

The study of religion(s) in Western Europe III:

Further developments after World War II¹

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ABSTRACT

This essay discusses main features and developments of the study of religion(s) in Western Europe. It attempts a historical, geographical, and thematic synthesis. Part III outlines post World War II developments with regard to journals, textbooks, and survey works. It looks at national figureheads, disciplinary boundaries and the changing fortunes of the phenomenology of religion. The series concludes by addressing selected key areas of scholarly work and current issues and concerns.

KEYWORDS

History of the study of religion

Phenomenology of religion

Religion and public education

Religion in Europe

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The history of the study of religion(s) is generally divided into two main eras—classical and contemporary—with World War II as a dividing line (see Gardaz, 2009, p. 283; see also Casadio, 2005a). Given the titles of its different parts, the present series of articles also adhere broadly to this scheme. In fact, however, this division into two main periods is far too rough. First of all, the criteria for any such division would need to be spelled out clearly. Different chronologies will emerge depending on whether one looks at institutional changes in academia in general and the study of religion(s) in particular, at developments in science and in the humanities in general and the study of religion(s) in particular, or when one bases one's chronology on main events in cultural or political history.² The latter approach, which would seem to lend support to the standard scheme, has the advantage of providing a framework relevant to the entire European continent, whereas changes in the institutional frameworks and in scholarship, common tendencies and shared developments such as the impact of existentialism and Marxism and the transformation of the role of the universities, are often specific to the various nations. This, in turn, has to do with linguistic barriers and the national structure of the European system of education and research, which is only slowly developing into a more overarching framework (see also part I = Stausberg, 2007, pp. 294-296). However, even when taking political history as a point of departure, there are several possible dividing lines. World War I can be considered as much a crucial turning point in European history as World War II. In fact, the catastrophe of World War I led to a major intellectual crisis; the impact of this challenge for the study of religion(s) has so far, it seems

² Casadio, 2005a, refers to the two periods as 'the age of euro-centrism and epistemological self-assurance' (for scholars born between 1880 and 1920 and educated before World War II) vs. 'the age of de-colonization and epistemological disenchantment' (for scholars born between 1920 and 1950 and educated during the war or shortly thereafter) respectively. This alludes to political and epistemological criteria and changes. Casadio's entry mainly provides brief (highly informative, but sometimes judgmental) sketches of key scholars from Scandinavia and the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, North America, France, Italy, and Romania belonging to these two eras. In his short history of the study of religion, Whaling, 2006, divides the history of the study of religion(s) into four periods: 1850 to 1900, 1900 to 1950, 1950 to 1985, and 1985 to the present day. Whaling presents brief background sketches on the respects eras, outlines some key developments and topics, and provides some general observations; the article concludes by identifying twelve general trends in the study of religion(s).

to me, not attracted the attention it deserves. At the other end of the century, the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War is another turning point (see also part II = Stausberg 2008a, p. 306), the full significance of which remains unclear even now, twenty years after the fact.³ Moreover, cultural changes epitomized by the cultural revolution of 1968 significantly altered the intellectual climate in which the study of religion(s) was operating, even if these upheavals did not become immediately apparent in the scholarly production of the generation of scholars holding relevant chairs at the time. Last but not least, as pointed out in part II (= Stausberg, 2008a, pp. 314-316), the religious changes characteristic of Western Europe in the postwar period are clearly reflected in the scholarly community and its audiences. The 9/11 attacks and subsequent bombings in Europe (Madrid 2004, London 2005) have alerted European societies to possible dangers emanating from politically radical Islam and contributed to raising attention to religion in general (see below on religion in European public schools).

Turning to developments in academia, the institutional establishment of social scientific approaches to religion in the postwar period (with some divergent chronologies) was addressed in part II (see Stausberg, 2008a, pp. 310-313). Moreover, it was only well into the post World War II period, in line with the unprecedented expansion and massification of the university system, that the study of religion(s) saw its main institutional growth in Western Europe (as elsewhere), with regard to the number of chairs, departments, and students (see part II [Stausberg, 2008a, p. 314]). In the present article, some further lines of developments will be singled out. Once more, attention is paid to the forums of scholarly discourse; hence we will start with a brief chronology of relevant journals, reference works and textbooks in the field/discipline.

³ Instead of writing a history based on World War II as the dividing line between two main periods, one could take Eric Hobsbawm's notion of 'the short twentieth century' (see Hobsbawm, 1994) for the period from the beginning of World War I until the end of the Cold War as a point of departure.

Post-World War II scholarly journals and reference works

Among the international journals launched after World War II,⁴ *Numen* (1953-), the official publication of the IAHR (on the founding of which see part II [Stausberg 2008, p. 308]) started to include North American scholars from its first issue,⁵ while *Religion* (1971-) started as a (Northern) British journal, later extending its base to the rest of Britain, the commonwealth countries, the United States and other European countries (see also Stausberg and Engler, 2008, pp. 1-3). The following journals have largely remained European publications: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* (ZRGG; 1948-),⁶ *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* (ZMR, restarted in 1950) – both publishing almost exclusively in German and only partially covering the study of religion(s) – as well as *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* [previously *Studies in Comparative Religion Presented by Scholars of Religion in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden*] (1965-), and lately the *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* (1999-), the title of which implicitly recalls the former *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* (1898-1941/42) that did not survive its National Socialist ideological takeover (see Heinrich, 2002, pp. 245-256). *Archævs* (1997-), edited by four Romanian scholars on behalf of the Romanian Association of the History of Religions (with two Italian associate editors), operates as an international journal, effectively crossing the boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe (and the rest of the world). The *Marburg Journal of Religion*, an open access journal published exclusively online, was started in 1996.⁷ Its editors are based in Marburg and other universities in that region of Germany (Hannover, Göttingen), but it has an international editorial board (seven Europeans

⁴ For periodicals started before World War II see part I (Stausberg, 2007, p. 311).

⁵ The first issue has an article by A.D. Nock, who was born and educated in Britain; on Nock see (with original documents) Casadio, 2006 (2008).

⁶ On one of the founders, H.-J. Schoeps, see part II (Stausberg, 2008a, p. 307).

⁷ <http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/ivk/mjr> (accessed June 3, 2009).

and one American). The journal has published three to six articles per year (volume), plus reviews; around 85 per cent of the articles are in English.

In line with the national organization and blossoming of scholarship in most European countries, several journals are now being published that cater to national scholarly communities; some of these journals are promoted by the respective national associations (some of which also publish bulletins).⁸ These include the *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* (1980-1999 [continued as *Culture and Religion* (2000-)]), the Danish *Religionsvidenskabeligt tidsskrift* (1982-), the Danish/Norwegian co-production *Chaos* (1982-),⁹ the Norwegian *Din: tidsskrift for religion og kultur* (1999-), the Swedish *Svensk religionshistorisk årsskrift* (1985-2007),¹⁰ the German *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* (1993-), and the Spanish *Ilû* (1995-) and *Bandue* (2006-) respectively. The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) adopted *Diskus* as its official journal in 2006.¹¹ The journal is published as an open access journal, only online; it is edited by the executive committee of the BASR, but it has an international editorial board.¹² All these publications are published predominantly if not exclusively in the respective national languages.¹³

⁸ The Swiss annual *Studia Religiosa Helvetica* has been published since 1995 (albeit not on a strictly annual basis); it is more a book series than a journal.

⁹ The *Religionsvitenskabeligt tidsskrift* is affiliated to the Aarhus department, whereas the Copenhagen department has promoted *Chaos*. *Chaos* arranges annual thematic conferences in shifting locations in either Denmark or Norway (and since 2009 also in Sweden). Papers from these conferences are published as one of the two issues of the journal. Both journals are characterized by a high degree of interactions in the form of debates, rejoinders, etc.

¹⁰ The journal has now been discontinued. At the same time, *Chaos* has extended its scope and board to include Swedish scholars and scholarship as well. Accordingly, its subtitle was changed to *Skandinavisk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studier* (formerly *Dansk-norsk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studier*).

¹¹ The journal was started by Brian Bocking and Gavin Flood in 1993 and first published on computer discs. (Hence its name.) It then was incorporated into an internet platform called *Internet Journal of Religion* (directed by Michael Pye). The journal had been inactive when it was adopted by the BASR as its journal. The BASR had previously published a *Bulletin* (from 1972) and then published the main lectures held at the annual meetings of the society, called Annual Lectures, as a series of Occasional Papers; for a selection, see Sutcliffe, 2004.

¹² <http://www.basr.ac.uk/diskus/index.html> (accessed June 3, 2009).

¹³ For a comprehensive survey of relevant periodicals on specific areas and regions see Benavides, 2005a. Apart from the emergence of national journals, recent decades have seen a thematic diversification of the journal landscape, increasingly diverting scholarly work from mainline publications to specialized journals. On the face of it, this trend reflects the increasing specialization of the field, with very few generalists remaining—and while being a generalist is appreciated and required in teaching, it is generally not helpful for building a scholarly

There is no single reference work in the study of religion that has a specific European dimension on an international scale. Several were published on the national levels, mostly in the form of the numerous single volume comprehensive ‘dictionaries of religion’ (for some French examples see below), some of which are translated into different languages. An important national reference work is the Italian *Enciclopedia delle religioni* (1970-1976, in 6 vols.), which has never been updated.¹⁴ Two innovative works of reference stem from Germany. The *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (‘Handbook of Key Concepts in the Science of Religion’) in five volumes (1988-2001), edited mainly by scholars from Tübingen (Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow and Matthias Laubscher [from vol. 3 replaced by Karl-Heinz Kohl]), remains the only dictionary in the field that focuses less on religious phenomena than on the terminological apparatus used to describe, classify, interpret, and explain them. The *Metzler Lexikon Religion* in four volumes (1999-2002; paperback 2005),¹⁵ again edited by a group of scholars from Tübingen, albeit from a younger generation (Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernard, Hubert Mohr), aims at a broader audience; the work tries to emphasize the contemporary, dynamic and pluralist shape of religions, to present them in an interesting yet reflexive manner from a European/Eurocentric perspective, and to highlight their sensual and visual media as well as their implications for everyday life and politics.¹⁶ A modified English translation was edited by Kocku von Struckrad (b. 1966) as *The Brill Dictionary of Religion* in four volumes (2005; paperback 2007).

reputation. Having a journal is certainly important for (new) fields of study to gain scholarly momentum. However, there are also economic aspects, for as long as publishers make money with scholarly journals, they will be keen to increase the number of journals.

¹⁴ A Catholic Italian publisher (Jaca Book) has published a rearranged Italian translation of Eliade’s *Encyclopedia of Religion* in twelve volumes (1993-2008). Based on an idea of Ioan P. Culiano, the Italian editors (Dario M. Cosi, Luigi Saibene, and Robert Scagno) have rearranged the entries by grouping them into five thematic volumes followed by volumes containing the entries pertaining to different religions or geographical areas.

¹⁵ An abridged one-volume version was published in 2006 under the title *Religionen der Welt*.

¹⁶ The fourth volume provides additional information, mainly chronologies, lists of festivals, source materials, (partly annotated) bibliographies, filmographies, and other resources.

The largest projects produced in Europe are *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (4th edition 1998-2005, in 8 vols.)¹⁷ and the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (1977-2004, in 36 vols.). Both works had separate associate editors for the history of religions; as a result they contain many and substantial entries on the history of religions, with authors not limited to German and European scholars. However, the publishing projects as such were mainly theological in orientation.¹⁸

Textbooks and historical survey works¹⁹

Until the late 1960s it seems that textbooks, an often overlooked but highly relevant genre of the general scholarly literature, followed the pattern set by Tiele and Chantepie.²⁰ In other words, introductory textbooks mostly provided a synthesis of information on what the respective author considered relevant religions.

Early in her long career, Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003), later president of the IAHR (1980-1990), published a brief survey (Schimmel, 1951). Another general survey work was published posthumously from lectures held by the Norwegian W. Brede Kristensen (1867-1953) who succeeded Tiele on the chair in Leiden that he held from 1901-1937 (Kristensen, 1954; Dutch translation 1955).²¹ It combines an introduction to the study of religion (emphasizing differences between Western and Eastern religions, the importance of ‘ritual mysteries’ for the former, the scholarly relevance of comparison, the abandonment of one’s own preconceptions and the importance of a sympathetic attitude towards other faiths in

¹⁷ See also part I (Stausberg, 2007, p. 309). To the account given there, it should be added that the third edition (1957-1965) ‘offered a sanctuary for former adherents of National Socialism who faced ... difficulties in their attempt to return to the university and who were in need of publication opportunities’ (Junginger, 2008, p. 81). A key example is Jan de Vries.

¹⁸ Consider also that the market share for theological works is much bigger than the demand for non-theological encyclopedias in Religious Studies.

¹⁹ For an earlier, more extensive survey see King, 1984, pp. 57-71.

²⁰ See part I (Stausberg, 2007, pp. 309-310).

