaging to the university because it involves the subordination of the academy to an agenda not its own—a development corrosive of the very foundations upon which our scientific work proceeds. And this would require of us, I suggest, a mode of political response more closely connected to that variety which culminates in institutionalized action. It is not enough that our methodological effort restrict itself to the techniques and methods involved in the various disciplines and sub-disciplines of our field. We must generate an organized political response. For in my opinion there is a sense in which the departments—and possibly

methodological norms. Others will worry about science policy and the application of results.

the university itself—are subject to hostile takeover by interests far from scientific. If science, then, is simply another manifestation of what we generally see as formal political action, the university would be but another participant in party politics rather than an enterprise providing objective knowledge of the world (including politics and religion). In such a scenario those who espouse science as traditionally defined would be justified in defending their form of politics, in a party-political fashion, from imperialistic takeover by the politics of their various critics.

In any event, mapping out political action of this kind is, I think, a particularly important aspect of the task of the methodologist in our field. We need, for example, to establish more appropriate relations between our research and that of other established scientific fields, severing all relationship with religious and political interest groups including those which ambiguously (if not insidiously) engage in the kind of Religious Studies described by Smart and Prozesky. We must be far more active in our protection of the university as an institution dedicated to scientific research. Given the current intellectual atmosphere on our campuses this will require reminding university administrators and government officials of the very specific mandate of the modern university and of their responsibility to see that resources are used to that end.

Although discussion of an appropriate political response to the academic expectations with which students of religion should work is important to our methodological discussion, we are just as urgently compelled to address the question of a research program which will bring a measure of unity to the Science of Religion. We must not only reject the polymethodism of programs of Religious Studies of the kind described above; we must refuse to condone even a polymethodological concept of the Science of Religion—the two strategies are clearly complementary. Without theory to analyze independently available descriptions of religious experience, practice, and belief, (as opposed to constructivist views of religion—on lines similar to those of my criticism of Friedman's constructivism above—which make those descriptions the product of theoretical-scientific activity)⁶, we cannot be

⁶ There are a number of scholars who take a constructivist view of religion, arguing that religion is the product of the scholar's attention rather than an independent or autonomous reality. Russell McCutcheon (1997), for example, argues such a case against Eliade and his followers who claim religion to be a *sui generis* reality. Although I agree with McCutcheon's critique of the notion of religion as wholly autonomous with respect to other aspects of our social and cultural existence it seems to me unwarranted to claim that relig-

said to vaunt scientific knowledge of religion; so it is to theory above all that we must look if our field is to achieve coherence. I am well aware of those critics of science who, like Paul Feyerabend, insist that “[t]he world, including the world of science, is a complex and scattered entity that cannot be captured by theories and simple rules” (Feyerabend 1995:142) but this observation is hardly sufficient grounds for an all-out debunking of theory in our quest for knowledge of the world around us. Feyerabend’s complaint, moreover, that theorists are dangerous because they often believe themselves to have found “shortcuts” to understanding nature or society—“[a] few words, a few formulas, and the Secret is revealed” (1995: 93)—is scarcely a fair or persuasive evaluation of the efforts of the history of any field. Theories may be dangerous when they place constraints upon thought, but without such constraint (which I prefer to call “structure”) it is not at all clear that knowledge or insight would ever be gained at all; the alternative, an amorphous oracularism, is not a viable alternative to theory. If theories of religion are “dangerous” in the constraints they place upon our thinking about religion, they nonetheless bear the greater chance of understanding data than anything else.

In considering the need for a research program for the study of religion, it is interesting that it is on the strength of evolutionary theory that the Science of Religion initially made an appearance as a new field of research. The nineteenth-century study of religion, Sharpe notes in his history of the discipline, involved a variety of approaches—theological, philosophical, and scholarly—but he rightly argues that those approaches were devoid of a cardinal principle or idea that might somehow tie them together and provide a coherent explanatory account of the data. Each of these approaches, rather, was concerned with “understanding” religion and its value to society. “What was lacking,” in all this, he writes, “was [...] one single guiding principle of method which was at the same time able to satisfy the demands of history and of science” (Sharpe 1986: 26). And Sharpe correctly points out that it was “evolutionism” which provided the guiding principle which made the emergence of the Science of Religion possible. Here for the first time was an opportunity to understand religion in terms other than religious. Darwinism, that is, made it possible for “the real focus of the study of religion [...] to be located,

ion is therefore the product of the scholar’s study. Surely it is the product of human activity long before scholarly attention is focused upon it; indeed, only if that were so, could we pay such attention to it.

not in transcendental philosophy, but in [...] this-worldly categories [...]” (1986: 24).

But this early theory of evolution, with its organicistic metaphors often attached to simplistic notions of progress, fell into disrepute by the end of the First World War. Fewer scholars found themselves infused with the evolutionary optimism which had permeated the study of religion since the 1870s, and more and more researchers were drawn to “close and detailed studies in a limited area rather than in vast comparisons and synthetic pattern-making,” (1986: 174), giving rise to the polymethodic structure which characterizes it to this day—a structure which, I think it could be persuasively argued, permits the field to return to the polymethodism of its “pre-paradigmatic” state. Furthermore, even though there may have been some enrichment of the field by the variety of approaches adopted since this “paradigmatic” phase, it is also clear that much by way of explanatory power has been forfeited. And I want to suggest here that we need to reconsider the value of a return to evolutionary theory to re-establish a unifying framework for the study of religion. Making a convincing case for this is not really possible here, because it would require not only a thorough analysis of the reasons for the rejection earlier this century of evolutionary theory as a framework but also a detailed account of how neo-Darwinian theory can actually help explain religious phenomena. But I would like at least to provide some indication of why I think the theory worth further consideration.

Daniel Dennett’s analysis of the explanatory capacity of evolutionary theory in *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*, I think, provides a solid case for the application of the theory not only to biological but also to cultural phenomena. The materialistic perspective of modern evolutionary theory, he argues diminishes the sharp divide many think separates *Naturwissenschaften* from the *Geisteswissenschaften*. As he puts it, “[i]f there is just one Design Space [...] in which the offspring of both our bodies and our minds are united under one commodious set of R-and-D processes, then [the] traditional walls [between the two] may tumble” (Dennett 1995: 189). Given that perspective, he then argues, “the central biological concept of function and the central philosophical concept of meaning can be explained and united” (1995: 185). And if this is so, then “all the achievements of human culture—language, art, religion, ethics, science itself—are themselves artifacts [...] of the same fundamental process. There is no Special Creation of language, and neither art nor religion has a literally divine inspiration” (1995: 144).

Dennett has not himself applied this explanatory approach to religious phenomena; there are a number of scholars, however, who have demonstrated the benefits to be gained from such theoretical analyses. Dan Sperber's work, for example, on the epidemiology of beliefs shows that a naturalistic and materialistic program for social science is more than merely conceivable; in fact, it is clearly superior to the holistic hermeneutical approaches which methodologically isolate social science, for it "establishes fundamental continuities between its domain and that of one or several neighbouring natural sciences" (Sperber 1996: 5). His own attempt to account for cultural realities, therefore, is to treat culture as "the precipitate of cognition and communication in a human culture," (1996: 97) for then it is possible to find genuine material causes of culture rather than "attribut[ing] causal powers to entities such as institutions or ideologies" (1996: 99). The adoption of such a framework of explanation and the application of such techniques of analysis are fruitfully applied specifically to religious phenomena in a number of recent works by E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley (1990), Pascal Boyer (1994), Ann Baranowski (1994, 1998), Luther H. Martin (1997), Stewart Guthrie (1993), and Walter Burkert (1996) among others, and are very suggestive of the benefits to be gained by the Science of Religion in a renewed emphasis upon theory. These scholars, like Bjerknes, have obviously "grasped the outlines of a political economy of the sciences" and have been able to exploit that economy in the aid of generating genuine explanations of religious phenomena. We can recognize here, at least, a general agreement that whatever religion is, if we are ever to understand it, we will have to study it not simply empirically but also theoretically.

References

Baranowski, Ann

- 1994 *Ritual Alone: Cognition and Meaning of Patterns in Time*. Toronto.
[unpubl. Ph. D. Thesis]
- 1998 A Psychology of Ritual and Musical Meaning. Method and Theory in
the Study of Religion 10/1 pp. 3–29. Toronto.

Bleeker, C. J.

- 1979 Commentary. In: Lauri Honko (ed.), *Science of Religion: Studies in
Methodology*; pp. 173–177. The Hague: Mouton. (Religion and Reason,
13)

Boyer, Pascal

- 1994 *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion*.
Berkeley: University of California Press.

Burkert, Walter

- 1996 *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cowling, Maurice

- 1963 *The Nature and Limits of Political Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dean, William

- 1994 *The Religious Critic in American Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dennett, Daniel C.

- 1995 *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. New York: Simon & Shuster.

Droogers, André

- 1996 Methodological Ludism: Beyond Religionism and Reductionism. In: Anton van Harskamp (ed.), *Conflicts in Social Science*; pp. 44–77. London: Routledge. (Routledge Studies in Social and political Thought, 2)

Feyerabend, Paul

- 1995 *Killing Time: The Autobiography of Paul Feyerabend*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Flanagan, Kieran

- 1996 *The Enchantment of Sociology: A Study of Theology and Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Friedman, Robert Marc

- 1989 *Appropriating the Weather: Vilhelm Bjerknes and the Construction of a Modern Meteorology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (Uppsala Studies in History of Science, 5)

Gellner, Ernest

- 1973 *The Savage and the Modern Mind*. In: Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan (eds.), *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*; pp. 162–181. London: Faber & Faber.

Guthrie, Stewart Elliott

- 1993 *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Honko, Lauri (ed.)

- 1979 *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*. The Hague: Mouton. (Religion and Reason, 13)

Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley

- 1990 *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marsden, George

- 1994 *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- 1997 *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Martin, Luther

- 1997 Biology, Sociology and the Study of Religion: Two Lectures. *Religio* 5: 21–35.

McCutcheon, Russell

- 1997 Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia. New York: Oxford University Press.

Prozesky, Martin

- 1990 South Africa's Contribution to Religious Studies. *Journal of Theology of Southern Africa* 70: 9–20.

Sharpe, Eric J.

- 1986 Comparative Religion: A History. London: Duckworth.

Smart, Ninian

- 1996 Some Thoughts on the Science of Religion: In: Arvind Sharma (ed.), *The Sum of Our Choices: Essays in Honor of Eric J. Sharpe*; pp. 15–25. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (McGill Studies in Religion, 4)

Sperber, Daniel

- 1996 Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach. Oxford: Blackwell.

Tranøy, Knut Erik

- 1976 Norms of Inquiry: Methodologies as Normative Systems. In: Gilbert Ryle (ed.), *Contemporary Aspects of Philosophy*. Stocksfield: Oriel Press.

Ufford, Philip Quarles van

- 1996 Reality Exists: Acknowledging the Limits of Active and Reflexive Anthropological Knowledge. In: Anton van Harskamp (ed.), *Conflict in Social Science*; pp 22–43. London: Routledge.

Wiebe, Donald

- 1980 Review of Lauri Honko (ed.), *The Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*. The Hague: Mouton, 1979. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48: 632–34.

- 1984 The Failure of Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion. *Studies in Religion* 13: 401–422.

- 1991 The Irony of Theology and the Nature of Religious Thought. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas, 15)

- 1995 Religion and the Scientific Impulse in the Nineteenth Century: Friedrich Max Müller and the Birth of the Science of Religion. *International Journal for Comparative Religion* 1: 75–96.