²¹ For Kristensen’s early career, see Hjelde, 2000.

the spirit of Schleiermacher) with a survey of ‘Western religions’ (from Rome to Iran) and a phenomenological section (with chapters on sacrifice, altars, and holy images). Two well-known Swedish historians of religion, Helmer Ringgren (b. 1917) and Åke V. Ström (1909-1994), jointly wrote a survey work on the various religions around the world entitled *Religionerna i historia och nutid (Religions in past and present)* that ran to nine editions between 1957 and 1993.²² An American edition was published in 1967 under the title *Religions of mankind: today & yesterday*. In Britain, a similar work was authored by Trevor Ling (1920-1995),²³ an ordained Anglican priest, trained theologian and historian who had studied Sanskrit and Pali. Ling, mainly known as a Buddhologist but also for his works on sociological themes, was a professor of theology at Leeds where he also obtained a personal chair in comparative religion before he became, in 1972, Chair of Comparative Religion at Manchester University. Contrary to most other works of that genre, Ling’s survey (Ling, 1968; many reprints well into the 1990s; German translation 1968, 1971; Spanish translation 1968, 1972; Portuguese translation 1994, 2005) arranges the materials not by traditions, but by a synchronic synopsis divided into seven periods, characterized by some main themes which he illustrates by presenting between two to five religions for the respective period. In his introduction, Ling holds that the present age ‘is increasingly menaced by secularism’ (Ling, 1968, xviii); the book ends on a religious note when Ling states the ‘need today for the West to recollect the wisdom it once had, and has almost lost in the pursuit of power’ and by inviting the West to recover ‘its own spirituality by considering the testimony of the traditions of the East’ (Ling, 1968, 430). The most well-known specimens of the genre were written by two scholars who migrated to the US: Mircea Eliade’s *Histoire des croyances et des idées*

²² The survey book by a Finnish scholar of religion (Holm, 1993; third edition 2003), otherwise known for his work on the psychology of religion, was intended as an update of the book by Ringgren and Ström, with a greater emphasis on the living religions. The book was written for students at Åbo Akademi. It contains a selection of source materials for each religious tradition that it covers. Ringgren also wrote an introductory textbook (Ringgren, 1968; six reprints until 1980) aiming at providing a ‘holistic view’ on religion.

²³ For Ling’s interesting biography, see the obituary originally published in the *Association of Southeast Asian Studies Newsletter*, now available at <http://www.ias.nl/iasn/iasn5/ling.html> (accessed March 25, 2009).

religieuses (first published in French in three volumes from 1976 to 1983, subsequently translated into many languages) and Ninian Smart's *The World's Religions: old traditions and modern transformations* (1989; second edition 1998). The single-authored survey-genre continues into the present century (see Stolz, 2001; Nesti, 2005; Diez de Velasco, 1995 (third edition 2002), 2006²⁴; Lenoir, 2008), but the enormous amounts of scholarship available on most areas makes this an audacious venture with results that sometimes appear as anachronistic (Antes, 2006, is a case in point).

Since it demands a certain degree of courage (if not hubris) to produce any such works single-handedly, the other option, already chosen for Chantepie's *Lehrbuch* starting from the second edition, is collective works. Several such works have been published, often running into several volumes and through several editions, sometimes prepared by successive generations of editors. New specimens of the genre continue to be published in all major and minor languages. It seems that publishers are able to make money with such books, even though they nowadays are seldom used for teaching purposes in Religious Studies departments. In the following, we will take a brief look at some main examples from continental Europe.²⁵

In the Netherlands, Gerardus van der Leeuw edited a survey of *De godsdiensten der wereld* in two volumes in 1940/41.²⁶ A second edition was published in 1948 and a third in 1955/56. In his introduction, van der Leeuw sets the tone by saying that this work will describe the religions historically, i.e., neither in a theological nor in a philosophical manner. Contrary to the phenomenological approach he is known for, the book does not aim to group phenomena with regard to their stipulated essence, but rather, he claims, according to the way

²⁴ The latter volume is a short introductory survey, whereas the earlier one is a substantial handbook with an extensive introductory chapter; the book thereby qualifies as manual to the history of religions.

²⁵ In the United States, world religion textbooks are still used in many colleges and universities in world religions courses, which often serve as the basic introduction to religious studies (see Olson, 2008, with a review of some recent examples of such works in English).

²⁶ Jan Bremmer drew my attention to this work.

in which they have grouped themselves around a specific center (van der Leeuw, 1948, vol. I, p. 5). The first volume starts with a lengthy chapter, written by van der Leeuw himself, on ‘the religion of primitive people’. The work also contains two chapters on Christianity, with the great schism of 1054 as the point of demarcation. They are followed by chapters on Islam and Manichaeism respectively. The final chapter of the second volume presents the high cultures of ancient America.

In Denmark, the first edition of the *Illustreret religionshistorie (Illustrated History of Religions)* was edited by the two first and leading Danish historians of religion, Edward Lehmann (1862-1930) and Vilhelm Grønbech (1873-1948) in 1924. A second edition was published by Grønbech jointly with the Arabist Johannes Pedersen in 1948. Exactly twenty years later, Iranologist Jes P. Asmussen (1928-2002) jointly with Assyriologist Jørgen Lassøe edited a new version of the work, which now has grown from one to three heavy volumes. In 1971, Carsten Colpe (b. 1929) published a slightly revised German version of all three volumes under the title *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte (Manual of the History of Religions)*, with Colpe himself adding a chapter on syncretism, renaissance, secularization and new religious formations in contemporary societies. Significantly, none of the versions of this comprehensive work includes a chapter on Christianity.²⁷

While there was avoidance of Christianity in Denmark and Germany (but not in the Netherlands), Christian apologetics was at work in Austria, where the three-volume work *Christus und die Religionen der Erde: Handbuch der Religionswissenschaft (Christ and the Religions of the Earth: Manual of the History of Religions)* was published in 1951 under the editorship of theologian Franz König (1905-2004).²⁸ In 1956 König, who also published on

²⁷ In the 1994, a new textbook was published by a (then) younger generation of scholars (see Jensen, Rothstein and Sørensen, 2004; second edition 1997) in one volume (595 pp.). This work emphasizes the importance of rituals and the visible dimension of religions. Although none of them is a specialist on Christianity, the editors have co-authored a chapter on Christianity in order to deal with it in a study of religions approach (rather than assigning the chapter to a theologian).

²⁸ The work was subsequently translated into Italian (1966-67) and Spanish (1960-61; second edition 1968-70).

the Iranian impact on the Old Testament, was appointed archbishop of Vienna. The handbook can be classified as apologetic since one of its explicit aims was to illustrate the unique position of Christianity in the history of religions, a point argued by König in the concluding essay of the work, which also contains several chapters on Christianity. König also edited a highly successful example of the dictionary genre (*Lexikon der Religionen* [1956], Italian translation 1960, Spanish 1964; revised edition [edited by the theologian Hans Waldenfels] in 1987, subsequently translated into Portuguese).

A further handbook was published by the then president and general secretary of the IAHR, Geo Widengren and Claas Jouco Bleeker (see also below), specialists in ancient Iranian and Egyptian religions respectively, in two volumes in 1969 and 1971. Volume one deals with past, volume two with present religions. The editors attempted to introduce a standard pattern of presentation for the single religions in order to safeguard their comparability (Widengren and Bleeker, 1969-1971), but to my eyes that attempt failed.

Comment [sje1]: Useful to have a few words hinting at why...e.g., 'due to the presence of religion-specific presuppositions in the comparative schema'

The most comprehensive of these survey-works is the French *Histoire des religions*, edited by the specialist in Gnosticism and Manichaeism (and the last scholar to hold the chair in the history of religions at the Collège de France), Henri-Charles Puech (1902-1986) for the prestigious series *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade* from 1970 to 1976.²⁹ The three volumes amounting to some 4,500 pages are remarkable because of their focus on regional, doctrinal, and organizational varieties and dissonances within an extremely broad spectrum of religious history. Most chapters are written by French scholars, but the general introductory essay was contributed by the Italian scholar Angelo Brelich (1913-1977).

Italy also has a rich tradition of this genre, going back to the period prior to World War II. It started with a work in two volumes by the Jesuit church historian (and church politician) Pietro Tacchi Venturi (1861-1956) in two massive volumes in 1934 and 1936. As

²⁹ There were also some earlier French works of general histories of religions.

Valerio Severino (2002) has shown, this work is to be seen in the context of the conciliation between the fascist state and the Catholic Church. The work emphasizes the special position of (Catholic) Christianity in religious history. Accordingly, it denies the validity of the comparative methods advanced simultaneously by Raffaele Pettazzoni, whose scholarly contribution is absent from the work. While implicitly acknowledging a plurality of religions, the work is apologetic in character. A second, revised version followed some years later. From the fifth edition (1962) onwards the work was continued by Giuseppe Castellani. It grew into three and then, in the sixth edition (1970-1971), into five bulky volumes. To some extent, it retained its apologetic character, for instance by continuing to include a passage about the by then obsolete question of modernism (Severino, 2002, p. 394). At the same time, some degree of conciliation between the Catholic apologetic tradition and Pettazzoni's rival school was achieved through the collaboration of Pettazzoni's Catholic student Ugo Bianchi (see also below). Bianchi's extensive introductory essay to the first volume of this sixth edition (1970) reviews key methodological, theoretical and empirical issues, concepts, and problems in the history of religion in the spirit of his master, Pettazzoni. The essay was published in an English translation by Brill as a book in 1975 (Bianchi, 1975).

A successor to the work launched by Tacchi Venturi in 1934, again in five large volumes, was published from 1994 to 1997 under the title *Storia delle religioni (History of religions)* edited by Giovanni Filoramo (b. 1945), an expert in Gnosticism and historian of Christianity, who teaches History of Christianity at the University of Turin. The chapters are mostly written by Italian scholars. Jointly with three other Italian historians of religion (Marcello Massenzio, Massimo Raveri, and Paolo Scarpi), Filoramo co-authored a one-volume handbook of religious history in 1998 (Filoramo et al., 1998; sixth edition 2002; Spanish translation 2000).

Attention should also be drawn to a substantial book-series entitled *Die Religionen der Menschheit* (*The religions of mankind*) published by Kohlhammer in Germany. The series was started in 1960 with volumes on ancient Egyptian and Vedic religion. In the meanwhile, 34 heavy volumes have been published (some of which have become classics in their respective fields and some of which already are out of print, while some few volumes have also been translated into Italian, French, and English), yet the series is still incomplete and will probably remain so. The series follows no common method and theory. Most authors are German (including Walter Burkert, Ernst Dammann, Werner Eichhorn, Karl Jettmar, and Siegfried Morenz), but the editors also recruited specialists from other European countries, including France (André Bareaux), Italy (Giuseppe Tucci), Scotland (William Montgomery Watt), Sweden (Helmer Ringgren, Ivar Paulson [an Estonian by birth], Åke V. Ström, Geo Widengren, Åke Hultkrantz), Finland (Haralds Biezais [a Latvian by birth]) and the Netherlands (Jan Gonda, Jan de Vries). The opening volume (published in 1961) is a treatise on the phenomenology of religion (Heiler, 1961; second edition 1979), an editorial choice that at the time may have seemed like an adequate strategy to provide the systematic framework for the monographs covering various religions and geographical areas.

The great age of the phenomenological treatises

In the period following World War II, the European scene was largely dominated by a handful of scholars who were also active in the executive council of the newly founded IAHR (Stausberg, 2008a, pp. 308-309). Most of these scholars were politically conservative, some had a deep religious commitment, and most were intellectually bound to the phenomenological paradigm. (Raffaele Pettazzoni is the exception confirming the rule.) In the years around 1960 a bulk of imposing phenomenological handbooks was published. Gerardus

van der Leeuw's 1933 *Phänomenologie der Religion* was published in a revised edition in 1956 (with later reprints and several translations)³⁰ and W. Brede Kristensen's Leiden lectures on phenomenology were published posthumously in an English translation under the title *The Meaning of Religion* in 1960 (532 pp.; third printing 1971). Gustav Mensching's *Die Religion: Erscheinungsformen, Strukturtypen und Lebensgesetze* was released in 1959 (paperback 1962; English translation as *Structures and Patterns of Religion*, Delhi 1976), and Friedrich Heiler's phenomenological treatise *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion (Manifestations and Essence of Religion; 605 pp.)* appeared in 1961 (Italian translation 1985), as the first volume of the already mentioned series *Die Religionen der Menschheit*. The year before, Heiler's younger colleague in Marburg, Kurt Goldammer (1916-1997), otherwise mainly known for his work on Paracelsus, had published his *Formenwelt des Religiösen (Morphology of the Religious; 528 pp.)* in which he attempts to combine the phenomenological heritage with Joachim Wach's program of establishing a 'systematic study of religion' (Goldammer, 1960; see Wach, 1924).

In the Netherlands, the phenomenological tradition was continued by Claas Jouco Bleeker in a series of articles (many of which are assembled in Bleeker, 1975). Bleeker, professor of the history of religions at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Amsterdam, served as IAHR secretary general from 1950-1970; for quite some time he also acted as the editor of *Numen*. His special field of interest was ancient Egyptian religion. Bleeker's longtime associate, Swedish scholar Geo Widengren (1907-1996; see Ciurtin, 2005 [slightly hagiographic]), mainly known for his philologically grounded studies of the religious worlds of ancient Iran and neighboring areas from the Ancient Orient to Gnosis, Manichaeism, and early Islam, also published a massive (684 pp.) handbook on the phenomenology of religion. In this book, Widengren attempts a better grounding of phenomenology with respect

³⁰ There are English translations of the first and the second editions (published in 1938 and 1963 respectively, the latter reprinted in 1986 with a new foreword by Ninian Smart). There are also French, Italian, Polish, and Spanish translations.

to the historical contexts of the phenomena described; by doing so he also recapitulates some of the main systematic topics of his research including his (problematic) theories of ‘high-gods’ and ‘sacred kingship’ (Widengren, 1969, pp. 46-92, 360-393; Italian translation 1984). Later IAHR-president (1980-1990), German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel who taught at Harvard from 1967-2002, partly positioned herself in the phenomenological tradition in her work on Islam (most explicitly in Schimmel, 1994; see also Antes, 2005, p. 8150).³¹

It is important to keep in mind that the scholarly projects and personalities of scholars such as Chantepie, van der Leeuw, Eliade, Heiler, and Widengren are far from identical—witness, for example, the different key-notions around which their approaches are built: mankind (Chantepie), power (van der Leeuw), the sacred (Eliade), the *deus absconditus* seeking to reveal himself (Heiler), gods and belief in them (Widengren). In some varieties (e.g. Chantepie, Kristensen, Goldammer, Widengren), phenomenology is synonymous with the systematic (i.e., non-historical and non-philosophical) or typological study of religion.³²

National figureheads

Some of the towering figures of the post-war period had pupils who were appointed to the chairs that were created in the course of the expansion of the discipline/field. The assignments at Swedish universities down to the previous generation can (at least from this perspective) be read as scholarly genealogies of Widengren, professor at Uppsala University for more than three decades (1940-1972) and the third president of the IAHR (1960-1970).

³¹ In her autobiography, she acknowledges that she modeled this work on Heiler’s approach (Schimmel, 2003, p. 307). Antes 2005, p. 8150 finds that ‘Schimmel distanced herself more and more from *Religionswissenschaft*’. In her autobiography, Schimmel expresses her dissatisfaction with the increasing emphasis on method, sociology and psychology at the IAHR conferences that alienated her from the association (Schimmel, 2003, p. 76). In her view, then, it is the academic climate that has changed, or become less religious, rather than simply being a matter of her distancing herself from *Religionswissenschaft*.

³² For a survey of major post World War II positions in the phenomenology of religion (including those mentioned above) and the unfolding of the debate, see King, 1984, pp. 87-108. See Cox, 2006 for a review of formative influences and main schools within the broader phenomenological paradigms as well as subsequent debates it has fueled. Unfortunately, Cox neglects German and Scandinavian branches of phenomenology.

Even in Uppsala, however, the so-called Uppsala-school was not undisputed, and while Widengren's chair was in the Faculty of Theology, another position in the history of religions was established in the Faculty of Philosophy (from 1948 as an associated professorship, from 1959 as a full professorship). Right from the start this chair was held by Carl-Martin Edsman (b. 1911) who increasingly dissociated himself from Widengren and was critical towards the assumptions underlying the Uppsala-School (Edsman, 2001). While the Uppsala-School centered on myth-ritual complexes (or 'patterns') in the Ancient Near East, in his wide-stretching work Edsman, originally an expert in New Testament and patristic studies, dealt with Hellenism as well as Christianity and with Lappish as well as Finnish religious practices and traditions. Moreover, Edsman studied ecstatic, magic, iconographic and other aspects of Medieval or early modern religious history in the North. In addition, he wrote a popular survey of the main religious traditions of Asia (1971; German translation [1976] as *Die Hauptreligionen des heutigen Asiens*) and a booklet on the dialogue of religions in 17th-century South Asia (1970)., Edsman also discussed contemporary mystical/religious experiences in a series of radio programs (1968). Contrary to Widengren, however, Edsman was not a school-founder, and while Widengren, albeit working at a Faculty of Theology, had no theological inclinations, Edsman defended theology and religion against a dominant culture of positivism (Edsman, 1974).

In Stockholm, where a chair had been established in 1913 (in the Faculty of Arts), anthropological approaches were prevalent. The Stockholm department was headed for almost three decades (1958-1986) by Åke Hultkrantz (1920-2006), a specialist in North American Indians, especially the Shoshone and the Arapaho.³³ Hultkrantz also worked on Sami and Old Norse religions and circumpolar religion in general. He devoted particular attention to the

³³ Kehoe, 1993, tries to expose Hultkrantz (alongside Eliade) as a representative of European primitivism, a heir to the Enlightenment myth of the noble savage, 'oblivious to archaeological canons of evidence' (Kehoe, 1993, p. 386), full of 'repressed Romantic fantasies' (Kehoe, 1993, p. 388), and not worthy of the standards of 'us who consider ourselves honest scholars' (Kehoe, 1993, p. 388). Her main target is Eliade and she provides little evidence from Hultkrantz's publications to support her blatant accusations.

concept of shamanism and critically discussed the phenomenological approach (Hultkrantz, 1970). He also made early attempts to establish the field of the ecology of religion (Hultkrantz, 1966; Hultkrantz, 1987) that has now taken off on an international scale (see Tucker and Grim, 2005). Hultkrantz wrote a conceptual dictionary in English (Hultkrantz, 1960) and a Swedish book on methodological approaches in the study of religion (Hultkrantz, 1973)—the only one of its kind in Europe, as far as I am aware, since Pinard de la Baullaye's pioneering effort (1925). It is only in recent years that two introductory books on methods and methodology in the study of religion(s) have been published, one by a German sociologist (Knoblauch, 2003) and an edited volume by two Norwegian colleagues that provides a survey of several methods and methodological questions (Kraft and Natvig, 2006).

Ever since he obtained the newly created chair in Rome (1923), the scholarly scene of the study of religion(s) in Italy was dominated by Pettazzoni, the second president of the IAHR (from 1950 to his death in 1959). Pettazzoni's main works consisted of tracing lines of developments of such topics as concepts of god (1922), the confession of sins (1929-1936), and the attribute of divine omniscience (1955 [English translation 1956]) through the religious history of mankind by putting them in comparative perspective. Where these thematic works build on a wide-ranging data-set covering virtually the entire religious history of mankind as known then (and with a rigorous attempt to be up-to date with regard to research on all relevant areas of historical scholarship), Pettazzoni also published several monographs on single religions or religious traditions such as Zoroastrianism (1920), Greek religion (1921, second edition 1953 [French translation 1953]), and mystery religions (1924). Pettazzoni emphasized the historical formation and genesis of religious phenomena. A selection of his numerous essays is available in English (Pettazzoni, 1954).

While Pettazzoni himself did not live to see the lasting institutional expansion of the discipline he devoted his life to, people from his network were appointed to all the relevant

chairs at Italian universities. The reservations Pettazzoni had against the phenomenological approach were inherited and even reinforced by later protagonists of the so-called School of Rome,³⁴ first of all by his successor Angelo Brelich (on whom see Nanini, 2004; Lancellotti and Xella, 2005), who previously had been influenced by classicist Károly Kerényi (1897-1973). Brelich, who also wrote a posthumously published autobiography (Brelich, 1979, pp. 21-115), emphasized the plurality of religions and the inseparability of religions from their surrounding cultures, thereby implicitly moving beyond Pettazzoni, who until the end of his life had always insisted on the autonomous value of religion (Pettazzoni, 1959). Developing further from the ground laid by Pettazzoni, Brelich, a specialist on Roman and Greek religion, defined the identity of the discipline in the first place as a methodological approach with empirically grounded comparison as its main methodological strategy (see already Pettazzoni, 1959).

With Pettazzoni, who after World War II (re-) emerged as a proclaimed Socialist, Brelich and Ernesto De Martino (1908-1965),³⁵ famous for his theory and analysis of magic (first edition 1948; several re-editions) and his often reprinted seminal studies of South Italian popular religion and its backgrounds (e.g. de Martino, 1961; English as *The Land of Remorse* [2005]), one encounters historians of religions with a pronounced anti-clerical attitude and explicit left-wing or even communist political sympathies and commitments³⁶ (otherwise quite unusual among European scholars of religion at that time). De Martino's theory of

³⁴ For an overview see Dörr and Mohr, 2002.

³⁵ On De Martino see Angelini, 2005, 2008. The bibliography on De Martino produced by Italian scholars and published in Italian is immense. For an uncritical and partisan summary of some basic ideas of Pettazzoni, de Martino, and Brelich in English see Massenzio, 2005. On the problematic relationships between De Martino and Pettazzoni (varying between conflicts but also strategic alliances) see Montanari, 2006.

³⁶ In Fascist times, however, Pettazzoni had been a member of the party, as had Brelich (see Stausberg, 2008b, pp. 373 and 375) who also had been close to Julius Evola (see Hakl, 2005 on Evola and his impact on the study of religion). While Pettazzoni and Brelich were mostly opportunists, de Martino's commitment to Fascism went much deeper (see Montanari, 2006, p. 102). After World War II, de Martino became a member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and, some tension notwithstanding, remained committed to the party even after 1956 (see Severino, 2003). Interestingly, contrary to the fortune of some other scholars of his generation, neither his early Fascist nor his later Communist commitments (none of them ever retracted) seem to have harmed his later reception and apotheosis.

religion, as pointed out by Bianchi, builds on and at the same time inverts Eliade's view of the relationship between religion and history. He builds on it in so far as religion serves the function of overcoming the 'anxiety' (Eliade: 'terror') of history, but inverts it in that the point of departure is 'the mundane' rather than the timeless origins of myth and the sacred (see Bianchi, 1970, pp. 165-166).

An interest in 'popular' religion, religious forms of protest, resistance, and inversion, often studied with methodologies inspired by (Neo-) Marxism, can also be found among other protagonists of the School of Rome such as the ethnologist Vittorio Lanternari (b. 1918) who has produced a rich oeuvre over more than five decades (see Lanternari, 2006, for a recent collection of essays). Especially noteworthy is his work on the study of festivals (Lanternari, 1959 [several re-editions]; 1989). Internationally Lanternari became known for his study *The Religions of the Oppressed: a study of modern messianic cults* (English 1963; French 1962; German 1968; original: 1960). His more recent production covers topics such as medicine and drugs (2006) and ecology (2003). He has also published studies on the history of the anthropology/ethnology of religion in Italy (Lanternari, 1997a) with an emphasis on the impact, also on an autobiographical level, of de Martino (Lanternari, 1997b). Studies on the contemporary religious history of Southern Italy and popular religion have been continued by Alfonso Di Nola (1926-1997) and folklorists as well as sociologists of religion (for the latter see Cipriani and Mansi, 1990; Prandi, 2002). Ambrogio Donini (1903-1991) was a student of the Catholic priest, Modernist theologian, and historian of Christianity Ernesto Buonaiuti. He had to leave the country in 1928 because of his anti-Fascist activities, emerged as a Marxist historian of religions (and a Communist Party official as well as senator), and became known mainly for a manual of religious history (Donini, 1959; many later re-editions; translated into Spanish) and a history of early Christianity (1975). However, Donini never achieved an important academic position within the field.

Contrary to Pettazzoni and later protagonists of his school, Ugo Bianchi, the sixth president of the IAHR (1990-1995), was firmly rooted in Catholicism. Partly to the distress of his teacher, Bianchi refined Pettazzoni's methodological legacy in a different direction, i.e. towards a methodologically controlled historical typology aiming at idiographic analysis. Contrary to later exponents of the school, but in line with the standards set by Pettazzoni, Bianchi always attached great importance to maintaining a high level of empirical (philological, historiographical, and bibliographical) accuracy and to remain updated on recent developments in various fields of study (see also Casadio, 2002; Casadio, 2005c). Bianchi also published a history of ethnology (Bianchi, 1964; second edition 1971) and numerous essays on methodological issues (see Bianchi, 1979 for a selection). An early volume on problems in the study of religion (1958; second edition 1986) was translated into German (1964) and Swedish (1968, preface by Widengren). In the first part of this slim volume, Bianchi discusses attempts at classifying the diversity of religions with the help of different schematic categories, e.g. national, universal, cosmopolitan religions and mystery cults. In the second and more theoretical part, Bianchi tries to advance an understanding of religion that would insist on its complexity and 'totality'. Elaborating on an idea of Eliade, he suggests that what distinguishes religion from other phenomena is a 'rupture of levels' that would create a relationship to something above (*supra*) and something prior (*prius*) supposedly constituting the foundations of the very existence of the world (Bianchi, 1964). When advocating a historical(-typological/comparative) approach to the study of religion, Bianchi insisted on its vocation to study the individual, specific 'personalities' of the religions under study, resisting as much as possible reductionism and explanatory projects as represented by the psychology and sociology of religion (Bianchi, 1970, p. 6). According to one of his students (Casadio, 2005c, p. 864) 'the problem of destiny, evil, salvation—in other words, the problem of humanity's relationship with God, or theodicy', was the main concern

at the heart of his work in the field of the history of religions. Some of the predominant interests of scholars belonging to the Roman school gravitated around issues of mythology, monotheism (Pettazzoni, Sabbatucci), dualism (Bianchi), and polytheism (Brelich, Sabbatucci).