- 1996 Toward Founding a Science of Religion: The Contribution of C. P. Tiele. In: Arvind Sharma (ed.), *The Sum of Our Choices: Essays in Honor of Eric J. Sharpe*; pp. 26–49. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (McGill Studies in Religion, 4).

Wolin, Sheldon

- 1981 Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory. *Political Theory* 9: 401–424.

J A N E W I L L I A M S - H O G A N

Discovering the Two Faces of Religious Charismatic Action — Traditional and Modern: A Model

Introduction

In the early decades of this century, Max Weber (1864–1920) identified charisma as a rationalizing force bestowed upon individuals within traditional societies, which gave them and, through them, their followers greater ability to manipulate and control the world. He claimed that charisma was the agent of rationalization, which brought forth the modern, disenchanted world—a world in which mysterious forces no longer come into play. It is a cynical world of instrumental rationality in which, in principle, all things can be mastered by means of calculation. To Weber, this gift of rationality, which in traditional societies is distributed almost randomly, becomes the rightful inheritance of every modern individual. From this perspective charisma, having brought the modern world into being, no longer has any particular function or place in it. It should by all rights disappear.

Weber's approach emptied charisma of content and left it without a locus within which it could operate in the modern age, even though Weber himself saw charisma as vital to meaningful human life. Weber was aware that his concept of charisma was paradoxical, and this led him to have genuine concern for the viability of modern society. Among other places in his corpus, he articulated this in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and in his essay “Science as a Vocation” (1919). Weber feared that life in modern rational society was meaningless or was rapidly becoming so. In it people could no longer be called or swept up by the pulsation of some prophetic *pneuma*.

The continual stream of new religious movements, as well as political movements, which have sprung up throughout this century may suggest that perhaps Weber was just wrong—perhaps modern religious movements are really possible. Perhaps the search for meaning

is completely possible now, but merely takes a different form in the modern world. Perhaps today charisma has a different guise, and shows a different face. On the other hand, however, perhaps all these new religious movements merely demonstrate the validity of Weber's perspective, because they are not really "new" religious movements, but only old style religious movements which spring up among traditionally oriented groups which have persisted on the periphery of modern society. What is needed in order to investigate this distinction is a methodology which can identify the characteristics of traditional and modern types of religious action. The presentation of such a methodology is the focus of this paper. First, however, we need to explore whether religion in any form has a future. The following discussion follows Stark and Bainbridge's argument in their book *The Future of Religion* (1985).

The Future of Religion

Stark and Bainbridge have argued convincingly for the survival of religion, even in our modern scientific culture. Although they acknowledge secularization as a powerful trend in modern life, religion, as they define it, will not, in fact, disappear. It will not, because it provides answers to the question of the meaning of both life and death. They call the answers to these questions compensators and distinguish them from the rewards which can be provided at least to some people within the structures of everyday life. Thus, they define religions as "*human organizations primarily engaged in providing general compensators based upon supernatural assumptions*" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 8). Their definition of religion is in essential agreement with Daniel Bell's (1977). He defines religion as: "a set of coherent answers to the core existential questions that confront every human group, ..." (Bell 1977: 429).

According to Bell, it is the human predicament that gives rise to religion, not human nature, as the ancient Greeks would have it, nor human history, as Marx believed (1977: 428). Human beings, unlike animals, are conscious of their own death, and this consciousness is integral to the definition of the species—*Homo Sapiens* "man, the knowing one." The question of salvation is the basic human question, as Weber posed it—"What shall we do, and how shall we live?" (Weber 1958a: 143).

In a sense, it is how one answers this fundamentally religious question that delineates both the structure and content of all human life. Of the five major social institutions, only religion is proper solely

to human beings. It is our human religious questions and concerns which essentially separate us from animals, and religion is the institution which humanity has devised to deal with them. Therefore, it follows that because these questions will never disappear, neither will religion.

Why then, has the process of secularization been viewed by so many social scientists as the final twilight of the gods (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 430)? According to Stark and Bainbridge this has occurred primarily for two reasons: first, because they believe that the process is uni-directional and non-reversible; and second, because "they are convinced that a new factor has entered into and canceled the old equation: the rise of science. Science is expected to make religion implausible, and hence modern secularization will not produce new major religions, but an era of rationality in which mysticism can no longer find a significant place" (1985: 430). This position is clearly stated by Anthony F. C. Wallace, who has written: "... the evolutionary future of religion is extinction... the process is inevitable" (1966: 264-265).

Stark and Bainbridge's concept of secularization challenges the uni-directional and non-reversible character of secularization. From their perspective secularization is not a recent phenomenon brought on by the scientific revolution, but is a perennial process in all religious economies. Secularization occurs because the dominant religions, in any culture, are always moving toward an accommodation with the world. They begin in a high tension relationship with the world and move toward a low tension relationship with it. According to them, this process is self-limiting and generates two countervailing processes: revival and religious innovation.

They define revivals as sects which are born "to restore vigorous otherworldliness to a conventional faith" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 2). These sectarian revivals seek to enliven old faiths, while religious innovations are movements which attempt to fashion new religious traditions. Their ability to succeed depends, in part, on the strength and vigor of existing conventional religions to oppose them, and because of their perceived truth. Historically, "thus, did Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, and the other great world faiths wrest dominant market positions from older faiths" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 2). They did so, because they were better adapted to the current market demands of their times.

While Stark and Bainbridge acknowledge science as a new and powerful cultural force to be reckoned with, they do not believe that it will eliminate human concern with death or the desire to escape it, or interest in the question of the meaning of life. They do say,

however, that while “science can challenge *some* of the claims made by historic religions, ... it cannot provide the primary satisfaction that has long been the *raison d'être* of religions” (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 431).

From Stark and Bainbridge's perspective, science only threatens the magical/miraculous formulations which religions offer. While the purely supernatural elements of religion can remain above the fray, any magical formulations which they supply can be directly challenged by science, because magic competes with science in its claim to offer tangible results. Magic claims to utilize supernatural means to provide this worldly ends, while science claim to use this worldly means to achieve this worldly ends.¹ Since magic and science claim the same empirical playing field, magic is vulnerable to scientific challenge and disconfirmation.

Traditional religions which arose prior to the scientific revolution often included magic in their offering. According to Stark and Bainbridge, this was particularly true for religions that attempted to dominate the religious economy in which they operated. Science, or the systematic process of evaluating explanations empirically, “will always tend to drive out empirically testable explanations that are false or at least less efficient than some other explanation. In consequence, as science is more widely practiced, it will tend to drive out magic” (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 432). In this way, science creates a cultural atmosphere skeptical of religion.

Effect of Secularization on Traditional Faiths, Sects and Cults

Stark and Bainbridge see secularization as a circular or perhaps spiral process. Through it “sects are tamed and transformed into churches. Their initial otherworldliness is reduced and worldliness is accommodated. Secularization also eventually leads to the collapse of religious organizations as their extreme worldliness—their weak and vague conceptions of the supernatural—leaves them without the means to satisfy even the universal dimension of religious commitment” (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 429). This shift in position relative to the larger culture opens the door to the formation of sects, a

¹ Religion which uses this worldly and other worldly means to achieve this worldly and other worldly ends is the complex of them all, and this may be why religion is the preeminent human institution.

conservative and circular process, and cults, an innovative and perhaps spiral process.

Within this perspective, traditional religions begin in tension with their surrounding culture and gradually move to a position of relatively low tension with their environment. When the scientific world view became the dominant perspective in Western society, many of the traditional churches, which previously had been in low tension with society, found themselves potentially in higher tension with it—that is, if they held steadfast to certain doctrinal positions such as biblical miracles or the literal interpretation of Genesis. To remain in low tension some of these positions had to be reinterpreted and others had to be abandoned. Today, these organizations, according to Stark and Bainbridge “offer only very weak general compensators. The conception of the supernatural they sustain has receded to a remote, inactive, almost non-existent divinity” (1985: 434).

Revivalistic sects attempt to restore the vigor and potency of these traditional religions. Evangelical Protestantism and Charismatic Catholicism in the United States are good examples of this effort. While these movements are reasonably successful in attracting and holding members, they have not established a position which makes them invulnerable to the forces of secularization. In fact, “the trouble with revival is that it is heir to a whole cultural history, and this history is replete with defeats of doctrine by science” (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 435). Their strength may lie more in their strong moral positions than in their defense of supernatural interventions in the world. In any case, in so far as these groups pick and choose between the aspects of the tradition they are willing to defend and those they are not, they have played into the hands of the forces of secularization, with science playing the role of legitimator. Thus, revival, as a response to secularization, is inherently weak and may lack long-term staying power as it speaks to markets already marginalized by secularization.

According to Stark and Bainbridge, innovation may be, therefore, the more fruitful avenue of response to secularization. The faiths that were dominant in the pre-scientific period, were well suited to the cultures in which they arose. They were innovative at the time and did not make claims that were false within the world view of the day. This is no longer the case, as they were not designed to fit the requirements of our present scientific culture. Does that mean, as Brian Wilson suggests, that the development of new religious groups should be seen “as a confirmation of the process of secularization? [and that] They indicate the extent to which religion has become inconsequential for modern society?” (1976: 96).

For Wilson the emergence of new religions confirms the process of secularization because religious action is essentially traditional and therefore can only develop outside of the impersonal, rational, and bureaucratic framework of modern society. That is to say, according to him, that religious action requires “charismatic leadership, ..., collective behavior, spontaneous faith, and unconstrained obedience” (1976: 125).

While granting that some religious activity in the modern age fits within the traditional framework of action, surely some innovative religion must be modern in character. Stark and Bainbridge suggest Mormonism, the Unification Church, and some older cults, such as Christian Science, Theosophy, the Baha'i , and New Age groups as possible candidates. While they use them as examples of their general contentions that religion remains a viable option in modern society, and that cults tend to flourish in environments where the dominant faiths are the weakest, they don't provide any criteria with which to judge their ultimate success or failure within our current culture or their exactness of fit. Thus, we need to ask, what are the requirements of religious action which would be compatible within the framework of modern scientific society?

A Theory of Modern Religious Action

Weber's theory of social action is a useful point of departure in order to discover the characteristics of religious action compatible with modern social structure. Two concepts in particular are useful: *charisma* and *prophecy*. Charisma because any new structure of religious action requires it; and prophecy because, as Weber said, the construction of a new religion requires a “new and genuine prophecy” (1958b: 155).

Throughout human history the extraordinary and exceptional powers of charisma have provided mankind access to and communication with the ultimate and the sacred. Embodied in an individual leader or prophet who appears to have supernatural and superhuman qualities, charisma orders the world by providing answers to the existential quandary of human life. The answers provide the inspiration for the creeds, the rites, and the institutional forms of religion. However, it was Weber's understanding that in the very process of adapting the extraordinary to the ordinary structures of everyday life, the creative essence of the religious experience is gradually obscured and eventually obliterated. This dimming of the vision of the prophet over time leads to a crisis of meaning for the group or the

community involved. The sense of distress which inevitably develops can only be addressed, within his theory, by the emergence of another prophet or charismatic leader. It is this evolutionary cycle which, Weber theorized, is the vehicle of change within traditional societies. In it each successive charismatic vision, in order adequately to resolve the new or existing level of distress, is more rational than the last, until in the end the world is totally rationalized.