In the UK, Roderick Ninian Smart (1927-2001) emerged in the 1960s as the towering figure, especially since he chaired the large Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster created in 1967 (the first of its kind in Britain).³⁷ There seems to be a consensus that the increasing anchorage of the subject at ever more British universities was to a significant extent due to his efforts and work. Smart, a highly prolific author, in many ways represents a type of scholarship that has no counterpart on the continent. From a continental perspective, Smart would appear as a unusual *mélange* of philosopher, public intellectual, educator, popularizer, media consultant, global and comparative theologian, or advocate of the dialogue of religions rather than belonging to the tribe of scholars of religion.³⁸ On the other hand, Smart powerfully proclaimed the principle of methodological agnosticism for the scientific study of religion (Smart, 1973). Among students of religion, Smart is probably mainly known for his work on religion and education (Smart, 1968; see also below), his theoretical anatomy of the dimensions of religion,³⁹ the concept of world-views (Smart, 1983), his contributions to the question of the definition of religion (where he employed Wittgenstein's family resemblance-approach)⁴⁰ and his interests in terminology and comparative issues. Smart opposed 'the ghettoization of religious studies' (King, 2005, p. 8444) and he was sceptical of "purists" who, he thought, failed to see the full nature of the object of their studies' (Wiebe, 2001, p. 381). For religious studies, Smart wished to retain openness for philosophical reflection and speculation on 'vital questions' beyond empirical, social-scientific, and

³⁷ On the circumstances leading to the creation of this department see Smart, 2000; Segal, 2001, pp. 27.

³⁸ For a study of Smart from the point of view of intercultural philosophy of religion see Kuruchavira, 2004.

³⁹ Smart, 1996 distinguishes seven dimensions: (1) ritual/practical; (2) doctrinal/philosophical; (3) mythic/narrative; (4) an experiential/emotional; (5) ethical/legal; (6) organizational/social; (7) a material/artistic.

⁴⁰ For a further development/application of this approach, see Gothóni, 1996.

historical objectivity (Smart, 2000, p. 33). He envisioned religious studies as ‘aspectual, plural, non-finite and multidisciplinary’ (Smart, 2000, p. 34) and advocated ‘the extension of our field to non-traditional religious worldviews’ (Smart, 2000, p. 34) including nationalisms. He regretted specialization leading to fragmentation and disintegration of the field (Smart, 2000, p. 31). His version of the study of religion was probably more meta-confessional than non-confessional, un-dogmatic but emphatic and multi-faith, ‘inclusivist and ecumenical’ (Segal, 2001, p. 28).⁴¹ Whereas his work has been highly influential in the UK and the US, Smart has had no real impact on the academic study of religion on the continent, even though many of his writings were translated into several languages.⁴² His academic profile was as unorthodox as the biography leading to it. Towards the end of World War II, Smart had interrupted his education to go into the military, where he studied Chinese (mainly at SOAS) for the Intelligence Corps. As an officer he traveled to Singapore and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon). As a result, he states, ‘I was roused from my Western slumber with the call of diverse and noble cultures’ (Smart, 2000, p. 20). Before accepting the position at Lancaster, Smart had been professor of Theology in Birmingham, and in the 1980s his Christian theological interest reemerged more explicitly (see Smart and Konstantine, 1991).

Smart was the last of the towering figures of the foundational generation(s). In more recent times, the scholarly community has become less dominated by single scholars, and contrary to the US, there is no celebrity cult (Benavides, 2008, p. 246) on the European religious studies scene. At present, it is impossible to point to any one scholar as *the* dominant scholarly figure in any Western European country, let alone for Western Europe as a whole. In a way, this development corresponds to the eclipse of the monograph as the preferred genre of scholarly publication and to the increasing importance of collaborative research activities.

⁴¹ See Segal, 2001, p. 29 for some differences between Smart’s and social scientific approaches.

⁴² On Smart, see the tributes published in a previous issue of this journal (*Religion* 31/4 [2001], pp. 315-386); for bibliographic and archival materials, see Shepherd, 2005.

The twilight of the phenomenology of religion

While Smart was critical of what he felt to be crypto-theological versions of the phenomenology of religion as exemplified by Eliade, methodologically he subscribed to phenomenology 'as the practice of empathy' (Smart, 2000, p. 26).⁴³ Moreover, he advanced what he called 'a dynamic phenomenology', i.e. 'a phenomenology without essences' as 'a moving grammar of the human spirit' (Smart, 1994, p. 902). While Smart thereby sought to retain a modified version of the phenomenological tradition, for scholarship in general the 1970s mark the twilight of the phenomenology of religion. At present, the works of the phenomenologists (apart from Eliade and Smart) are hardly read anymore, and the diversity of phenomenological approaches is often ignored in a common polemic, where a routine dismissal of phenomenology has become something like the standard prologue to contemporary self-understandings. Anti-phenomenology or post-phenomenology seems to be one of the few common denominators of the present state of the art.

In many cases, scholars who were appointed to the chairs between the late 1960s and early 1980s did not start an outright campaign against phenomenology, but silently ignored it in their own research. More often than not, their interest focused on specific areas of study. Academic legitimacy was no longer achieved by drawing the larger picture, but by empirical or methodological competence and by attention to specific source materials and contexts.

In his history of the discipline/field Eric Sharpe states: 'In the early 1970s the study of religion had reached a point at which those involved in it clearly felt the need to bring their perplexities, hopes and misgivings into the open' (Sharpe, 1986, p. 299). Several attempts were made to review the state of the art. A survey of the main tendencies of the field had already been published in 1961 (de Vries, 1961), authored by the Dutch scholar of Germanic

⁴³ For Smart as a phenomenologist, see Fitzgerald, 2000, pp. 54-71; Cox, 2006, pp. 159-167.

religion, etymology, folklore, and mythology Jan de Vries (1890-1964), who after the war had lost his position at Leiden because of his intellectual collaboration with and political commitment to National Socialism (see Hofstee, 2008; Junginger 2008, pp. 72-76). A Swedish translation of the book by de Vries was published almost immediately, translated by Stig Wikander (1908-1983), an Indo-Iranian scholar and historian of religions (Timuş, 2005; Timuş, 2008) also known for his right-wing political sympathies (see Junginger, 2008, pp. 46-49). De Vries' book was translated into English by the historian and religious scholar Kees W. Bolle (1967 as *The study of religion: a historical approach*) who had grown up in the Netherlands. The early 1970s saw the publication of the first edition of Sharpe's history (Sharpe, 1975) as well as several volumes assembling and reviewing main approaches to the study of religion(s) (Waardenburg, 1973; Lanczkowski, 1974). Moreover, for the first time, conferences devoted to methodological problems were held, namely in Rome (1969) and Turku (1973) eventually resulting in important publications (Bianchi, Bleeker and Bausani, 1972; Honko, 1979). The Turku-conference also illustrated the rising 'influence of the social sciences, particularly of cultural anthropology' (King, 1984, p. 132), on the study of religion(s). Heightened methodological reflection may be regarded as 'evidence of widespread uncertainty in the field consequent on the erosion of old intellectual assumptions' (Sharpe, 2005, p. 41) and it reflects increasing discursive rivalries; alternatively it can be read as a sign of scholarly maturation and growing reflexivity.

Nowhere was the challenge to the phenomenological approach made more explicit than in its traditional homeland, the Netherlands. It has been argued that this was in part due to ideas of cultural relativism imported from American anthropology (Hofstee, 2000, 2001). Already in the late 1940s, a pupil of van der Leeuw, Fokke Sierksma (1917-1977), 'revolted publicly, in his self-imposed role as a "nihilist", against the theological inspiration of the phenomenology of religion of his virtually worshipped teacher' (Platvoet, 1998, p. 335).

However, the eclipse of the approach is usually ascribed to the oeuvre of van der Leeuw's successor in Groningen, Theo van Baaren (1912-1989),⁴⁴ who questioned the empirical validity of van der Leeuw's work, before setting on to challenge its epistemological foundation, leading to his project of eliminating all metaphysical presuppositions from the study of religion(s). He regarded religions as mere 'functions' of culture which have to be theoretically explained by what he (like Wach and Goldammer) referred to as 'the systematic science of religion' (van Baaren, 1970a; 1970b). By this he intended a conglomerate of historical and social empirical sciences aiming at a maximization of objectivity and a minimization of subjectivity (see also Platvoet, 1998, pp. 339-342).⁴⁵ In this endeavor van Baaren, who also initiated an important project on religious iconography/iconology resulting in seven volumes of *Visible Religion: annual for religious iconography* (1982-1990), was inspired and supported by a number of colleagues from the Groningen Working-group for the Study of Fundamental Problems and Methods of Science of Religion (Drijvers and van Baaren, 1973).⁴⁶ The epistemological program of 'methodological agnosticism' has since become the standard framework for the study of religion(s) in the Netherlands (Platvoet, 1998, p. 343; Platvoet, 2002, p. 134) and elsewhere.⁴⁷ This, the greater attention paid to developing a more exact terminology and the attempt to construct valid comparisons were major innovations. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the grandiloquent program advanced by van Baaren and his associates such as Han J.W. Drijvers (1934-2002), who is mainly known

⁴⁴ Jan Bremmer refers to van Baaren as an 'artist, poet, scholar—perhaps even in this order' (Bremmer, 1993, p. 171).

⁴⁵ The program of systematic study of religion was subsequently further discussed by some German authors such as Seiwert, 1977; Antes, 1986; Rudolph, 1992, pp. 54-57 (stressing its comparative and historical dimension). Rudolph, 1992, p. 43 criticizes the Groningen group for what he regarded as excessive contextualization that would endanger the autonomy/discreteness (*Eigenständigkeit*) of religion.

⁴⁶ For this other attempts to define the study of religion as a 'science' in the 1970s, see King, 1984, pp. 125-144.

⁴⁷ In Germany, Rudolph, 1992, p. 90 (originally published in 1978) and Colpe, 1980, p. 294 promoted the principle of methodological atheism (mitigated by Rudolph to agnosticism or neutralism [adapted from Smart] in 1992, p. 90, note 25a). For Smart's understanding of methodological atheism see Cox, 2006, pp. 160-162 and 219-220 (the latter on Wiebe's critique of Smart's refusal to opt for methodological atheism instead). Borgeaud, 1999, p. 72 now moves beyond that frame when he argues that methodological agnosticism was not sufficient; according to him, the history of religions could paradoxically only be a *real* discipline when liberating itself entirely from religion.

as a Semitist,⁴⁸ or Lammert Leertouwer (b. 1932), especially with its ambition of explaining religious facts, has not produced the sort of scholarly output some would have hoped it would accomplish. Its main achievements remained on the programmatic level. The Utrecht anthropologist Jan van Baal (1909-1992) shared this anti-phenomenological twist and suggested a structuralist-inspired theory of religion (van Baal, 1971) ‘based on the view that religion is a system by which humans communicate with their universe’ (Hofstee, 2005, p. 724) and stressing the non-verifiability of religious ideas (see Platvoet, 2002, p. 133). Interestingly, after his retirement, van Baal moved ‘from the positivism of the social scientific study of religions to an explicit religionist position’ (Platvoet, 2002, p. 135).

Apart from tacit neglect and despite explicit rejection—nowadays reinforced by feminism, post-colonialism and postmodernism each adding its voice to the critiques of the phenomenology of religion—, there were and are some attempts at rehabilitation of the phenomenology of religion. The most influential stems from Jacques Waardenburg (b. 1930), a student of Bleeker who is otherwise mainly known for his work on Islam (Waardenburg, 2002), leading scholars of Islam (Waardenburg, 1969) and the relation of Muslims to others (Waardenburg, 2003). Waardenburg, who was part of the Groningen Working Group, has not only worked on the history of Dutch phenomenology of religion (Waardenburg, 1993), but tried to redesign phenomenology as the study of religious intentions (Waardenburg, 1972). However, it is not quite clear in what respect this should be considered a phenomenological endeavor in the first place, and in a later textbook on the study of religion (Waardenburg, 1986; French translation 1993) he no longer refers to his project as a renewed phenomenology of religion but rather to ‘hermeneutical research’.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Wim Hofstee (email June 7, 2009) reminds me that Drijvers and van Baaren’s successor in Groningen, Hans Kippenberg (who went to Bremen in 1989), did much to integrate historical-philological with sociological-anthropological approaches (with Weber and Geertz as main inspirations).

⁴⁹ For a survey of hermeneutical approaches in the international debate of the 1970s, see King, 1984, pp. 108-125.

Hermeneutical approaches are also proposed by some other German scholars, in the most radical fashion by Wolfgang Gantke (b. 1951) with his program of an ‘open’, non-reductive, access to the study of religion (Gantke, 1998). A further attempt at rethinking the phenomenological heritage was attempted by Colpe, especially well-known for his work on webs of religious relations in late antiquity (see Colpe, 2003 for an updated collection of essays), who tries to reformulate a phenomenological approach based on a rereading of Edmund Husserl (Colpe, 1988), the main founder of phenomenological philosophy.⁵⁰ As with much of his other important writing (see especially Colpe, 1999), unfortunately this essay is not easily accessible for non-initiates. In Britain, Gavin Flood (currently director of the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies and Professor of Hindu Studies and Comparative Religion) has challenged the phenomenological method precisely because of its reliance on a Husserlian philosophy of consciousness; in his view, ‘[r]esearch programmes in religions need to be dialogical and to begin with communication and interaction, rather than with the phenomenological privileging of consciousness’ (Flood, 1999, p. 236). In Italy, theologian and comparative religious historian Aldo Natale Terrin (b. 1941), a prolific writer who has published books on religion and neuroscience (2004), *New Religious Movements, New Age and Pentecostalism* (2001), and on ritual and liturgical studies (1999), tries to defend the epistemological and methodological legacy of the phenomenology of religion by emphasizing the *religious* point of departure in the study of religion (see his textbook, Terrin, 1998; Brazilian translation 2003).⁵¹

⁵⁰ For an attempt to take stock of the legacy of the phenomenology of religion, see also Michaels, Pezzoli Olgiati, Stolz, 2001.

⁵¹ There is a sustained, if not renewed, interest in the phenomenology of religion in theological and philosophical quarters in Germany (for the latter see, e.g., Failing, Heimbrock and Lotz, 2001; Koritensky, 2002; Enders and Zaborowski, 2004). These works, however, are quite different from the phenomenological treatises mentioned above; unfortunately, they are generally ignored or avoided by historians of religion. The intricate relationships between religious studies (history of religions) and the philosophy of religion (and philosophy in general) cannot be discussed in the present context. For an attempt to make the philosophy of religion relevant for the study of religion (against common suspicions), see Berner, 1997. Phenomenological methods have been adopted by some American anthropologists.

The critique of the phenomenology of religion has been ‘the springboard for new interpretations and advances in religious studies’ (Cox, 2006, p. 243); to some extent, this process has paved the way for entry of the study of religion into the broader field of research in the humanities and social sciences. In the course of this development, however, the academic study of religion has to a large extent lost sight of its comparative perspective and its general, cross-cultural agenda. If such topics are addressed at all, then this is done by discussing methodological issues or by editing multi-authored volumes.⁵²

From structuralism to anthropology

France never produced a phenomenologist of religion of repute and the Durkheim-school effectively restrained the impact of protestant-religionist approaches. In the years after World War II, structuralism gained prominence in France, amounting to nothing less, according to Camille Tarot, than a scholarly revolution, replacing the hitherto dominant religionist and political approaches by a focus on symbol systems (Tarot, 2008, pp. 43-45). The emphasis on the systemic character of religion, its structured and structuring dynamics, has ‘contributed much to the “scientific” turn in the study of religion’ (Jensen, 2004, p. 234). Structuralism was spearheaded by Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908) and Georges Dumézil (1898-1986),⁵³ two extremely prolific writers and brilliant storytellers whose scholarly production stretched over a period of around half a century each. Both have substantially refined, and in the case of Dumézil also revised, their theories, and both produced ambitious programs of comparative mythology; recall but two multi-volume works running into more than a thousand pages each: *Mythologiques* by Lévi-Strauss (4 vols. 1964; 1966; 1968; 1971) and

⁵² The recent rise of cognitive approaches (especially in the US, the UK, Denmark, and Finland) may owe its appeal to the promise of rehabilitating a scientifically grounded comparative and cross-cultural agenda.

⁵³ From 1926 to 1931 Dumézil was professor of the History of Religions at the University of Istanbul in Turkey; the chair was part of Atatürk’s program of modernization and laicization of higher education.

Mythe et épopée by Dumézil (3 vols. 1968; 1971: 1973). Both scholars mastered immense empirical grounds in their various studies. Dumézil covered the vast field of Indo-European philology and history, focusing on the tripartite ‘ideology’ that he assumed was their characteristic trait in form of social functions, models structuring society, and social organization.⁵⁴ Lévi-Strauss analyzed the mythological systems of South and North American Indians (with only slight attention to history, politics, and social structures). Their empirical grounding, however, was in part vehemently challenged by experts in the respective areas. Lévi-Strauss and Georges Dumézil introduced new theories and devised methods to support them—and it is precisely these traits that made them into outstanding scholars.⁵⁵ The grand narratives of both scholars have found enthusiastic admiration by some and faced stern opposition by others, in the case of Dumézil also with respect to his right-wing political past and suspicions of possible political sub-texts in his writing (especially by Arnaldo Momigliano, Carlo Ginzburg, Bruce Lincoln, and Cristiano Grottanelli). In the history of religions, Dumézil’s theories have stimulated Widengren, Wikander, and others. In Europe, Dumézil still has some followers in Denmark and France. Both Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss have inspired Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914-2007) in his widely acclaimed work on Greek mythology and society (e.g., Vernant, 1991). As a theoretical approach, structuralism is no longer discussed, and seriously considered or employed by rather few scholars only (e.g. Jensen, 2000; Kunin, 2004). Its theoretical dimension has given way to post-structuralist attempts to dissolve the category of religion altogether on the one hand and to cognitive studies on the other.

Michel Meslin (b. 1926) who held the Sorbonne-chair in the general study of religion subscribed neither to phenomenology nor to structuralism. Instead, he advocated an

⁵⁴ Lambert, 1995, presents an extension of his theory outside of the Indo-European linguistic area towards a new reading of the early history of the three monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).

⁵⁵ On the relationships between both scholars see Grottanelli, 1993, pp. 143-171; Tarot, 2008, pp. 521-522. On Lévi-Strauss and religion see Tremlett, 2008.

‘anthropological’ approach to the study of religion (Meslin, 1973; Italian translation 1975) centering on the notion of religious experience (Meslin, 1988). In his survey of European scholarship, Peter Antes, the eighth president of the IAHR (2000-2005), whose main empirical field is Islam, bemoans the absence of comparative thematic studies in French scholarship:

Where they are found, they are generally not comprehensive overviews but rather collections of highly specialized treatments by scholars working within their narrow areas of specialization. It seems that comparative studies on a broader scale are not taken as serious research work worthy of the discipline (Antes, 2004, p. 48).

Antes may here have in mind volumes devoted to general topics where specialists from various areas discuss the topic in question with regard to their respective special fields. The series ‘Patrimoines – histoire comparée des religions’ (Les éditions du Cerf) includes volumes on such topics as conversion (1997), controversy (1995), the formation of canons (1993), and master and pupil in the history of religions (1990). For a time, François Bœspflug (b. 1945), member of the Dominican order, worked for that publisher; currently professor of the History of Religions at the University of Strasbourg (in the Faculty of Catholic Theology), Bœspflug’s main publications revolve around issues of comparison (1997), religion in the French secondary school system (see below), and Christian iconography (including various works for broader audiences). The Belgian priest and scholar of religions Julien Ries (see part I [Stausberg, 2007, pp. 302-303])—whose collected works (in 11 planned volumes) are currently being published in Italian translation by a Catholic Italian publisher (Jaca Book)⁵⁶—has also edited a series of thematic volumes (entitled ‘Homo religiosus’) including edited

⁵⁶ Riccardo Nanini has drawn my attention to the alignment of Jaca Book with the Catholic movement *Comunione e Liberazione* (Communion and Liberation) that has adopted Ries (a Catholic priest) as a key thinker.

books on prayer (1980), myth (1983), cultic symbolism (1985), initiation rites (1986), angels and demons (1989), religious and esthetic experience (1993), symbolism and experience of light (2002), crises, ruptures, and mutations in the history of religions (2005), and time and destiny (2008). Jointly with other colleagues Ries has edited volumes on children, festivals, travel, and heaven in Oriental civilizations (1980, 1996, 1998, 1999).

Apart from such thematic volumes, as in other countries, several dictionaries of religion have been published in French. Like the case of Cardinal König in Austria, such a work was edited in France by a high ranking Catholic priest, Cardinal Paul Poupard (b. 1930), the former vice-chancellor of the Institut Catholique (1971-1980) who had held important offices in the Roman Curia.⁵⁷ Apart from the *Dictionnaire des religions* (1984; third edition 1993; Spanish translation 1987; Italian translation 1988), Poupard has also written the volume on religions for the prestigious series *Que sais-je?* (Presses Universitaires de France) published in 1987 (10th edition 2007). There are some further dictionaries of religions published in France. Most noteworthy in scholarly terms perhaps is the *Encyclopédie des religions* published in 1997/2000 (second edition also available in paperback), the title of which is somewhat misleading, since it does not consist of entries arranged in alphabetical order. Instead, this massive work running into some 2,500 pages (edited by author-scholar-journalist Frédéric Lenoir⁵⁸ and Ysé Tardan-Masquellier, who teaches at the Institut Catholique) is divided into two parts of almost equal length: the first part/volume ('history') presents a series of short essays on the religious traditions of the world (from prehistory and

⁵⁷ Since 2006, he has served as President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

⁵⁸ As a scholar, Lenoir is mostly known for his work on the European encounter with Buddhism (Lenoir, 1999). Lenoir is the (co-)editor of several popular reference works. He is also a writer of fiction. His 2004 book (co-authored with Marie-France Etchequin) on Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) was a bestseller with translations into some 20 languages. As a journalist, since 2004 Lenoir directs the bimonthly magazine *Le monde des religions* (2003-), which enjoys a unique position in Europe as a magazine that aims at 'detached' reportages and dossiers on issues concerning religions and spiritualities; see <http://www.le-monde-des-religions.fr/index.php> (accessed May 23, 2009); the French Wikipedia reports a circulation of 63,000 copies for 2007; see http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_monde_des_religions (accessed May 23, 2009). Odon Vallet (b. 1947) who had inherited a fortune from his father, is a prominent private scholar of religions; he has published a dictionary of religious wars (2003) and a dictionary of false information spread about religions in the media (Vallet, 2002; second edition 2004).

the Ancient Middle East to modern indigenous cultures), while the second part/volume ('themes') discusses ten main topics in a comparative manner (in some 150 brief essays).⁵⁹ The general emphasis on religious experience and the overall structure of this work display the intellectual impact of Michel Meslin, who is featured as 'scientific advisor' of the entire project and who authored several chapters. The overwhelming majority of the authors are French—Italian scholars constituting the largest minority of authors—and the 'bibliographical orientations' concluding each section are almost exclusively Francophone. In 2004, Daniel Dubuisson, internationally known for his critique of the notion of religion (see part I [Stausberg, 2007, p. 300]), has published a dictionary of important topics in the history of religions (Dubuisson, 2004), in which he assembles short snippets of texts from Western authors, from the pres-Socratics to Lévi-Strauss, with the aim of pointing to the disputed field governed by the category of religion in European history.⁶⁰

Changes in introductory textbooks

Early (university) textbooks had mostly been surveys of the main religious traditions of mankind and their development (see above). Later on, phenomenological treatises sought to provide orientation over the world of religions. Given the increasing specialization of scholars, 'increasing diversification of the religious data' (Gardaz, 2009, p. 283), the eclipse of phenomenological and the twilight of historical approaches to the study of religion(s), there was a need for a new type of textbook.⁶¹ Some of these have already been mentioned in

⁵⁹ The recent handbook edited by Austrian *Religionswissenschaftler* Johan Figl is likewise subdivided into two main parts, one surveying past and present religious traditions and one discussing 'main themes' (Figl, 2003). Among the themes not covered by the *Encyclopédie des religions* this handbook includes essays on intra-religious plurality, law and religion, human rights and freedom of religion (all by Eva Synek), nature and technology in religious history (Peter Koslowski), didactics (Martin Jäggle), and the dialogue of religions (Norbert Hintersteiner). Most authors of this works are Austrians.

⁶⁰ In 2005 Dubuisson published a massive attack against Eliade (Dubuisson, 2005).

⁶¹ While textbooks have a huge impact on university-educated students who do not enter the academic profession, they are usually not reviewed in scholarly journals. To the eyes of the present writer, this is a very unfortunate

passing. A brief review of examples from Italy, Britain, and Germany may serve as an illustration of some changes in the way the study of religion(s) has been approached.⁶²

Among such developments in post-historical and post-phenomenological textbooks one finds that surveying the various religious traditions of the world ceased being identical with what the discipline was all about; one finds a leaning towards greater reflexivity along with attempts to accommodate social scientific approaches and greater attention paid to terminological issues and to contemporary arenas and scenarios of religion.