As we have seen, modern Western society from Weber's point of view is such a society. Charisma, the dynamic principle of change in the process of rationalization, appears to have no place once society has become rationalized. Charisma once routinized, the unique once made uniform, seems to free man from his dependence upon the gift of charisma, and seems to give man a sense of independent action and freedom of control. And yet even Weber saw that rational action, a by-product of the unique and superhuman quality of charisma, was in truth only a pale imitation or shadow of charisma. Thus he felt that for social life to be human and to have meaning, it must contain the quality or at least the possibility of charisma.² It is this alternative conception of charisma, as the essence of foundation, which Weber recognized as so important, that can be useful in the construction of a model of religious action in the modern age.

The system of authority which Weber identified as modern is rational-legal or rational-bureaucratic. This type of social system is characterized by its impersonality. In it there is little room for the individual creative action so necessary for personal charisma, and rationality rather than affectivity governs the conduct of action. Although Weber correctly observed the shift in the framework of legitimacy in a system of rational legal domination from that of a per-

² Both Parsons and Mommsen have made the observation that for Weber charisma provides the basis of legitimacy in any social system traditional or modern. (Williams-Hogan 1985: 637) As Parsons says; "In other words, charisma is directly linked with legitimacy, is indeed the name in Weber's system for the source of legitimacy in general." (Parsons 1968: 663) Mommsen says; "Although Weber treated of charismatic leadership in the context of his political sociology as just one particular type among others, he nonetheless showed a strong tendency to identify it with genuine leadership of any kind The notion that all genuine leadership is, in some way or another, of a charismatic nature does indeed lead to the conclusion that some element of 'charisma,' whether in a routinized or in a disguised form, is required in every system of domination, regardless of its particular nature." (Mommsen 1974: 79) "The essential point is that the quest for the source of legality always leads back to a charismatic, whether by apostolic succession, revealed law (Calvin's Geneva), divine right or general will." Parsons 1968: 665.

sonal order to that of an impersonal one, he continued to imagine that charismatic breakthroughs, if they were to be possible at all in modern societies, would still be embodied in personal charismatic leaders. That is, although Weber understood the tremendous structural changes wrought by the coming of modern society, he never gave up the prophet as the model of charisma.

The difficulty with this model is not merely theoretical. Although modern man continues to be fascinated by personal charisma which bursts into his rationally ordered world from time to time, it also frequently fills him with a sense of horror and dread, on the one hand, and on the other, with a sense of the ridiculous and the absurd.³ Reactions to the awesome "demonic" powers of Hitler, Stalin, and Jim Jones exemplify our collective sense of horror, and reactions to the salvatory claims of the tele-evangelists exemplify our sense of the ridiculous. What this discussion suggests is, that while the concept of charisma as a source of inspiration and legitimization can be retained as a theoretical element, it would be fruitful to look for its location elsewhere than in the individual.

But the question of where else to look presents a serious problem. For as we know a "new religion" requires "a new and genuine prophecy," and what other source of prophecy is there but the prophet? Obviously, there is none. However, while it is necessary to acknowledge this truth, the specific nature of the prophetic role remains open, thus indicating an area in need of development.

How to conceptualize the prophetic role is the key to understanding the modern face of charisma. If the role of the prophet changes, so then do the other elements of religious action. In the traditional framework of action the prophet has a very personal role to play. His followers develop a very close relationship to him, and he demands absolute obedience to the religious law. In this model, in an extreme case charisma can be transformed into Franz Neumann's concept of *Caesarism* where power not love rules (1962: 246). If however, the prophet, but not his words, were absent from the founding and the unfolding of a religious movement then the whole framework of action which could develop would be different.

³ It should be noted that in men like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ghandi it still retains its traditional pull. Whether such men can "call" both traditional and modern segments of present day society is a question that is addressed later in this paper.

Two Faces of Charisma: Traditional and Modern

Within the traditional framework of action, the problems which the prophet addresses are socio-historically specific and primarily communal, and the solutions offered are in the nature of a collective covenant. That is, they will resolve the problem only if they become binding on the group as a whole. The laws or rules which form the new way of life or the new covenant are promulgated to correct lapses in the social structure, not necessarily lapses of the individual. As a result, they are to be enforced by the group not merely by the individual. Thus acknowledgment of the charismatic quality of the prophet requires in itself spontaneous obedience to his demands. If we abstract these characteristics, we can present a more detailed model of traditional prophecy, which focuses on its structural components:

1. Mode of Prophecy: oral.
2. Nature of Crisis: communal.
3. Nature of Covenant: collective.
4. Nature of Message: particularistic.
5. Nature of Controls: external.
6. Nature of Response: demanded obedience; spontaneous obedience; group directed subordination.

In examining traditional prophecy from a structural perspective, it becomes clear that modern individuals will not heed its call. If they could hear any calls to meaning, or the call to resolve the existential human question, it must be in a form that is congenial to the requirements of modernity. What follows is the proposed model of modern prophecy:

1. Mode of Prophecy: written.
2. Nature of Crisis: personal.
3. Nature of Covenant: individual.
4. Nature of Message: universal.
5. Nature of Controls: internal.
6. Nature of Response: voluntary obedience; reflective obedience; self-subordination.⁴

For the sake of clarity, it might be useful to present the two models in a schematic form.

⁴ After this paper was presented at the IAHR Conference in Turku, Finland, August 4–7, 1997, Matti Kamppinen from the University of Turku suggested including an additional component namely, the scope of control of the prophetic leader. Does it reach into all aspects of the followers life, both public and private, or does it permit areas of individual discretion and action? Thus, is the scope of control broad or narrow? This suggestion is useful and a real addition to the model. How this would play out in the model of modern religious action where the emphasis is on self control remains to be explored.

Two Models of Prophecy

<i>Category</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Modern</i>
1. Mode of Prophecy	oral	written
2. Nature of Crisis	communal	personal
<i>Category</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Modern</i>
3. Nature of Covenant	collective	individual
4. Nature of Message	particularistic	universal
5. Nature of Controls	external	internal
6. Nature of Response	demanded obedience	reflective obedience

Model Categories

1. Mode of Prophecy. This refers to form of communication by which the prophetic message is received. A revelatory experience of an individual is the starting point of the social phenomenon of prophecy. However, regardless of the nature of that experience, it must be communicated to others if it is to have any social significance. Whether that experience is communicated by speech or written word is of tremendous importance in the subsequent development of prophecy. This will be discussed in greater detail later.

2. Nature of Crisis. This category refers to the type of situation which calls forth the prophecy and the response. Communal crises affect the well-being of a group of people and often are situations which directly affect the group as a whole. Both the cause and the solution of a communal crisis are felt to be a communal matter, and communal action is necessary for its resolution. Examples of communal crises are: wars, famines, pestilence, oppression, and economic and social dislocation. Personal crises, however, are private, and while they reflect concerns that many individuals actually have, they are experienced primarily within the self. The resolution of personal crises requires action on the part of the individual. Examples of personal crises are: fear of death, sense of personal sin, anxiety about the meaning of life, and the search for God.

3. Nature of Covenant. A covenant or a *Berith*, is an agreement between persons or parties. It is also defined in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* as, "a solemn compact between members of a church to maintain its faith, discipline, etc..." (Webster's 1958: 192). Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel, and for the covenant to be maintained by "the chosen people" each and every member was

required to live according to His law. On His part, Yahweh promised his people that they would live long and well in the promised land if they abided by the covenant, that is if they obeyed his law. This identifies the nature of a collective covenant. It is a compact which is binding on all the members of the group. When God offers man an individual covenant, however, each man is bound by God's law independently. Ultimately, he is solely responsible for his own conduct. Jesus, when he instituted the holy supper said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20) That this new covenant was between God and each man is apparent in the Lord's saying: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

4. Nature of the Message. What is the message about, and to whom is it addressed? Is the prophet speaking to a very particular situation, which is affecting a very specific people, and which cannot easily be generalized? Or is the prophet speaking to the conditions and concerns of all people everywhere? Is the message (and the solution it entails) bound by class, social, and historical issues, or is it like a scientific formula, usable and replicable regardless of the specifics of time and place? If the message cannot be generalized, it is particularistic. If it is like a scientific formula, it has universal applicability.

5. Nature of Controls. Any compact or agreement requires a system of sanctions to ensure compliance with it. This category refers to the way in which the covenant is enforced. It can either be enforced through the external supervision and control of others, or it can be enforced through internal controls or self discipline. A contrast can be made here between a system where the community has the legitimate right to oversee the spiritual progress of all of its members, and where one's spiritual progress is confessed only to God.

6. Nature of Response. This concept refers to the expectations that the prophet has regarding those who receive his message. Must they respond to the demands of his message completely, automatically, and without question, because he or his disciples say so; or are they permitted to reflect on his message, to see if it makes sense, and then to choose voluntary to subordinate themselves to it? Must those to whom the prophet is sent respond enthusiastically and spontaneously, or may they think and reflect on the message?

Distinctions

With this brief discussion of the terminology used in the model, it would now be useful to probe the categories more deeply, particularly the distinction between oral and written prophecy.

Oral vs. Written Prophecy

In his book *Beyond the Written Word*, William A. Graham quotes the Egyptologist Alan Gardiner who said: “Speech and Writing have been the two main stages passed by [man] on his long road to civilization” (1987: 12). They may also define two fundamentally different models of prophecy. In fact, the difference between oral and written prophecy may be the key distinction between the structures of traditional and modern prophecy, because the other distinctions between these models appear to follow from it. Oral prophecy, almost by definition is, in its founding stage, communal. While access to written communication, according to Graham, “is through an individual’s private, silent reading and study,” (1987: 9) the written word has gradually opened “new vistas on both the substance and shape of knowledge” (1987: 14). The spoken word stimulates our affections, while the written word encourages critical reflection.⁵ Graham continues:

Still more: the use of written records eventually stimulates or coincides with new concerns and purposes for verbal narrative that are qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from those of primary oral cultures. Speaking involves interaction with an audience; writing necessitates distancing of the writer from his or her reader. The inclination of modern hermeneuts such as Paul Ricoeur to see the written text as utterly independent of its author is an extreme but logical expression of the autonomy of the written word. Fixing a text visually objectifies its discourse as symbols on the page and makes it as something abstract and impersonal, an object of analysis apart from the specific, always

⁵ As any lover knows, hearing the voice of the loved one brings a welling up of affection that merely seeing the name does not. And as Jack Goody says, “... writing, and still more alphabetic literacy, made it possible to scrutinize discourse in a different kind of way by giving oral communication a semi-permanent form; this scrutiny favoured the increase in scope of critical activity ... writing laid out discourse before one’s eyes in a different kind of way ... Graham 1987: 15.

contextual situations of oral speech... literacy makes 'study' possible, and with it, the 'abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths' that is 'impossible without writing and reading (1987: 15).

However, not only does writing change the processing of information; it also affects the manner that it is used. For example, as Graham says:

oral retelling of the past, even by specialized guardians of a society's traditions, is not subject to the same repeated scrutiny over time (whether within a single transmitter's lifetime or over several generations) that a written record receives. Where the former is personal (which is to say, communal, in the most immediate sense) and directed to present concerns and situations, the latter has existence apart from its author, his or her 'present' concerns, and those of the community, which will rarely be the same as those of a latter time (1987: 16).⁶

Written communication has the capacity to change both the transmission of culture and an individual's relationship to his own past. It allows the past to become fixed and distant from the present, but it also allows it to be a permanent possession, unlike the ephemeral quality of an oral presentation. Furthermore, speech has a different audience with different demands than does the written word. What one hopes to find in a text differs markedly from one's expectations of a performance. Thus, in Graham it is argued that "the graphic representation of speech ... is a tool' that 'encourages reflection upon and the organization of information' and 'also changes the nature of representations of the world' even for those in the culture who cannot write" (1987: 17).