To begin with Italy, one of the earliest new introductory textbooks is Angelo Brelich's *Introduzione alla storia delle religioni (Introduction to the history of religions)* from 1966. The book still presents a mixture of previous approaches in that it combines a systematic treatment of the categories of beliefs, rites, behaviors, and organization (Brelich, 1966, pp. 3-70) with a survey of various religions and religious areas around the world (Brelich, 1966, pp. 73-364). Published some twenty years later, the *Sommario di storia delle religioni (Outline of the history of religions)* by Dario Sabbatucci, a major representative of the third generation of the so-called School of Rome (see above), adopts a critical stance towards all earlier textbooks and survey works. Sabbatucci criticizes the underlying abstractions of religion from the respective cultural contexts and the personal preconceptions of the previous authors of handbooks. Instead of moving right into the subject area, i.e. religions, Sabbatucci devotes the first part of his book to a (rather selective) history of the discipline, where he, in conclusion, contrasts the phenomenological tradition of 'objectivation' of religion with his own program

neglect. Benavides, 2005b, somewhat sarcastically states that 'despite the talk about the questioning of "master narratives" and the like, ours seems to be the age of compendia, encyclopedias, dictionaries, guides, and introductions to the study of religion'. It seems that this also is the sort of works most publishers are keen on putting on the market, probably because they sell best.

⁶² While some textbooks have been translated into French, there is just one academic textbook written by a French scholar (Demariaux, 2002), who also authored introductory books on Daoism and Hinduism, but does not hold a chair in the study of religion(s). In a way, this mirrors the absence of general chairs, departments, and programs for the study of religion(s) in France. Francesco Diez de Velasco (b. 1960), the editor of *Bandue*, has authored two introductory works in Spanish: Diez de Velasco, 1995 (third edition 2002) is a manual of the history of religions and Diez de Velasco, 2005 is a systematic/thematic textbook with chapters on violence, political power, death, anxiety, identity, and methodology. Both works have comprehensive, up-to-date, international bibliographies.

of a (historical) ‘nullification (*vanificazione*) of the religious object’ (Sabbatucci, 1987, p. 97). This is followed by an analysis of ten basic themes in the study of religion(s) such as deity, Supreme Being, cultural hero, or myth and ritual (Sabbatucci, 1987, 101-158). Both textbooks were published by minor publishers in Rome with local students as the intended audience. Giovanni Filoramo, whose work as an editor has already been mentioned above, has published a textbook with a leading Italian publisher (Einaudi). In his textbook, Filoramo does not flag out one school, program, or approach but tries to give a more comprehensive overview over the study of religion in its international dimension, taking the postmodern critique as his point of departure (Filoramo, 2004, pp. 20-22). Filoramo, who rarely mentions the protagonists of the Roman School at all, discusses the history of the discipline, questions of definition and comparison, social science approaches, issues of typology, functions of religion, and relations between religion, violence and politics (Filoramo, 2004; French translation 2007). As for the future of the discipline, Filoramo advocates a critical restoration of the primary role of historical scholarship (Filoramo, 2004, pp. 160-161).⁶³

Turning to Britain, where textbooks from scholars based in America and Australia were and are also used, Ninian Smart wrote important textbooks such as *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (1969, with many impressions, from the fourth edition, published in 1991, carrying the title *The Religious Experience*), later replaced by the above-mentioned *The World's Religions*. Moreover, there were several general surveys of religious history by authors such as Parrinder (see also part II [Stausberg, 2008a, pp. 315-316]), namely his *The World's Living Religions* (1964, several revised editions until 1977, sometimes also published under the title *The Handbook of Living Religions*), and Ling (see above). A different approach was taken in an early work of Michael Pye, known mainly for his work on Buddhism, Japanese religions, syncretism, and methodological and epistemological issues, who served as

⁶³ Filoramo also co-authored an introductory textbook with the sociologist Carlo Prandi (b. 1931) (Filoramo and Prandi 1987; third, revised and updated edition 1997; Brazilian translation 1999).

the seventh president of the IAHR (1995-2000). In his *Comparative Religion: an introduction through source materials* (1972), Pye presents a post-phenomenological systematic study of comparative religion. Apart from the underlying methodological and theoretical principles, in which he argues for an operational definition of religious data and ‘four main aspects of specifically religious data’ (Pye, 1972, p. 25) the book is original in that it mainly consists of snippets of textual sources from various religious traditions grouped into systematic categories.⁶⁴ Eric Sharpe’s history of the study of religion(s) from 1975 (updated version 1986) was widely used as a textbook.⁶⁵ Sharpe, for some time a colleague of Smart and Pye at Lancaster and general secretary of the IAHR (1971-1975), concludes his book, which outlines ‘significant ... personalities, themes, stages and landmarks in the comparative study of religion’ (Sharpe, 1997, p. xiv), by appealing to an inclusivist view of the discipline, which to his eyes “must remain the meeting-ground of complementary (not competing) methods—historical, sociological, phenomenological, philosophical, psychological” (Sharpe, 1997, p. 293, citing an earlier article of his). In 1983 (second impression 1988), Sharpe published another general, introductory work, this time ‘an inquiry into the presuppositions of the study [of religion] itself’ (Sharpe, 1988, p. [vii]). Sharpe devises the study of religion as ‘a behavioural science (or art, or craft)’ concerned with ‘studying *people*, and not quaint abstractions’ (Sharpe, 1988, xii). The first chapters discuss the relationship between theology and Religious Studies, commitment and understanding in the study of religion(s), and the question of definition of religion. In a chapter on ‘holy ground’, Sharpe holds ‘that *the study of religion is first and foremost a matter of learning to recognise and respect what is (or has been) holy in the lives of individuals and communities*’ (Sharpe, 1988, p. 60 [original emphasis]). He argues that ‘the transcendent’ was a kind of ‘intellectual replacement’ of the

⁶⁴ Pye also edited a one volume dictionary of religion (*The Macmillan Dictionary of Religion*, published in the US as *The Continuum Dictionary of Religion*), published in 1994.

⁶⁵ The very first issue of the journal *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* (1989) includes a series of articles (by Annette Aronowicz, Antonio Gualtieri, Rosalind Hackett, Ursula King, Robert Segal, and Donald Wiebe) discussing several aspects of this work; the second issue carries a reply by Sharpe.

genuine supernatural (Sharpe, 1988, p. 76). In one of the later chapters, as distinguished from Smart's 'dimensions', Sharpe identifies 'four functional modes' in which 'religion operates, humanely speaking', namely the existential, intellectual, institutional, and ethical modes, relating content-wise to faith, beliefs, organizations, and conduct respectively (Sharpe, 1988, p. 95). Jumping to the late 1990s, Peter Connolly, who was at the time teaching at the Chichester Institute of Higher Education,⁶⁶ edited another type of textbook (aimed at an undergraduate audience) by putting together chapters, all written by British scholars, on seven approaches to the study of religion(s), namely anthropological (Gellner), feminist (Morgan), phenomenological (Erricker), philosophical (Fisher), psychological (Connolly), sociological (Northcott), and theological (Whaling) approaches (Connolly, 1999). The absence of historical and comparative approaches is conspicuous, but Ninian Smart reflects on the importance of comparison in his Foreword. The most recent significant textbook published by English authors is authored by George D. Chryssides (b. 1945), recently retired from the University of Wolverhampton, whose main work is on New Religious Movements, and Ron Geaves from Liverpool Hope University, who mainly works on Islam in Britain and Sufism, but who has also authored a short glossary of religious studies terminology (Geaves, 2006). In their textbook, Chryssides and Geaves devote one chapter to fieldwork⁶⁷ and attention to methodological issues and types of data such as census surveys is a distinctive feature of this work. Apart from reviewing key figures, key approaches (phenomenology), key concepts (world religion) and gender, which no recent textbook can afford to ignore, Chryssides and Geaves have chapters on what they call 'levels of religion', authenticity and diversity, and the question of truth (all by Geaves) (Chryssides and Geaves, 2007).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ This institution later became The University College Chichester and then The University of Chichester.

⁶⁷ Geaves is one of the editors and Chryssides is the book review editor of the journal *Fieldwork in Religion* launched in 2005.

⁶⁸ During the past decade, several guides or companions to the study of religion(s) have been published by international publishers, and are now often used as textbooks. These books have a mixed authorship of British and North American contributors (with occasional authors from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa);

Looking at Germany, the versatile and prolific historian of religions Günter Lanczkowski (1917-1993) published an introductory textbook in 1980 (second edition 1991).⁶⁹ His book is an example of the strategy of briefly presenting various branches or sub-disciplines in the study of religion(s) such as phenomenology, typology, geography, ethnology, sociology, and psychology.⁷⁰ He also addresses relations between the study of religion(s) and theology, critique of religion, and the study of religion(s) as an academic discipline (Lanczkowski, 1980). In 1985, the Dutch scholar Jacques Waardenburg (see above) published an introductory textbook in which he outlines several main trajectories in the study of religion(s), namely historical, comparative, contextual, and hermeneutical research (Waardenburg, 1985). The Swiss historian of religion, Fritz Stolz (see below), published a textbook in which he first discusses different definitions and conceptualizations of religion, and he defines *Religionswissenschaft* as thinking through religion from the outside (Stolz, 1988, pp. 38-42). The following chapters discuss communities as carriers of religions, features of religious messages and symbols, psychological processes, and models of religious change and development. In the final chapter, Stolz attempts to reformulate the program of the phenomenologists as the development of an analytical and classificatory meta-language for thinking through and speaking about religion from a respectful distance (Stolz, 1988, pp. 230-238). Another textbook opted for a different structure altogether; the editor, Hartmut Zinser (b. 1944) from the Freie Universität Berlin,⁷¹ calls his approach to writing a textbook ‘problematic’ (it should rather be ‘problem-based’), meaning that it takes questions and

Braun/McCutcheon, 2000 is the only volume with two European contributors, namely Veikko Anttonen from Finland (on sacred) and Jeppe Sinding Jensen from Denmark (on structure); Antes, Geertz and Warne, 2004 is a different matter, because it was not conceived as a textbook; for a critical review of these field guides, see Engler, 2008.

⁶⁹ In addition to several comparative volumes, many books on different single religions (e.g. on Aztec, Maya and Inca religions) and several works of reference, Lanczkowski also wrote an introduction to the phenomenology of religion (1978; third edition 1992; Japanese translation 1983) and an introduction to the history of religions (1983; second edition 1991), all published with Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

⁷⁰ Hock, 2002, adopts the same strategy.

⁷¹ Zinser is the editor of a book on the demise of religions (1986) and the author of a work on the contemporary esoteric and occultist marketplace (1997)

problems as its organizing principle. Accordingly, Zinser's edited textbook consists of essays on various topics that the holders of the main chairs in Germany (and one from Switzerland) and two related disciplines (anthropology and Old Testament studies) regarded as relevant for the subject, significant for the discipline and suitable for that kind of book (Zinser, 1988). Topics ranged from the subject matter of the discipline (Gladigow), geography (Hoheisel), texts as sources (Rudolph), rituals (Lang), groups (Kehrer), ethics (Antes), ecstasy (Zinser), mysticism (Elsas), phenomenology (Colpe), the relation to theology (Berner), comparative themes such as the suffering righteous (Klimkeit) to issues of national and international identity in a Japanese religion (Pye). Also in 1988, Hans-Jürgen Greschat (b. 1927) from Marburg published a textbook the first two chapters of which try to position the study of religion(s) in epistemological and methodological terms. Further chapters discuss the historical study of religion, where he emphasizes the importance of dialogical encounter beyond textual and visual sources, and the systematic study of religion, where he reformulates phenomenology while pointing at the possibilities and limits of theory and comparison in the study of religion(s) (Greschat, 1988; Brazilian translation 2005). A more recent textbook (Kippenberg and von Stuckrad, 2003), whose two authors represent two generations of scholars, one retired (Kippenberg, b. 1939) and the other one (von Stuckrad, b. 1966), his former student, recently appointed to the chair in Groningen, is based on a discursive approach to the study of religion(s) (see also Kippenberg, 1983; von Stuckrad, 2003). The book presents a critical review of a selection of earlier approaches and theories in the study of religion(s) as a cultural history of the study of religion. In line with a focus on the public communication about religion, where the study of it appears as one (not necessarily privileged) segment, the textbook has two further chapters on public arenas where religion is negotiated and on religious praxis as community and communicative action. The book is largely based the authors previous work, with an acknowledged emphasis on 'Western' data (Kippenberg

and von Stuckrad, 2003). The most recent textbook, by the prolific scholar on Roman religion, Jörg Rüpke (b. 1962), tries to make the case for the historical character of the study of religion. He mainly uses examples from his own field of expertise to illustrate the analytical pay-off of the concepts and categories he addresses, grouped into three parts (texts, actions, organizations). His emphasis on the historical-philological profile of the discipline notwithstanding, in the final section he reflects on the study of religion(s) as a factor of the religious history in the modern age (Rüpke, 2007, p. 161).

(Beyond) disciplinary boundaries

In Western Europe (as probably elsewhere as well), there are no clear-cut boundaries between the specialist area studies, as and when they address religion, and the general study of religion. Academic boundaries are to some extent illusory. Scholars may have a chair in the study of religion(s) while they devote themselves in their research (and often also in their teaching) exclusively to the study of a single religion, whereas scholars from neighboring fields may come up with far more relevant contributions to the general study of religion.