This discussion has tremendous significance, because currently we live in an age of the written word. As Graham says:

For most if not all of us, the fixed, visible page of print is the fundamental medium of both information and demonstration of

⁶ Further, as Goody and Watt say, "In oral societies the cultural tradition is transmitted almost entirely by face-to-face communication; and changes in its content are accompanied by the homeostatic process of forgetting or transforming those parts of the tradition that cease to be either necessary or relevant. Literate societies, on the other hand, cannot discard, absorb, or transmute the past in the same way. Instead, their members are faced with permanently recorded versions of the past and its beliefs; and because the past is thus set apart from the present, historical inquiry becomes possible." Graham 1987: 16.

proof. If anything is truly important, we have to 'get it in writing,' be it an idea, a report, a directive, or an agreement. We want tangible evidence of 'documentation'; we need things of importance 'signed and sealed.' To a degree unknown in any other culture in history, knowledge for us is 'book-learning'; and no orally communicated word carries the kind of legal, scholarly, or administrative authority for us that a written or printed document does (1987: 9).

For the purposes of this paper, one could argue further that oral prophecy in such an age, even though it continues to exist, cannot carry the same authority as written prophecy.⁷ A "book religion" or prophecy communicated in a book would appear to be more congenial to the spirit of the age.

Communal vs. Personal Crisis

Identity and purpose are essential characteristics of truly human life. These characteristics are not given at birth but must be socially acquired in an interactive process between the person and his community. In traditional societies one's identity and commitments are primarily defined by the community and are communal in nature. In such societies, according to Phillip Rieff, the process of socialization or civilization require "the submerging of their individualities within a communal purpose" (1968 : 10). In these societies what constitutes a crisis of action is a breakdown of either the efficacy of the communal formula for living (prescription for life) itself, or a substantial reduction in its implementation by the people. The duty of the prophet in such situations is to recall or remember and possibly redefine or extend the communal purposes and vision so that the members of that community can re-identify with its aims. As we have seen, in Weber's view, the unfolding of this process within the Judeo-Christian tradition gradually led to the rationalization of the world.

⁷ Two problems need to be touched on here. The obvious fact that oral prophecy continues to thrive among certain groups who live in modern society; and the fact that written prophecy does not appear to share the same type of authority as do legal, scholarly and administrative spheres, even though theoretically it should. These things can be partially explained by the modern rationalists who treat religion as irrelevant and the parallel assessment of the romantics that it is essentially a non-rational phenomena. This explanation draws on an understanding of the romantic reaction to the Enlightenment.

As he said, "The rational conception of the world is contained in germ within the myth of the redeemer" (Weber 1958a: 274). In the rationalization of the world the institutional areas of communal life became increasingly specialized and rational. As Luckmann explains:

The functionally 'rational' norms of institutions characterized by a complex division of labor and specialization of roles became increasingly disengaged from the biographical context of meaning in which institutional performances stood for the individual performer (1967: 97).

In modern society institutional performances no longer stand for the individual and no longer bind and express the identity of the individual. The smooth and rational functioning of the external and objective institutional order of society does not require that its functioning have subjective significance for the individual. The institutional order is concerned only with the performance, as such, and not with the individuals subjective biographical context. Again, as Luckmann says:

In comparison to traditional social orders, the primary public institutions no longer significantly contribute to the formation of individual consciousness and personality, ... Personal identity becomes, essentially, a private phenomenon. This is, perhaps, the most revolutionary trait of modern society. Institutional segmentation left wide areas in the life of the individual unstructured and the overarching biographical context of significance undetermined (1967: 97).

In this process emerged the private or personal sphere, in which the individual has a sense of freedom and autonomy. It is within this sphere or domain that purpose is now defined and identity is acquired. This personal sphere has become the arena in which the inevitable human quest for ultimate meaning takes place. Because meaning is now personally defined, crises in meaning are personal rather than communal. And it is precisely crises within this area that modern prophecy should address, if individuals are to find a religious vision which is relevant to their lives. Modern prophecy must address these issues if individuals are to be able to respond to it, but it must also provide a new form of integration or relationship between the subjective and objective worlds. It must be capable of addressing personal concerns and crises in a way which also recognizes the dual quality of human nature which is both personal and communal or individual and collective. In the modern age a genuinely new prophecy would deal with both because, while meaning may be essentially

a matter of personal definition, the communal aspect of human life requires that not all the vital human functions be left in the hands of individuals to shape according to merely personal whim or fashion. A genuine new prophecy would not only give comfort in the face of personal crisis, it would encourage communion.

To a certain extent religious institutions in the modern world have attempted to re-fashion their messages to conform to this demand for personal solace. But today secular faiths or secular therapies compete with the Christian communions to provide the techniques of comfort and solace as men and women search for meaning in *pianissimo*. Weber saw the danger in intellectually constructing new religions without new and genuine prophecy, whether these constructions were attempted within the old churches or within the academic community. According to him, such attempts would only create monstrosities. While it may be true that currently many prophetic monstrosities may exist, this should not prevent sociologists from taking up the challenge of recognizing new prophecies in whatever form they take, even if they should occur in a disenchanted world.

Collective and Individual Covenants

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, a covenant is "a bond entered into voluntarily by two parties by which each pledges himself to do something for the other." (Cross 1957: 350) The religious history of the West is a history of covenants. The old covenant was between Yahweh and the people of Israel. He was the sovereign and Israel the servant, in a manner similar to the ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty pattern. The Sinai story follows this treaty pattern (Ex. 19–24) which has the following elements, according to J. Arthur Thompson:

- 1) there is a recital of God's acts prior to the making of the covenant (Ex. 19:4);
- 2) followed by the call to enter into a covenant and to obey. The stipulations in the form of the Decalogue are given in Ex. 20 and supplemented by other laws (Ex. 21–23);
- 3) There is a reference to the oath that Israel took (Ex. 19:8; 24:3);
- 4) and to the religious ceremony at which the covenant was ratified (Ex. 24:4–8);
- 5) Curses and blessings are contained in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1–17);

- 6) and there is mention of a covenant document (Ex. 24:7) (Thompson 1979: 792).⁸

Covenants are initiated by God. They contain promises that are everlasting. God will remember them and will confirm them with a sign. What was expected in return was obedience on the part of Israel. Obedience was not considered a condition of the covenant but was rather a definition of the appropriate relationship between God and his people, because the covenant identified the form through which the people of Israel could achieve genuine humanity. "There could be no blessings or fellowship without obedience" (Tompson 1979: 792). Within this relationship Israel was expected to "keep the covenant, to "remember" it, to "do" it, and to "walk in" it. Her repeated failure to do so resulted in curses. "Hence ... she experienced ... natural calamities, war, sickness, exile, and death, whereas had she kept the covenant she might have enjoyed the blessings of the covenant instead (Lev. 26; Dt. 27-28)" (Tompson 1979: 792).

In the Old Testament it is made clear that God's promises are eternal and that they establish the structure of human well-being. He is faithful. He keeps his Word, but the people do not. The role of the prophets was to call the people to renew their commitment to the covenant. Sawyer informs us that Prophets are "proclaimers" and "predictors." (1987: 1) They are spokesmen for the Living God and they declare his truth. They declare that in his Word or in his truth is found the way of life, and that all other ways lead to death. Following God's Word is good and leads to good, disobeying his Word is evil and leads to evil. Their predictions flowed from this reality. If Israel breaks the covenant, then curses or evil are the inevitable result. But "the promise of God could not fail," even if Israel did (Thompson 1979: 792). As Jeremiah and other prophets predicted, if Israel should fail, God would make a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-33).

There would be a remnant in whom, by way of judgment and repentance God would honor His promises. He would make a new covenant, not new in essence, but new in fulfillment. His law would be written on hearts of flesh (Thompson 1979: 792).

The words of Jeremiah point to a more internal or ethical covenant. In the life of Christ, the Messiah and Redeemer, this new covenant is established. This new covenant is more spiritual, unlike the Decalogue inscribed on tablets of stone. McCaig states that "Its re-

⁸ The elements of this pattern have been placed in numerical order for the convenience of the reader.

quirements are not simply given in the form of external rules, but the living Spirit possesses the heart; the law becomes an internal dominating principle, and so true obedience is secured" (McCaig 1979: 796). The new covenant does not replace the law, it gives it genuine life, and in contrast to the collective covenant between God and Israel, Christ offered every individual the possibility of making a covenant with him. During the last supper he said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." (Lk. 22:20) The promise of the new covenant was eternal life, the path to which was repentance and the remission of sins through the blood of the new covenant. This is the message that the disciples were to preach in his name to everyone in all nations.

Christianity grew around the worship of the risen Lord—the God of eternal life. Each man could find eternal life if he would repent and take the sacraments in the name of the Lord. Although the commemoration of the last supper was a communal ritual of the early Christian community, eternal life was promised to individuals. However, as the Christian church grew and eventually adopted the formula that there could be no salvation outside of the Church, it appeared as if the covenant was between the Church and God, rather than between each individual and God. Attempts to reform Christianity frequently resulted in the development of Covenant Theologies which were conceived of as identifying the compact between God and his elect. This covenant was a covenant of grace requiring only faith on the part of believer. In taking away the believer active role in the preservation of the covenant, the ultimate role of the covenant in religious life was thrown into doubt. The Enlightenment then cast doubt on the efficacy of the religious enterprise itself. Because it appeared that rationality could completely destroy religion if its relevance was asserted to be primarily in the external/empirical world, or the world of action, during the romantic reaction, religion became an affair of the human heart. No longer covenantal in nature, religion in the modern age, according to Rabbi Harold Kushner, exists "not to explain God or to Please God, but to help us meet some of our most basic needs" (Neuhaus 1989: 52).

Modern prophecy within the Judeo-Christian framework, if genuine, would re-establish a covenant between God and man. Such a covenant would call the individual to respond freely to the rational Living Word of God.

Particularistic and Universal Messages

The structure of modern society is dependent upon universalistic norms. As Parsons has pointed out:

Although many of the elements of such a general normative order appeared in quite highly developed form in earlier societies, in my view their crystallization into a coherent system represents a distinctive new step, which more than the industrial revolution itself, ushered in the modern era of social evolution (1982: 316).

It is evident that all the major social institutions have been substantially altered by this step to establish a general normative order. Politics and economics are perhaps the two most obvious examples. This is indicated by the development and globalization of the European nation-state and its law, and the development of international markets and money economies. According to Parsons the development of a general legal system is central to the process of societal evolution. He states:

A general legal system is an integrated system of universalistic norms, applicable to the society as a whole rather than to a few functional or segmental sectors, highly generalized in terms of principles and standards, and relatively independent of both the religious agencies that legitimize the normative order of the society and vested interest groups in the operative sector, particularly in government (1982: 316).

Nonetheless, education and the family have also undergone dramatic changes, with the development of universal education and the nuclearization of the family. Standardization in technology and the development of the scientific method are also noteworthy examples of this change.

The institution of religion is the one major exception. It is precisely the failure of religion to universalize at the normative level that has lead to the current questioning of its relevance. While at the organizational level religion has become increasingly bureaucratized in the modern era (a key element of universalization), normatively, religions have either tended to remain particularistic or have liberalized. These two tendency are in opposition to one another and compete for recognition on the same plane of social reality. Thus, the relationship between religion and modernity has become politicized, as the advocates of the contending positions desire (or demand) the exclusive right to define that relationship. From those who hold the particularistic perspective, modernity is viewed as a threat to religion, and

while they retreat from it in order to preserve the substance of religion, they invalidate modernity itself. On the other hand, the liberals, in their rush to embrace modernity, must of necessity invalidate many particular religious ideas, and in doing so frequently invalidate the fundamental premises of the religious world view.

Liberalization has not provided the key to the universalization of religion because conceptually, even though it has attempted to have a broad appeal by negating particularism, it does not represent a higher or deeper level of religious understanding. The achievement of a new level of understanding is a necessary prerequisite of universalization. Rather, the liberal perspective comes from adopting natural empiricism as the universal standard of truth. Naturalism cannot be the universal form of religion. It does not represent a penetration of religious reality, but its denial. Furthermore it does not represent an overcoming of religion, only its abandonment.

Rationalization and universalization represent processes that discover truths that integrate diverse and divergent particulars at a deeper and more general level of reality. It is for this reason that they are more broadly applicable. The universalization of the Judeo-Christian tradition would not lead to its abandonment, but would entail the discovery of a more interior appreciation of its truths. It would lead to the development of a perspective that could explain the apparent surface contradictions of that tradition in a consistent and rational manner, without at the same time invalidating the truths inherent in other religious traditions.

Genuine modern prophecy would minimally provide a new and more universal ethic, providing deeper insight into the question, "who is my neighbor?" This would de-mystify the sacred. Furthermore, genuine modern prophecy would provide new insights into the four area of the global-human condition identified by Robertson and Chirico: "namely, societies; individuals; the system of societies; and (in the generic sense) mankind" (Beckford and Luckmann 1989: 11).

If religion is to reclaim its relevance for modern individuals and modern societies, it must be able to address substantively within its own appropriate sphere the universal concerns of modernity.

External and Internal Controls

For visions to live and structure the lives of men, specific means must be used to encourage adherence and to control deviance. These visions live in appropriately socialized human beings. Prior to the completion of the initial socialization process human behavior is con-

trolled primarily by others. Once socialized, human beings have the capacity to sanction or control their own behavior. All societies use both external and internal mechanisms of social control. As sociology understands the concept of social control, according to Berger, "it refers to the various means used by a society to bring its recalcitrant members back into line" (1963: 68). Societies employ a great variety of mechanisms of control, depending upon the social situation involved. They use "deterrents, incentives, rewards and punishments" (McGuire 1987: 241). However, the mechanism of control found in traditional societies, in general, tends to be more external and physical than are the mechanisms of control in modern societies. Furthermore, in traditional societies the whole community is the agent of control. In modern society, the self becomes the fundamental agent of control, utilizing essentially internal and psychological means. However, the impersonal structures of modern institutions, such as the state and market, also serve as agents of control. These institutions do utilize psychological mechanisms of control, but they also have at their disposal a broad range of physical and economic tools.

Socialization in traditional societies is status-centered, while modern socialization is person-centered. In traditional societies the individual must acquire a status which has been defined for him by the community to be considered truly human. In modern societies the individual is given the responsibility of placing himself and developing his own humanity. Therefore, it makes sense that in societies where the power to place is in the hands of the community, the community also has the primary power to shape and control, and conversely, in societies where the power to place is in the hands of the individual, he is socialized into the power of self-control.

The status positions in traditional society are hierarchically organized. Respect and deference follow from one's position in the hierarchy—the higher the status position, the greater the respect due. Traditional societies emphasize obedience, conformity to rules, and respect for authority. The socialization process is organized around the maintenance of social solidarity. Since the value of maintaining the social order is believed to be self-evident, the demand for obedience to any particular command require no justification.

Even though status positions in modern society are still hierarchically organized, the individual's relationship to them is fundamentally different. He is no longer given a place in society, but must choose one. Thus, the socialization process emphasizes mechanisms of control that will both aid the individual's ability to choose and encourages his commitment to his choice. The individual is asked to understand and question both his own motives and feelings, and the

reasons why society is structured the way it is. A critical approach to both self and society is encouraged in the name of "higher" ethical and rational principles. The individual is encouraged to explore why he acts the way he does, and the society and its agents are encouraged to explain why it makes the demands it does. In traditional society the order of life is given, and the individual must fit himself into that order; in modern society the order of life is created in a dialogue between the individual and the other individuals and collective agents of that order.

Demanded and Voluntary Obedience

It follows therefore that once the possibility of internalized self-control became the dominant model of social control, externally enforced mechanisms of communal control appear to have lost their primacy.⁹ While it is true that there are prophetic movements in the modern age that have continued to operate within the framework of externally imposed controls, their long term efficacy is in doubt.¹⁰ Once individuals have experienced self-control, they may only be able to respond to prophecies that welcome self conscious participation in its realization.

Utility and Evaluation

Weber's approach emptied charisma of content and left it without a locus within which it could operate in the modern age, even though Weber himself saw charisma as vital to meaningful human social life.¹¹

⁹ Social order in modern society is based upon the internalized control of its members. The break down of these internalized controls often leads to behavior which requires intervention of an external system of control e.g. the legal system.

¹⁰ Witness the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

¹¹ Weber was aware that his concept of charisma was paradoxical. This led him to have a genuine concern for the viability of modern society. As he said in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: (1958b: 182) "For of this last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.'" It should be pointed out that in holding this position, Weber was not alone among

Charisma

In traditional society the charismatic personality or the prophet brought a universalizing and rationalizing message which simultaneously expanded and penetrated the sphere of external order in the world, giving people the ability to manipulate and control the natural world. The disenchanted world is the end product of this process, when no more mysterious forces come into play, and when one can in principle master all things through rational calculation. The gift of rationality almost randomly bestowed in the ancient world becomes, for Weber, the rightful inheritance of the modern individual. Clarity brought by charisma in a dark and foreboding world loses its brilliance and its ability to beckon when the world is filled with light. As Weber portrays this brave new world of light, however, he speaks of an iron cage and the images are hard and cold. What is missing in this Arctic world of rationality and light is meaning and warmth—the genuinely human, or in Weber's terms the "highest cultural and spiritual values."

In investigating charisma in only traditional societies, Weber saw charisma as one dimensional, solely as the force of rationality. So envisioned, charisma dissipates in the very act of realizing itself through the transformation of the world. Given Weber's analysis, therefore, one would not expect to find genuinely new religions emerging within our transformed and rational modern society. Yet this is what occurred in the founding of the General Conference of the New Church in Great Britain (1787) (see Williams-Hogan 1985).¹² In the examination of the founding something that is best identified by the sociological term charisma, though obviously in modern guise, is clearly evident. This points to the possibility that charisma is not static but has the dynamic capacity to be responsive to the structural characteristics of the society in which it operates.

According to Weber, the essential characteristic of charisma is its ability to set something apart from the ordinary, and thus, it is

nineteenth-century social theorists. For example, the Italian Vilfredo Pareto is another who shared this perspective.

¹² In an unpublished follow-up study entitled "Charisma in the Modern World: A New Theory of Religious Action" (Williams-Hogan 1990), the characteristics of this group are examined and are determined to fit the model of modern religious action. In this earlier study the model presented here in this paper is applied and tested on the General Conference or the Swedenborgians, the Quakers, the Shakers, and the Methodists. All of these groups have at least some characteristics which are identified as modern.

treated as "endowed with supernatural, ... , or exceptional powers or qualities" (1964: 358). "Setting apart from the ordinary" in modern rational bureaucratic societies will obviously have a different form than it would in traditional societies. Thus, perhaps charisma has not been dissipated in modern society as Weber thought, but has merely been transformed. However, because of this change of form, initially it would be difficult to observe.

In order to conform to the structural requirements of traditional society, genuinely new, rational and universal insights are best articulated within the affective and spoken pronouncements of a personal prophet; while in modern society, it would seem that what is genuinely new is a deeper penetration and appreciation of what is good, which is best discovered through the rational form of the written word.¹³ Charisma is that quality which makes visible the extraordinary and the supernatural in any context. In traditional society, rationality, or what in those societies was extraordinary could only be appreciated, and responded to, when it was presented in the affective form of the charismatic prophet. In modern society, spirituality, the truly human, or what to us is extraordinary can only be appreciated and responded to when presented in the rational form of the charismatic book. Charisma, thus, must be actually bi-polar in nature, always providing the balance necessary in the quest for salvation in any age.

Sociologically, charisma is the vital ingredient of religious action. It calls men to act. It does so, because in every age it provides all who are seeking salvation the very thing they cannot provide for themselves, either a vision of the true or a vision of the good. Charisma is recognized whether in the prophet or in the book, because it points to what is missing when we ask, "what shall we do and how shall we live?"

¹³ Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) highlights in his *Arcana Coelestia* why he thought a new revelation in a new form was necessary: "At the present day the doctrinal things of love to the Lord and of charity to the neighbor are rejected, ... and thus are so completely lost that there remains scarcely any trace of them" (Swedenborg 1998: number 3419) Swedenborg's religious writings were the source of the new vision of the General Conference founded in 1787. Thus, both their doctrine and their process of formation reveal modern elements.

Prophecy

In moving beyond Weber's one dimensional conception of charisma as a rationalizing force located in the prophetic personality, to seeing it as having the additional capacity to be a humanizing force located in the prophetic book, we have also had to move beyond any model of prophecy which identifies the interactive relationship between the prophet and the people as the key element of prophecy. While it is clear that prophecy requires acknowledgment by others, if it is to be realized and be a force in the world, that acknowledgment can occur during quiet moments of reflective reading, as well as in the highly charged atmosphere of a revival. As it has been argued here, the modern individual is more likely to discover ideas which will guide his life during quiet, reflective reading than through his being swept up in the emotional contagion of a mass religious movement. Thomas Overholt in his most recent book, *Channels of Prophecy*, argues for the continual possibility of prophecy in the modern world. While he identifies "feedback from the audience" as the key element of prophecy, (which, if it were absent would bring prophecy to an end) he expands his conception of prophecy in the present day to include prophetic institutions, ordinary people and prophetic books (Overholt 1989: 158, 165–174). While his use of the word "audience" remains a barrier in the discussion of modern prophecy because it implies that the prophet and the people are consciously present to each other, his overall presentation is supportive of the model of modern prophecy presented here.

Commentary on and Evidence of Modern Prophecy

In the chapter in which Overholt argues for the current possibility of prophecy in Western society, he draws on the work of other commentators to support his claim. He also examines a recent prophetic book and the phenomenon of channeling. He refers to the work of Hanson, Tucker, Ramsay, and Hall among others. He finds Hanson useful, because he acknowledges the existence of prophetic "activity" today, although he is not specific about the manner in which it appears. Tucker no longer finds that "activity" in the role of the individual prophet, but in the people who constitute the church. Those in the church must be open to the guidance of the prophetic words found in the Bible and must allow them to consciously shape their understanding of the present and their vision of the future. "In a word,

they must do corporately what the biblical prophets did individually, namely, interpret present events in terms of the theological traditions in which they stand" (Overholt 1989: 165). This understanding of prophecy simultaneously acknowledges the vital and on-going social role of prophecy, while recognizing the problematic nature of individual prophecy in the modern world. However, locating prophecy solely in institutions blunts its transformative character, which has been one of its most salient features.