Examples of important inter-disciplinary crossovers include the seminal work undertaken by classicist Walter Burkert (b. 1931) toward a biologically and ethologically informed theory of religion and ritual (see in particular Burkert, 1996) and the comparative and theoretical contributions of Egyptologist Jan Assmann (b. 1938) to the study of the formation of cultural memory (Assmann, 1992; 2006) and monotheism (2008). Moreover, the work of the Italian Jewish historian Carlo Ginzburg (b. 1939) has opened up new ways of writing religious history, both with respect to micro-history, as in his famous early studies *I benandanti* (1966; English [1983] as *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*) and *Il formaggi e i vermi* (1976; English [1980] as *The*

Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller), and with respect to larger morphological and comparative scenarios, as in his ambitious reconstruction of the origins of early modern Witches' Sabbath in ancient ecstasy-cults (1989; English [1991] as *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*).

It should also be pointed out that not all vacancies for chairs of comparative religion are necessarily filled by candidates trained in the subject. The extraordinary demand for competence in the field of Islam, for instance, easily lends itself to recruitment from Oriental Studies, and a background in Indian, Central Asian, Chinese or Japanese studies can also be relevant qualification for positions. In this way, several scholars of religion slid into the field from other backgrounds. Well-known examples include Ninian Smart (who had studied several languages and philosophy), Burkhard Gladigow (b. 1939), and Fritz Stolz (1942-2001). Both the latter scholars have continuously grounded their work in their respective areas of competence while at the same time developing new theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Gladigow has a background in classical philology (and law). He sought to profile *Religionswissenschaft* as cultural studies/study of culture (*Kulturwissenschaft*)⁷² that was to take the place of the void created by the demise of the phenomenological paradigm—a program that was widely echoed in German scholarship. He is the author of a series of essays (many of which are now conveniently available in Gladigow, 2005) on the general study of religion, which were highly influential in the German speaking countries. Further topics he has worked on include the study of polytheisms, ecstasy and sacrifice as well as media and natural sciences.

⁷² Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 235 likewise argues 'that scholars working within religion departments who do not have a theological agenda and who see their work as a critical humanistic inquiry should conceptualize religious studies as cultural studies'. Unfortunately, Fitzgerald was not aware of the work of Gladigow and others in this direction. While this new profile of the discipline enjoys overwhelming consensus in Germany, critical voices from different backgrounds are not lacking; see, e.g., Krech, 2006, pp. 99-101 and Gantke, 2005.

Stolz had a background in Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern studies and had been Professor of Old Testament before he was appointed to the chair in the history of religion at the Faculty of Theology in Zurich.⁷³ Stolz has mainly addressed the problems of monotheism (1996), myth, wisdom-literature, and religious communication (see his posthumously edited collection of essays: Stolz, 2004).⁷⁴ His last published work (Stolz, 2001) is an ambitious and exciting attempt at writing a general history of religions on a strictly comparative basis. Instead of focusing on certain regions, religions, or epochs, his presentation operates by systematically employing some basic polar or binary schemes of differentiation ('Leitdifferenzen') such as nature vs. culture and controllable vs. uncontrollable. This method allows Stolz to analyze the mechanisms and strategies by which 'total worldviews' are being constructed and sustained in various contexts.

Gladigow and Stolz share a preoccupation with visual religion and with improving the terminological vocabulary, i.e. the meta-language, of the study of religion. Stolz has suggested certain terminological innovations such as, for example, the term *Gegenwelt* ('counter-world') to describe processes and phenomena that construct comparable structures of imaginary structures of 'world', and 'processes of exchange' to replace the laden term 'syncretism' (see Stolz, 2004). Gladigow was instrumental in launching the *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (see above). Stolz, in turn, served on the editorial board of the latest edition of the already mentioned *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, introducing several new terms into the lemma-list, such as *Bewegungsrituale* ('rituals of movement/displacement').

Pre-Christian religion in Europe

⁷³ His successor on the chair in Zurich, Christoph Uehlinger (b. 1958), also has a background in Old Testament studies.

⁷⁴ For an assessment of Stolz' work, see Pezzoli-Olgiati, 2004. On his introductory textbook, see above.

This is not the place to take a more detailed look at the empirical work of Western European scholars on various regions, traditions, and epochs of religious history.⁷⁵ A particularly vibrant and also theoretically fruitful area appears to be the study of ancient Mediterranean religious history.⁷⁶ If there is one single field of study to which disproportionately few European scholars have contributed then this must be the study of the religious history and contemporary religious landscape of Northern America—a field which in the US in the meanwhile is solidly institutionalized in terms of chairs, courses, prizes, training programs, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journals, textbooks, source-books, etc. and which enjoys a prominent place in around half the departments surveyed by the AAR-census in the United States (see Warne, 2004, pp. 16-17).

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the study of pre-Christian religions is central to the academic agenda. Throughout Scandinavia, for instance, the study of Old Norse or Ancient Scandinavian religion is an important branch of the scholarly enterprise. The religious history of the Sami (from pre-Christian to neo- and post-Christian varieties) and circumpolar religion in general has also recently been studied in greater detail, albeit by a much smaller international scholarly community. In Finland, the study of autochthonous ‘folk’ religion and Finno-Ugric studies have traditionally formed a prominent area of research. Studies in Celtic religion are conducted at various universities in different ‘Celtic’ countries. In Italy and France a majority of scholars are involved in the study of ancient Mediterranean and Roman religion.

In Germany, on the contrary, with the notable exception of Walter Baetke (see part I [Stausberg, 1997, p. 313]), who worked in the former GDR, the study of Germanic religion

⁷⁵ For brief surveys see Casadio, 2005a; 2005b; Benavides, 2005b. For European studies on African religions see Ludwig and Adogame, 2004.

⁷⁶ This field engages an international scholarly community. A selection of prominent scholars (not all of whom work in departments of religion) includes Christoph Auffarth, Mary Beard, Philippe Borgeaud, Jan Bremmer, Peter Brown, Walter Burkert, Hubert Cancik, Giovanni Casadio, Claude Calame, Marcel Detienne, Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, Ingvild Gilhus, Burkhard Gladigow, Fritz Graf (now teaching in the United States), John North, Simon Price, John Scheid, Jörg Rüpke, Einar Thomassen, Robert Turcan, and Hendrik Versnel.

has been off the scholarly agenda among historians of religions since World War II. Those who study it are mainly based in other departments.

Some scholars work on Neo-pagan movements and the Romantic, nationalist, Fascist, racist, religious and other political and ideological interests informing the past and present studies (and constructions) of these fields. Swedish scholar Mattias Gardell (b. 1959) at the University of Uppsala has published on racism and Asatru/Heathenism (or Odinism) and other forms of religious extremism and racism in the United States (2003). This and his book on The Nation of Islam (1996) establish him as one of the few European scholars of religion dealing with contemporary North American religious history. In recent years, Gardell, who is widely known in Sweden, even beyond academia, has been working on political Islam in the context of globalization and on torture (Gardell, 2008).

National religious histories

While research on pre-Christian and alternative religions has been an important element of the study of religion(s), a recent trend is the publication of large-scale ‘national’ religious histories. The first specimen was the *Histoire de la France religieuse (Religious History of France)*, published in four heavy volumes from 1988 to 1992⁷⁷ followed by the *Storia dell’Italia religiosa (Religious History of Italy)* in three big volumes (1993-1995). Both projects were devised and executed by prominent professional historians such as Jacques Le Goff, René Rémond, André Vauchez and Gabriele De Rosa. The same is true for the German counterpart, which, however, is not yet completed and which covers not a nation but a linguistic area, namely the territories where German is spoken (*Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte im deutschsprachigen Raum*, vol. 1 [2008]; vol. 2 [2000], vol. 5 [2007]).

⁷⁷ Religious histories of several French provinces such as Normandy and Touraine were published in the 1970s and 1980s.

Moreover, the editor of the work, the Austrian historian Peter Dinzelbacher, is also the author of one of the volumes, while the French and Italian works are all edited volumes. In 2005, a *Religious History of Norway (Norges religionshistorie)* was published under the editorship of the folklorist Arne Bugge Amundsen (with two historians of religions as authors).

A similar project on the European scale has not yet been attempted, once again illustrating the predominantly national orientation of European scholarship. The emergence of this new genre also illustrates the interest in religious matters among folklorists and historians (not the least due to the impact of the history of mentality-school). Obviously, numerous historians have contributed enormously to the writing of religious history (mainly in the West) and history remains an important contact discipline for historians of religion. Nevertheless, there appears to be little formalized interaction between the two fields/disciplines, although both face similar theoretical and methodological challenges.⁷⁸

Apart from the national histories, there now are many research projects that try to take stock of the changing religious landscapes by mapping religious diversity at a local level. Moreover, there are some projects that analyze religion on a regional level (see Stausberg, 2009, and the papers of the special issue of this journal, *Religion* 39/2).⁷⁹

Religion at school

The introduction of compulsory, primarily state-run public school education is one of the main features of the development of modern societies. Public schools have been, and still are, main arenas of nation building, and the different place of religion in the school systems across Western Europe reflects contrasting histories, legal frameworks, and political agendas.

⁷⁸ It is indicative of the situation that history rarely appears in works addressing various approaches to the study of religion; see Auffarth, 2002, for an attempt to put perspectives from the study of religion(s) in dialogue with Medieval Studies.

⁷⁹ De Martino's studies on the South are an important early example of a regional approach to religious history.

In the context of school education religion appears as an issue (1) as a subject or object of teaching, (2) with regard to the presence of religious symbols (e.g. on buildings, clothes and ornaments) and practices (e.g. dietary practices) and (3) with respect to the governing bodies of the schools. With respect to the latter point, in some countries school education is strictly a government affair, while religious communities and other interested parties have a say on the teaching of religion in others (for comparative surveys, see Willaime, 2005a; Jackson, Weisse, Miedema and Willaime, 2007). All school systems, however, have in recent years seen new challenges such as the increased religious diversity in European societies, as is reflected in the constituencies of many schools. To a large extent this development is caused by migration, giving Islam a far more visible position in European societies and coinciding with the decline of institutional Christianity across Western European societies. As a result, the teaching of religion has in recent years been intensely negotiated across the continent, with important changes that cannot be discussed here. Wanda Alberts distinguishes between two main strategies: integrative approaches, designed for groups of pupils not necessarily sharing the same religious affiliation; and separative approaches, in which pupils are assigned to different groups according to their, or their parents', religious belonging; Sweden and Norway are examples of the former and Belgium and Germany of the latter (Alberts, 2007, 2008).

The confessional teaching of religion, or instruction in a given Christian confession, appears to be generally under pressure and has been replaced by other approaches in some countries or parts thereof, though it is still vigorously defended by the churches in many countries, or parts thereof.⁸⁰ Most Western European countries have some form of separate teaching about religion, or religious education, as part of the school curriculum. The main exception is France, where, given the dominant understanding of *laïcité* since the strict enforcement of the separation of religion and state in 1905, religion as a subject of school

⁸⁰ It therefore appears wishful thinking when Willaime, 2005b, p. 20 speaks of a strong and real process of deconfessionalization of teaching about religion in schools throughout Europe. That seems a long way from happening—if it ever will.

education has traditionally been out of the question, while religion as a topic can hardly be avoided when teaching other subjects such as arts and history. Since the 1980s, however, the question of teaching religion in public schools has been raised again. The debate intensified in the late 1990s (see Böespflug, Dunand and Willaime, 1996) and some teaching materials were published (see Willaime, 2007, p. 93). In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, the topic gained a new urgency and the then Minister of National Education charged the influential public intellectual, ‘mediologist’ concerned with the modalities of successful transmission of ideas and meaning by mediated communication, and leftist political advisor Régis Debray (b. 1940) with the task of looking into the matter of teaching ‘religious facts’ in secular school.⁸¹ In his report, Debray challenged what he calls a ‘*laïcité* of incompetence’ by introducing the notion of a ‘*laïcité* of intelligence’ (Debray, 2002b, p. 43), i.e. the idea that society can no longer afford to ignore the reality of religion but rather must seek to understand it. In his report, Debray tries to drive home the point that it is possible to acquire knowledge about religion without preaching religion. At the same time, he is against introducing religion as a separate school subject.⁸² Apart from anti-religious laicists and religious traditionalists, reactions to the report were positive (Willaime, 2007, p. 97). However, while there now is a consensus that schools at all levels should pay greater and better qualified attention to ‘the religious fact’, this did not lead to the establishment of religion as a separate school subject. A consequence, however, was the establishment, in 2002, of the Institute Européen en Sciences des Religions (European Institute for the Study of Religion) within the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes;

⁸¹ See Debray 2002a for that concept.