Ramsay does not have a problem in identifying specific persons who he claims are twentieth century Christian prophets: Walter Rauchenbusch, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Overholt 1989: 166). Since for Ramsay, prophets are simply those who speak forth for the living God, there will be prophets in any age. They will be recognizable because their messages will be consistent with the Scriptures. "Since the Spirit is not going to contradict what the Spirit has already inspired in the Scripture," the Bible provides us with a method of assessing prophetic activity, even in the twentieth century (Ramsay 1986: 2). Ramsay finds the key to modern prophecy in God's demand for social justice as exemplified by the Old Testament prophets. Each of the individuals which he discusses in his book has called for social justice, each for a different oppressed group—the American working class, American blacks, Latin American peasants, and women. He readily admits that not everything written by these "prophets" is true and that they do not all agree. Thus, he invites his own readers to make their own judgments, using the church's canon of authentic prophets as the guide. Although Ramsay's work focuses on God's mission as primarily temporal in the form of social justice, nonetheless it provides several useful ideas about modern prophecy: first, it is likely to be in written form; second, it must be consistent with the Scriptures; and third, it is the individual through reflection on the Scriptures and the "prophecy" who must weigh its authenticity. While consistency with the Scriptures does not necessarily suggest the universalization or deepening interpretation of past revelation which the new model suggest, nevertheless such an idea implies rationality and resonates with the concept of universalization.

Hall in a work entitled, *Anyone Can Propheesy*, democratizes prophetic activity. Like Ramsay, he assumes a living God who is constantly providing for his people. Prophecy, personal guidance and preaching are some of the means He uses to care for us. Prophecy is distinct from both personal guidance and preaching. He understands prophecy to be "God speaking through us" to others, while in personal guidance He speaks specifically to the individual, and in preaching

the preacher speaks to us about God in his own words (Overholt 1989: 168).

From Hall's perspective prophecy obviously would be widespread, and thus, it is important that it be tested and evaluated. Therefore, he develops criteria to judge its authenticity (Overholt 1989: 169). First, it never stand alone. It is either preceded by something or followed by something, which somehow completes it. Secondly, it conforms to past revelations. Hall, like Ramsay, believes that God is true and does not contradict himself. And finally, he asserts that prophecy expresses love, because God is loving (Overholt 1989: 169). Overholt finds in Hall's second criteria support for his concept of the feedback sequence, because Hall asserts that not only must the prophet be called by God, but he "must be recognized by the body itself for who he is" (Overholt 1989: 169). While Hall's concept of prophecy includes such phenomenon as speaking in tongues, which obviously cannot be an element of written prophecy, his focus on the democratic nature of prophecy is quite modern, and according to Overholt it is related to his conviction that the crisis situation which precipitates prophecy can be personal as well as social (1989: 170). This fits neatly with the second characteristic of modern prophecy in the proposed theory. Furthermore, Hall's criteria that God's prophecy will be both consistently true and loving bears some resemblance to the bi-polar character of charisma proposed in this thesis.

Overholt turns next to examine the written prophecy of David Wilkerson, contained in a book published in 1981 entitled *The Vision*. Here it is interesting to note that he sees the possibility that in the modern age, "prophetic activity may not conform to the main biblical stereotypes of such action by standing before live audiences and speaking in God's name ... They may write books instead" (Overholt 1989: 170). This nicely reinforces the concept of written prophecy so important to the proposed model.

Although Overholt finds all the elements of his model in Wilkerson's book, the key, as he has pointed out, is audience feedback. This he discovers in Wilkerson's reference to "his closest friends and associates" advice not to publish the book. Additionally, he finds evidence of an audience or the anticipation of one in some of Wilkerson's appeals in the book: "many praying people now share this very same vision, ... and, God gave me a very special message of hope for all true believers" (Overholt 1989: 171). This, however, stretches the concept of audience far beyond its origins in oral prophecy. The word audience specifically refers to pronouncements being heard, and implies that the prophet and the people are present simultaneously to each other. Furthermore, by seeking to find evidence of oral prophecy

when the revelation occurs in written form, is to be potentially blind to the unique characteristics of written prophecy itself.

With written prophecy, the evaluation of its content takes on much greater importance than it does when prophecy is oral. The criteria of each of them are quite different. While the proposed Model asks whether the message is particularistic or universalistic, Overholt touches on a somewhat similar distinction when he says: "To accept Wilkerson's vision leads to abandoning the world and absolutizing social and religious divisions. By contrast, to accept Ramsay's notion of prophecy leads to creative efforts to transform the world that are inclusive in their intentions" (Overholt 1989c: 173).

Evaluation

Overholt's major contribution to our understanding of prophecy is his focus on the social process of intermediation.¹⁴ This is in keeping with the sociological focus of the present work. However, while he has attempted to construct a cross-cultural model of prophecy, he has neglected to take into account the tremendous structural and symbolic differences between traditional and modern societies in which the intermediation takes place. While he is quite aware of the importance of conceptualizing intermediation as a social process, he has not utilized the sociological perspective which could give his insight more power. Thus, his model is one dimensional and static. In his model prophecy contains the same components and develops through a similar process in any age or any place, ignoring the fact that all human institutions are imbedded in history and are subject to change. In the sociological investigation of prophecy both time and place become variables which can affect the structure and process of prophetic activity. In the manipulation of these variables, instead of a single process, the multi-dimensional and dynamic quality of prophecy is seen. Because in sociology the focus is on the context of an action as well as on the action itself, within it, it is possible to identify new patterns of action in response to the perennial existential questions of human life.

This review of Overholt and others interested in understanding prophecy in the modern age has been useful, because by it each author is seen to provide separate evidence that prophecy today deviates in some way from its traditional form. It is significant that each

¹⁴ The term intermediation refers to the pivotal role of the prophet in translating and communicating the extraordinary to human kind.

of these deviations can be explained by the general model of prophecy presented here. First, they all affirm the possibility of modern prophecy. Then each specifically identifies some particular characteristic of prophecy key to the model. Tucker, for instance, acknowledges the problematic nature of individual prophecy in the present age. However, in locating it in the institution of the church its radical quality is constrained. Ramsay, in choosing to discuss four prophets, who were primarily writers, inadvertently points to the importance of written prophecy; and while he provides criteria for judging such prophecy, he realizes that ultimately it is the individual who must reflectively decide which "call" to heed. Hall introduces the idea that prophecy can emerge in and resolve personal crises rather than social ones, and also the concept that the charismatic call must be loving and good, as well as true. While he is not explicit that prophecy could be written, his general discussion of it does not rule it out. And finally, Overholt himself recognizes that the modern prophet may choose to write rather than to speak.

Written Prophecy

What makes the new model compelling is the fact that it provides an integrated interpretation of all these particular empirical observations. It does what Sontag suggests must be done, if we are to understand how we may hear God in the current age. In "Words of Silence: The Context of God," he says that we "... need to discover in our time the context within which God may be heard in new ways, in fresh words and with contemporary power" (Sontag 1987: 128). This paper, by articulating a new structure of prophecy, has attempted to do just that, through the discovery of the form by which modern individuals may discover God.

By developing a model to explain a genuinely modern religious movement, obviously, if the model is valid, other genuinely modern religious movements ought to develop along a similar pattern. Thus, it would be very interesting to apply this model to the numerous new religious movements which have emerged in contemporary Western society.

Neopaganism is an interesting case in point. What is intriguing about this movement is its written origins. According to Jencson, the dissemination and availability of anthropological literature has made a significant contribution to the recent revival of Neopaganism. She reports that "her research reveals a century-old process in which those researching and writing about magical practices have served to

spread those very practices among their own informants, and via the printed page to new generations of practitioners" (Jencson 1989: 3).

In many ways modern witchcraft could be called a "book religion." Books are central to both the recruitment process and the ritualistic aspects of the religion. She writes that

A common feature in the life stories of American witches is that the concepts of the belief system are first contacted on the library shelf, not through active proselytization nor through any type of face-to-face contact with practicing witches themselves (Jencson 1989: 4).

And furthermore,

Books play such an important role that in one ritual I attended, a witch carried *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth* by Volkstein and Kramer (1983) into a sacred ritual circle and placed it on the alter. At the appropriate ritual moment he invoked the ancient Sumerian goddess by reading an ancient prayer to her from the book, much as a Christian priest would read from his Bible (Jencson, 1989:4).

While it is not clear what a detailed examination of Neopaganism in light of the new model of prophecy would reveal, it is fascinating to discover that, even in the revival of the magical world of paganism, charismatic authority is now located in the written word. This fact lends credence to the new model and suggest that further investigation of this movement within the framework of it would be fruitful.

It is also worth noting that two of the most influential non-religious movements of the modern era, Marxism and Freudianism, have been spread primarily through the authority of the written word and not through the personal charisma of either Marx or Freud. Investigating them within the framework of the proposed model might give new insights into the strengths and weakness of these movements and point out their long term prospects. Furthermore by broadening the concepts of both charisma and prophecy, it may be possible to use this model to understand other book religions and how both charisma and prophecy operate within them. Obviously there may be other uses of the model which could be developed, and hopefully in the future others will take up the challenge to test its validity and to discover new applications for it.

References

- Beckford, James A., and Thomas Luckmann (eds.)**
1989 *The Changing Face of Religion*. London: Sage. (SAGE Studies in International Sociology, 37)
- Bell, Daniel**
1977 *The Return of the Sacred? The Argument on the Future of Religion*. *British Journal of Sociology* 28: 419–449.
- Berger, Peter L.**
1963 *The Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Cross, F. L. (ed.)**
1957 *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Graham, William A.**
1987 *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jencson, Linda**
1989 *Neopaganism and the Great Mother Goddess*. *Anthropology Today* 5/2: 2–4.
- Luckmann, Thomas**
1967 *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.
- McCaig, A.**
1979 *The Book of the Covenant*. In: Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; vol. 1; pp. 795–797. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- McGuire, Meredith B.**
1987 *Religion: The Social Context*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Mommesen, Wolfgang J.**
1974 *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Neuhaus, Richard John**
1989 *When Bad Things Happen to Good Religion*. *National Review* 41: 52–54.
- Neumann, Franz**
1962 *Anxiety and Politics*. In: Eric and Mary Josephson (eds.), *Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society*. New York: Dell.
- Overholt, Thomas W.**
1989 *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Parsons, Talcott**
1968 *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*; vol. 2. New York: The Free Press.
1982 *On Institutions and Social Evolution: Selected Writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Ramsay, William M.**
1986 Four Modern Prophets. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- Rieff, Phillip**
1968 The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sawyer, John F. A.**
1987 Prophecy and Prophets of the Old Testament. London: Oxford University Press
- Sontag, Frederick**
1987 Words of Silence: The Context of God. In: Robert P. Scharlemann and Gilbert E. M. Ogutu (eds.), *God in Language*; pp. 128–146. New York: Paragon House Publishers.
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge**
1985 The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Swedenborg, Emanuel**
1998 *Arcana Coelestia*; vol. 4. West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation.
- Thompson, J. Arthur**
1979 Covenant (OT). In: Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; vol. 1; pp. 790–793. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Wolkstein, Diane, and Samuel Noah Kramer**
1983 *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C.**
1966 Religion: An Anthropological View. New York: Random House.
- Wilson, Bryan**
1976 Contemporary Transformations of Religion. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max**
1958a From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Ed. by H. H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.
1958b *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Schribner's Sons.
- 1964 *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Webster**
1958 Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield: Merriam.
- Williams-Hogan, Jane**
1985 *The New Church in a Disenchanted World: A Study of the Formation and Development of the General Conference of the New Church*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International.
1990 *Charisma in the Modern World: A New Theory of Religious Action*. [unpubl. Development Thesis, Bryn Athyn College of the New Church]

Biographical Notes

Veikko Anttonen, is professor of comparative religion at the University of Turku. His special interests are anthropology of religion, especially cognitive and symbolic approaches to the study of cultural phenomena. Geographically his scholarly work has been focused on ethnoreligious traditions of the Finns and other population groups in the Finnish-Karelian culture area and moreover, the sacrificial rituals of the rural Meadow-Mari population in eastern Russia. He has also published a scholarly biography of Uno Holmberg-Harva as a pioneer of comparative religion in Finland (1987). His doctoral thesis was *The Boundaries of Man and Earth: 'Sacred' as a cultural category* (1996). Address: Department of Cultural Studies/Comparative Religion, Henrikinkatu 3, FIN-20014 University of Turku, Finland.

E-mail: veikko.anttonen@utu.fi

Dziedzorm Reuben Asafo is a doctoral student at Uppsala University (Department of Theology), Sweden. His area of specialization is Sociology of Religion. Asafo's field of concentration in this area is the phenomenon of religiosity especially the link between socioeconomic factors and the religious conversion process and religiosity in general. A second area of interest is the development of new research methods and the adaptation of older methodological traditions to Religious studies with special reference to Africa. His present project (soon to be published as his doctoral thesis) deals with the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and religious orientations of the people of the Volta Region of Ghana. Uppsala University, Department of Theology, Box 1604, S-751 46 Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: Reuben.Asafo@teol.uu.se

Pascal Boyer studied philosophy and anthropology at Paris and Cambridge universities. His research has focused on patterns of cultural transmission and the influence of evolved properties of the brain on cultural acquisition. His anthropological research focused on the transmission of long epic stories among the Fang of Cameroon. Recently he has also carried out experimental research on the ways in which various aspects of religious concepts are represented and recalled. Address: MRASH, 14 avenue Berthelot, 69363 LYON, France.
E-mail: pboyer@mrash.fr

Armin W. Geertz is Professor in the History of Religions at the Department of the Study of Religion, University of Aarhus, Denmark. He is currently Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Aarhus and Director of the Research Network on New Religions

(RENNER) under the auspices of the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. He has served as co-founder and Chairman of the Danish Association for the History of Religions for 12 years, Treasurer of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) for 5 years and, since 1995, the General Secretary of the IAHR. His main interests are the religion and mythology of the Hopi Indians in Arizona, where he has done fieldwork during various periods since 1978; methodology in the academic study of religions, especially postmodern challenges to methodology; the history of primitivism in Western thought; hermeneutics in anthropology and the study of religion; and recent developments in contemporary religiosity. He is editor-in-chief of *RENNER Studies on New Religions* (Aarhus University Press) and a parallel series in Danish, and he is on the editorial board of *Studies on Religion* (Aarhus University Press). Address: Department of the Study of Religion, University of Aarhus, Main Building, DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark.

E-mail: geertz@teologi.aau.dk

René Gothóni is Acting Professor of Comparative Religion at the Department of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki. His fields of interest are monasticism, pilgrimage and the methodology of comparative religion. His publications include Modes of Life of Theravāda Monks (1982), *Pātimokha i strukturanalytisk belysning* (1985), Paradise within Reach: Monasticism and Pilgrimage on Mt Athos (1993), Tales and Truth: Pilgrimage on Mount Athos Past and Present (1994), How to Survive in Academia (1996) and Carl Robert Sederholms intellektuella individuation (1996). Address: Department of Comparative Religion, P.O. Box 13, FIN-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland.

Peter Jackson (MA) is a Ph.D. student at the Department of History of Religions at Uppsala University. The principal aim of his current research is the detection and assessment of concordant mythical and ritual linguistic usage in the earliest Indo-European corpora. Address: Department of the History of Religions, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, P.O. Box 1604, S-751 46 Uppsala, Sweden.

E-mail peter.jackson@relhist.uu.se

Morny Joy is Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Canada. She received her B.A. degree from the University of Sydney, Australia and her Ph.D. from McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Morny has published many articles, monographs and edited three books on the topics of women and religion, hermeneutics and methodology. Address: Department of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 1N4.

Matti Kamppinen is a cognitive anthropologist working on cultural models of risk, illness, and time. He has done fieldwork in the Peruvian

Amazon and in Western Finland. His principal publications include Cognitive Systems and Cultural Models of Illness (Folklore Fellows' Communications 244) and Consciousness, Cognitive Schemata and Relativism (Reidel). He has worked as Visiting Research Fellow at Cornell University and he is currently Senior Researcher at the Finland Futures Research Centre, Turku. Address: Department of Comparative Religion, University of Turku, FIN-20014 Turku, Finland.

E-mail matti.kamppinen@utu.fi

Kimmo Ketola is a Ph.D. student at the Department of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki. His fields of interest are religious representations and religious communication processes, especially in the context of the study of new religious movements in the west. The subject of his research for a Ph.D. dissertation is social categorization involving charisma in new religious movements. He has written a number of scientific articles on communication theoretical and cognitive approaches in the study of religion. Address: Department of Comparative Religion, P.O. Box 13, FIN-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland.

E-mail kimmo.ketola@helsinki.fi

E. Thomas Lawson is Professor of Comparative Religion in the Department of Comparative Religion at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA. He is also the Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and Editor of *NUMEN: International Review for the History of Religions*. His main interests are in the relationship between Cognitive Science and the study of Religion, and African Religions. Address: Dept. of Comparative Religion, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008, USA.

Thomas Luckmann is Professor of Sociology of Religion in University of Constance, Germany, author of several books on Sociology of Religion, *The Invisible Religion*, New York, 1967 (1st version: *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft*, Freiburg, 1963), also in German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, Chinese; *The Social Construction of Reality* (with Peter Berger), Garden City, N.Y., 1966, also in German, Danish, Swedish, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, Slovenian, Finnish, Japanese, Chinese; *Die Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (with Alfred Schutz), vol. 1 Neuwied, 1975, vol. 2 Frankfurt, 1979, vol. 3 Frankfurt, 1984, also in English; *The Sociology of Language*, Indianapolis; 1975, *Life-World and Social Realities*, London, 1983, also in German; *Theorie des sozialen Handelns*, Berlin, 1992, also in Spanish; *Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning* (with Peter Berger), Gütersloh, 1995, also in German and Spanish. Address: Dept. of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universität Konstanz, P.O. Box 5560, D-7750 Konstanz, Germany.

William E. Paden is Professor of Comparative Religion and Chair of the Department of Religion at The University of Vermont, USA. He is the author of Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion (2d ed. 1994, Beacon Press), Interpreting The Sacred: Ways Of Viewing Religion (1992, Beacon Press), and several articles on theoretical aspects of comparativism, his current area of research. Address: Department of Religion, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, 05405, USA. E-mail: wpaden@zoo.uvm.edu

Jørgen Podemann Sørensen is Associate Professor of the history of religions at the University of Copenhagen. His main fields of interest are ancient Egyptian religion, the mystery religions of the Hellenistic Period and the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, and the comparative study of ritual. Among his published articles are: The Argument in Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae (1984), Three Varieties of Ritual Drama (1986), The Myth of Attis: Structure and Mysteriosophy (1989), Ancient Egyptian Religious Thought and the XVIth Hermetic Tractate (1989), Native Reactions to Foreign Rule and Culture in the Religious Literature of Hellenistic Egypt (1992), Ritualistics: a New Discipline in the History of Religions (1993), Ritual Art: a Key to the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead (1996). A forthcoming book is: From Ritual to Gnosis: Studies in the Egyptian Background of Gnosticism. Address: Sønderstrupvej 162, DK-4360 Kr. Eskilstrup, Denmark.

Michael Pye was born in 1939 in England and studied Modern Languages and Theology at Cambridge as an Open Scholar of Clare College (1958–61). He then spent five years in Japan before holding lecturing posts in Religious Studies at the universities of Lancaster and Leeds (where he was also awarded a Ph.D.). Since 1982 he has been Professor of Religious Studies at Marburg University, Germany. He is currently President of the International Association for the History of Religions (1995–2000). Publications include: Skilful Means, A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism (Duckworth, London 1978), Emerging from Meditation (Duckworth, London 1990), Macmillan Dictionary of Religion (edited, Macmillan, London 1993); and many articles on various aspects of the study of religion, in particular on Japanese religions. Address: Zur Hege 11, D-35041 Marburg, Germany.
E-mail: pye@mail.uni-marburg.de

Ilkka Pyysäinen is senior research associate, Academy of Finland/Turku University. Among his academic works are Belief and Beyond (1996), "Jñānagarbha and the 'God's-eye view'" *Asian Philosophy* Vol. 6 (1996) and "Somewhere over the rainbow? Cosmogony and mystical decretion" *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* Vol. 10 (1998). Address: Kavallintie 1 D 38, FIN-02700 Kauniainen, Finland. E-mail ilkka.pyysainen@utu.fi.

Heikki Räisänen is Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Helsinki. His academic books include: Das koranische Jesusbild (1971), The Idea of Divine Hardening: A Comparative Study of the Notion of Divine Hardening, Leading Astray and Inciting to Evil in the Bible and the Qur'an (1972), Paul and the Law (1983), Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme (1990) and Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths (1997). Address: Vantaanjärne 1 B 11, FIN-01730 Vantaa, Finland. E-mail: heikki.raisanen@helsinki.fi

Tom Sjöblom is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Comparative Religion at Helsinki University. He is doing research on Early Irish folk-religion, Celtic mythology, and magic in the Middle-Ages. He is the chair-person of the Finnish Society for Celtic Studies. Along with his research work he is currently giving lectures in methodology in Comparative Religion. He is the co-author of *Näköaloja uskontoon* and the editor of *Celtica Helsingiensia* and *Tutkija, tekstit ja uskonto*. Address: Department of Comparative Religion, P.O. Box 13, 00014 Helsinki University, Finland. E-mail: Tom.Sjoblom@Helsinki.fi

Einar Thomassen is Professor of the history of religions at the University of Bergen. His research interests include late Hellenistic religions and 19th century Islamic mysticism. His publications include *Le Trait Tripartite* (1989), and *The Letters of Ahmad ibn Idris* (with Bernd Radtke; 1993). He is presently preparing a monograph on Valentinianism. Address: Department of the History of Religions, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, N-5007 Bergen, Norway.

Donald Wiebe (Ph.D., Lancaster) is Professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Divinity, Trinity College, University of Toronto. He has been actively engaged in the work of the International Association for the History of Religions since 1975. In 1978 he was appointed the Executive Director for the XIVth International Congress (1980) and has served on the Executive Board of the IAHR from 1985 to 1995, and currently serves as Treasurer for the Association. In 1985 Wiebe, together with Luther H. Martin and E. Thomas Lawson founded the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR) which became affiliated with the IAHR in 1990 and he twice served as President of NAASR. He is the author of *Religion and Truth: Toward an Alternative Paradigm in the Study of Religion*, *The Irony of Theology and the Nature of Religious Thought*, and *Beyond Legitimation: Essays on the Problem of Religious Knowledge*. He has also published numerous articles and reviews and, for Peter Lang Publishers, edits the series *Toronto Studies in Religion*. Address: Trinity College, University of Toronto, 6 Hoskin Avenue, Toronto, M5S 1H8, Canada.

Jane Williams-Hogan received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1985. She wrote her dissertation entitled "A New Church in a Disenchanted World: A Study of the Formation and Development of The General Conference of The New Church in Great Britain". Willy de Craemer was her dissertation advisor. In 1988 she chaired an international symposium in honor of the three hundredth anniversary of Emanuel Swedenborg's birth. She co-edited the book *Swedenborg and His Influence* which published the papers presented at the symposium. She organized the Swedenborg Seminar at the American Academy of Religion and currently chairs it. She has authored numerous published articles including one to be published in 1998 under the Editorship of Antoine Faivre entitled "Swedenborg's Place in Modern Western Esotericism." This year she was named to the Paul Carpenter Chair of Church History at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church where she teaches. She is married to Michael H. Hogan and they live in Bryn Athyn with two of their six children. Address: Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, Box 717, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA

Information for Authors

Manuscripts should be written in English, French or German and should be completely ready for printing.

A manuscript should be submitted to the Editor Tore Ahlbäck by address: Donner Institute, P.O. Box 70, FIN-20501 Turku, Finland.

Articles should not exceed 10,000 words and should be accompanied by an author's biography of not more than 100 words. It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission to reprint any material that is under copyright and to supply such permissions when submitting the manuscript. The author's full names, full address, telephone and facsimile numbers must be supplied on the title page. Authors should moreover submit an electronic file of their manuscript. The disk should be labeled with the date, the author's name, the file name, the type of computer used, the type of software and the version number. The only accepted software is Microsoft Word and WordPerfect. Figures should be of professional quality and photographs should be good-quality, high contrast, black-and-white glossy prints. Tables, and illustrations should be presented on separate sheets.

References to publications should be included in the text, not in the footnotes. They should be given the name of the author, the year of publication, and the number of the page, e.g.:

Further checks proved Peter's suspicions to be founded (1965: 163).

The mission no longer depended merely on calling like it did during the last century and early part of this century (Kamma 1977: 134).

The References cited should be presented according to the following model:

Anthony, Dick, and Thomas L. Robbins

- 1978 The Effect of Detente on the Growth of New Religions. In: Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.), *Understanding the New Religions*; pp. 80–100. New York: The Seabury Press.

Blacker, Carmen

- 1976 *The Catalpa Bow*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Bremmer, J. (ed.)

- 1987 *Interpretation of Greek Mythology*. London: Croom Helm.

Choi, Sun-Duk

- 1986 Comparative Study of Two New Religious Movements in the Republic of Korea: the Unification Church and the Full Gospel Central Church. In: James A. Beckford (ed.), *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*; pp. 113–145. Paris: UNESCO.

Gothóni, René

- 1982 Modes of Live of Theravada Monks. A Case Study of Buddhist Monasticism in Sri Lanka. Helsinki: Societas Orientalis Fennica. (*Studia Orientalia*, 52)

Rothstein, Mikael

- 1988 Religion er så meget – religiøs selvforståelse i Unification Church. *Chaos* 9: 18–43.

The contributor receives page proofs. For other than printer's error, changes in page proofs in excess of 10% will be charged to the contributor.

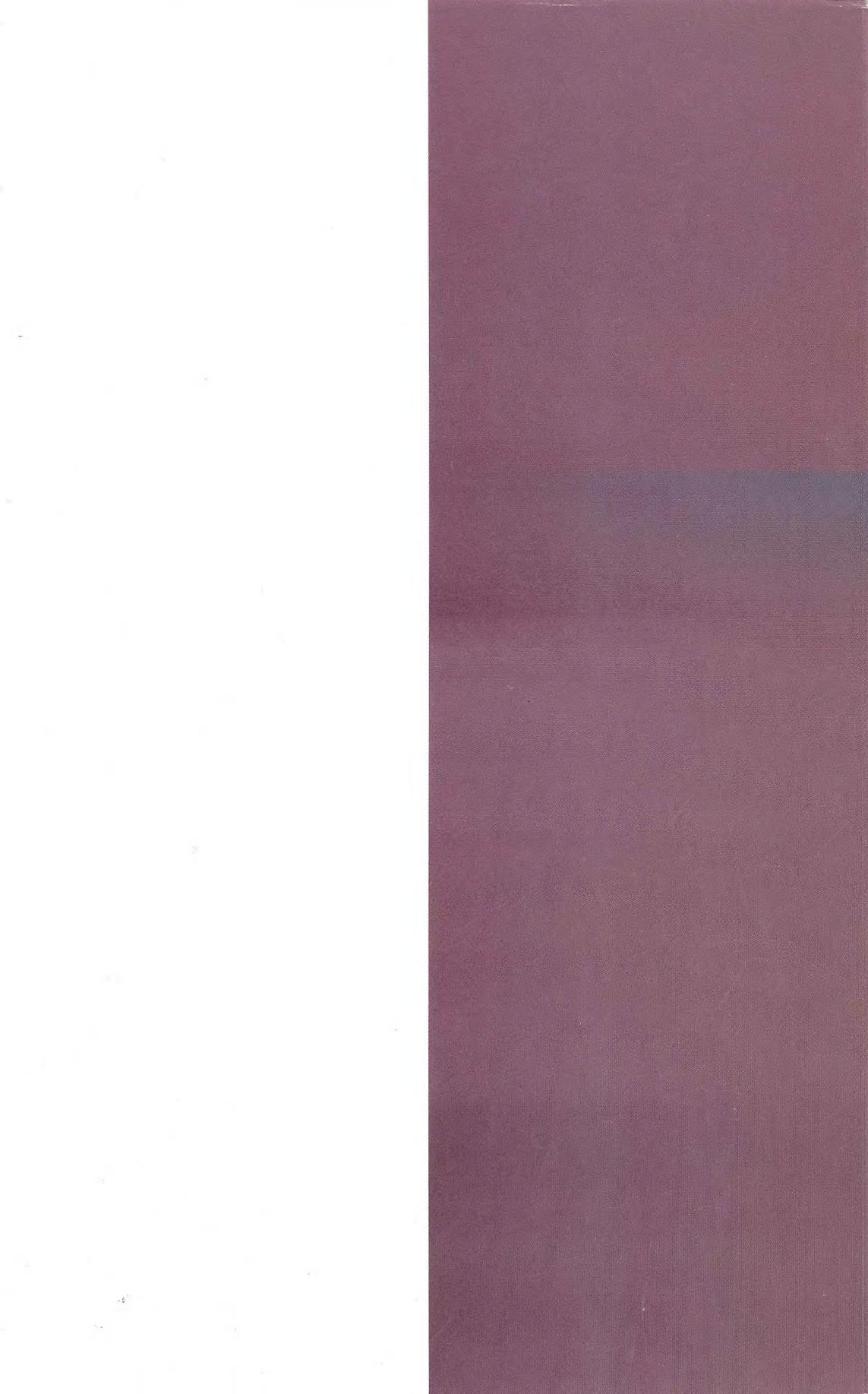
SCRIPTA INSTITUTI DONNERIANI ABOENSIS

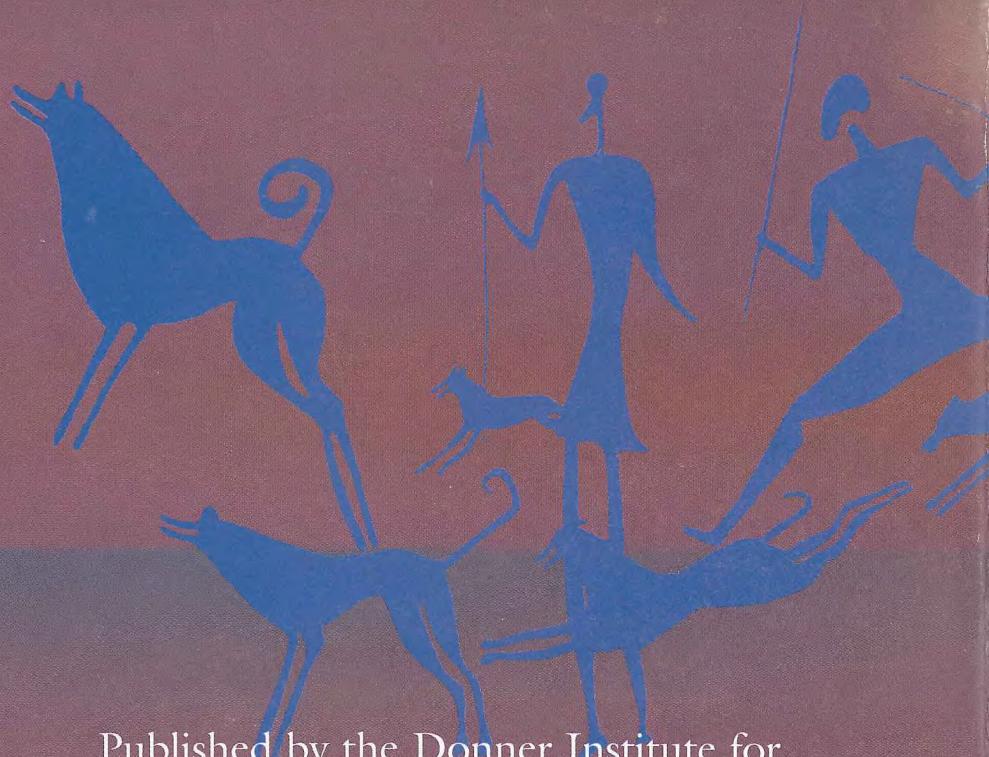
- 1 *Studies in Shamanism*. Ed. by C.-M. Edsman. 1967
- 2 *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore, and Literature*. Ed. by H. Ringgren. 1967
- 3 *Syncretism*. Ed. by S. S. Hartman. 1969
- 4 Wikman, K. R. V. *Lachesis and Nemesis*. 1969
- 5 *Mysticism*. Ed. by S. S. Hartman and C.-M. Edsman. 1970
- 6 *The Myth of the State*. Ed. by H. Biezaïs. 1972
- 7 *New Religions*. Ed. by H. Biezaïs. 1975
- 8 Biezaïs, H. *Lichtgott der alten Letten*. 1976
- 9 *Dynamics and Institution*. Ed. by H. Biezaïs. 1977
- 10 *Religious Symbols and their Functions*. Ed. by H. Biezaïs. 1978
- 11 *Religious Ecstasy*. Ed. by N. G. Holm. 1982
- 12 *Saami Religion*. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck. 1986
- 13 *Old Norse and Finnish Religions and Cultic Place Names*. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck. 1990
- 14 *The Saami Shaman Drum*. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck and J. Bergman. 1991
- 15 *The Problem of Ritual*. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck. 1993
- 16 *Dance, Music, Art, and Religion*. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck. 1996
- 17 *Approaching Religion*, Part I. Ed. by T. Ahlbäck. 1999

Libraries, universities, learned societies and publishers of learned periodicals may obtain this series in exchange for their own publications. Inquiries should be addressed to **The Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History**, P.O. Box 70, FIN-20501 Åbo/Turku, Finland. Fax *358 2 2311 290.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.abo.fi/institut/di/scripta.htm>.

ISBN 952-12-0368-4





Published by the Donner Institute for
Research in Religious and Cultural History
Åbo Finland
Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell
International
Stockholm, Sweden

ISSN 0582-3226
ISBN 952-12-0368-4

Printed in Finland by Åbo Akademi
University Printing Press
Turku 1999