⁸² In 2001 Debray had published a work on the history of conceptualizations of the idea of god (English: Debray, 2004). After writing his report, Régis Debray has published two books on religion (Debray, 2003; Debray, 2005). In the latter book he suggests replacing the ‘illusionary’ concept of religion by that of ‘communion’. In 2007, he published a book in which he criticized the ‘myth’ of the ‘dialogue of civilizations’. In 2008, Debray has published a report on travels to the Middle East under the title *Un candide en Terre sainte*. See Debray, 2000 (French original 1997), for his work on cultural transmission in English.

the aim of this Institute is to bridge the gap between academic research on the one hand and the requirements of school education on the other (see Willaime, 2007, p. 95).⁸³

One important dividing line across Europe concerns the very aims of the subject, even where it goes beyond purely confessional religious instruction. The spectrum ranges from teaching about religions to religious education or, from the perspective of the learners, from learning about to learning from religions. Where the former aims at transmitting information and knowledge, often with the aim of developing cognitive competence in the interpretation of religious matters or religious dimensions of culture such as architecture and history, the latter aims at educating in a wider sense by also affecting and engaging the religious attitudes and identities of students.

The field of religious instruction and instructing about religion(s) is still largely the domain of theologians. Given that the non-theological study of religion(s) has only recently become involved in these matters, the didactics of religion, bridging the academic study of religion(s) with didactic principles and the requirements of the respective school systems, is still very much a nascent field in the study of religion(s), albeit a crucial and relevant one (see Alberts, 2008 for an outline). One aspect of this is the development of curricula and textbooks that are designed in light of the current state of the art in the study of religion(s).

The European Union does not, and cannot, impose any unity in matters of the teaching of/about religion(s) in schools, but all states are bound to respect the European Convention of Human Rights, which rules that no pupil can be forced to attend confessional teaching of religion and that religious freedom must be respected. On an intergovernmental level, both the European Council and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have put religion and education on their agenda in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In 2002, the European Council set up a working party to examine the issues of religion in education,

⁸³ Debray was the first Director of the Institute. Jean-Paul Willaime currently serves as the Director. The Institute has also some regional correspondents. All members are from France. Its radius of activities is also largely French. The meaning of the word 'European' in the name of the Institute is unclear.

resulting in proposals that were adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2003. One practical result was the appointment of ‘a group of specialists in religious and intercultural education to work together to produce a guide for teachers, teacher trainers, administrators and policy-makers to deal with the issue of religious diversity in Europe’s schools’ (Jackson, 2009 referring to Keast, 2007). Another result is the recent (2009) establishment of the The European Wergeland Centre in Oslo, a resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, which reportedly shall also relate to religions (see Jackson, 2009, p. 89).⁸⁴ The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief has in 2007 prepared the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*,⁸⁵ devised ‘to assist OSCE participating States whenever they choose to promote the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, particularly as a tool to enhance religious freedom’ (p. 12). The report concludes that knowledge about religions and beliefs ‘can reinforce appreciation of the importance of respect for everyone’s right to freedom of religion or belief, foster democratic citizenship, promote understanding of societal diversity and, at the same time, enhance social cohesion’; that it ‘has the valuable potential of reducing conflicts that are based on lack of understanding for others’ beliefs and of encouraging respect for their rights’; and that it ‘is an essential part of a quality education’ (pp. 13-14). The report is especially concerned with an adequate training of those who teach about religion and belief. This may well be a major call of duty for the academic study of religion(s) in Europe and beyond.

Among prominent scholars of religion of previous generations, Ninian Smart was exceptional in that he showed an active interest in the sphere of education (see e.g., Smart, 1968). Smart, it is generally agreed, was an instrumental figure for the transition from a

⁸⁴ On the homepage of the Centre, religion is not mentioned; see <http://www.theewc.org/index.html> [accessed April 17th, 2009].

⁸⁵ http://www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2007/11/28314_993_en.pdf

confessional to a post-confessional (multi-faith) kind of religious education in Britain, but there is some disagreement as to the interpretation of his precise contribution and legacy (see Barnes, 2000; O'Grady, 2005; Barnes, 2007). Apart from Smart, several British scholars involved themselves in matters of religious education, and Britain still has the most vibrant academic scene devoted to this field, with the *British Journal of Religious Education*⁸⁶ as its main flagship. Main themes of the journal, which has an increasingly international authorship, include religion and citizenship, religion and plurality, and teaching and learning religion. Note that the *British Journal of Religious Education* is published in association with Christian Education, a charity providing resources for teaching Christianity, governed by a Board of Trustees elected mainly by representatives from church denominations.⁸⁷ The present editor of the journal (since 1996), Robert Jackson, the founding Director of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WERU, since 1994), is a leading voice in the debates about religion and education in Europe. His earlier work, from the late 1980s, focused on Hinduism, and his ethnographic book, co-authored with Eleanor Nesbitt, on Hindu children in Britain (Jackson and Nesbitt, 1993), seems to have led to his work on religious education. The theoretical landscape in England, however, is far from uniform, reflecting approaches in religious studies such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, constructivism, and postmodernism. Besides Jackson's 'interpretive' approach (see Jackson, 1997, 2004)—which emphasizes diversity within religious traditions and the active role of the pupils in the learning process leading to a reflexive reassessment of their own way of life—other British scholars have developed rival educational projects and alternative theoretical approaches to religious education, including experiential, critical, constructivist, and narrative approaches (see

⁸⁶ The journal began its life in 1934 as *Religion in Education*. In 1961, the title was changed to *Learning for Living*. The present title was adopted in 1978. For a brief review of the history of the journal, see Jackson, 2008.

⁸⁷ <http://www.christianeducation.org.uk/about.htm> [accessed April 17, 2009]. The journal was published as an in-house journal by the Christian Education Movement (later Christian Education) until 2004, when it moved to Taylor and Francis/Routledge.

Alberts, 2007, pp. 111-186). In other countries, more often than not, the debate, if present at all, is located in faculties of theology (France being a major exception).

Apart from its inherent relevance and interest, the status and modalities of teaching about religion in the various European countries appear to be decisive for the fate of the academic study of religion(s). As a rule of thumb, one can say that the study of religion(s) flourishes institutionally in those countries where religion is a subject taught in a non-confessional manner in schools and where departments of the study of religion(s) directly contribute to the training of teachers. This is one of the main reasons why the study of religion(s) blossoms in the Scandinavian countries and why its institutional position remains fairly marginal in such countries as France, Germany, and Italy. From the point of view of the present writer, it is only if the study of religion(s) is inclined to involve itself more actively in matters of religious education and didactics—often requiring some attention to political and legal processes and the desire to make the voice of the study of religion(s) heard in these arenas—that it will be able to increase its impact beyond that of a fairly limited academic niche business. This is probably a key emerging issue in the study of religion(s) in Western Europe.

Further Issues and Concerns

It should be clear by now that Western Europe does not present a homogenous academic landscape. Moreover, to a large extent Western Europe increasingly shares transcontinental scholarly agendas. On the one hand, this is due to global issues and challenges such as the emergence of New Religious Movements, alternative religions and Pentecostalism/charismatic Christianity since the 1950s, the transcontinental spread of the New Age movement and issues of globalization more generally, continuous yet changing and

sometimes violent involvement of religion in politics (including the North Ireland conflict, state/church in several countries issues, the controversies on the presence of Muslim and Christian symbols in public spaces, the status of Christianity in the political project of a unified Europe and public education as well as the recent terrorist attacks on Madrid and London), legal and human rights issues, and the impact of modern mass media such as television and the internet. As elsewhere these issues are discussed in contemporary Western European scholarship (with a preponderance of sociologists dealing with the above-mentioned issues). The same is true for other issues on the international research agenda such as the performative-ritual and the territorial-spatial sides to religion (see Kreinath, Snoek and Stausberg, 2006-2007 and Knott, 2005 for theoretical approaches to these issues). Furthermore, there is the transcontinental emergence of theoretical paradigms such as feminism, post-modernism (originally a French development but re-imported to Europe via its American reception) and post-colonialism⁸⁸—albeit not quite to the extent that could have been expected in light of the fact that most European nations were (or still are) colonial powers. Cultural studies, though largely a British invention, has (as yet) not had a great effect on the study of religion in Europe. Cognitive approaches have swept into Europe from the United States but have developed and taken new turns at several places in Western Europe. In line with a greater exposure to public debates, the question of applied, ‘practical’, or engaged science, or of the study of religion(s) put into practice has been raised; examples include pre-school or school education (see above) and other spheres of public life where a knowledge about religion seems relevant for social practice such as social work with regard to children, migrants, and the elderly, medical care, media, the military, politics (often with regard to discourses on small or new religions), prisons, sports, and tourism (see Whaling, 2006, p. 18;

⁸⁸ There now is an expanding corpus of ‘Saidian Studies’ (see Gardaz, 2004, p. 95). See also the special issue of *Religion* (34/2, 2004) edited by Michel Gardaz, which includes a shattering critique of the theoretical and epistemological foundations of Said’s *Orientalism* (Mellor, 2004). For a devastating critique of Said’s *Orientalism* from the point of view of the history of religions, see Casadio, 2004. A key-contribution on post-colonialism is King, 1999. Richard King has in the meanwhile moved to the US (Vanderbilt University).

see also Klöcker and Tworuschka, 2008). The step of taking relevant knowledge into practice, however, remains disputed because of a general understanding of the discipline as descriptive, analytical, historical, and theoretical rather than applied, engaged, and dialogical.

Some developments have helped to draw scholars of religion into public debates. Controversies on so-called cults and New Religious Movements have instigated various legal and political processes, with some scholars of religion getting involved, for example in government commissions (see, e.g., Seiwert, 2004) and in the media. In addition, two organizations were founded in 1988 that aim to make available non-polemical information on a wide spectrum of religious movements. The London School of Economics-based Information Network Focus on New Religious Movements (INFORM), was founded by the sociologist of religion Eileen Barker (b. 1938), a leading scholar of New Religious Movements,⁸⁹ with the help of British Home office and the support of mainstream churches. The Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni (CESNUR) is directed by the attorney and independent scholar Massimo Introvigne (b. 1955),⁹⁰ an extremely prolific scholar, journalist, and editor of wide-ranging interests. His 2005 book on the esoteric mythologies of the writer Dan Brown became a best-seller and was translated into several languages. He plays a leading role in Alleanza Cattolica, a conservative Catholic lay organization aimed at spreading the social gospel of the Catholic Church. In recent years (2006-), Introvigne has published on (what he perceives to be) the post-Christian crisis of contemporary Europe. On an international scale, CESNUR arranges conferences, and in Italy it to some extent dominates the publication landscape on alternative religions and spiritualities. However, CESNUR projects also cover various branches of Christianities, culminating in the publication of the

⁸⁹ See her ground-breaking study of the process of affiliation to Unification Church (Barker, 1984).

⁹⁰ The cofounders were an Italian Roman Catholic priest, Father Ernesto Zucchini, and the Swiss specialist on new, alternative, 'parallel', and controversial religiosities, Jean-François Mayer (b. 1957), who effectively combined roles of scholar, consultant, and political analyst; after some years as strategic and international affairs analyst for the Swiss federal government and a period as a lecturer at the University of Fribourg, he is now active as the founder, director and chief editor of the bilingual *Religioscope* news-website (see <http://www.religion.info> [accessed June 12, 2009]) and as the director of the related Religioscope Institute.

massive *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia* in 2001 (second, revised edition in 2006 as *Le Religioni in Italia*). Both INFORM and CESNUR also research anti- and counter-cult organizations.⁹¹ In 1989, in Germany, a number of Religious Studies graduates founded REMID (Religionswissenschaftlicher Medien- und Informationsdienst/Religious Studies Media and Information Service), also committed to making Religious Studies based information on religious groups available to the media and the general public.⁹²

As a result of 9/11 and the subsequent terrorist attacks, radical Islam has replaced ‘cults’ and NRMs as the main concern in public debates about religion. In Britain, the *Satanic Verses* controversy, which erupted in 1989, had already put religion on the public policy agenda. These developments are also reflected in the agenda of government-sponsored research; as a discipline, Religious Studies is relatively inexperienced in dealing with this sort of research assignments, which also raises a number of important issues in terms of research ethics and methodologies (see Weller, 2007).

Some recent developments in scholarship are country-specific or relate to other disciplines. In Germany, for instance, there is a growing interest in the economic implications and impacts of religion (Gladigow, 1995)⁹³ as well as in the aesthetics of religion (Cancik and Mohr, 1988; Lanwerd, 2002, 2003; Mohn, 2004), but the arts and artifacts (including architecture) in general are highlighted more in international scholarship (see, e.g., Hinnells, 2005b). Mostly outside departments of religious studies, the geography of religion has been an emerging field of study in France, Germany, and Britain since the 1980s (Vincent, Dory and Verdier, 1995; Bertrand and Muller, 1999; Rinschede, 1999; Park, 1994) and geographers

⁹¹ Introvigne himself was one of the founders of a leading Italian Catholic counter-cult organization.

⁹² The present writer has been a member of REMID since 1992.

⁹³ See also the subsequent essays on the financing and funding of religions by Christoph Auffarth, Jörg Rüpke, Thomas Hoffmann, and Günter Kehrer in the same volume. G. Kehrer also edited a special issue of the *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 8/1 (2000) on the economics of religion. Financing of religion is just one aspect of the interfaces between religion and economy and between the study of religion(s) and economics; see the suggested classification and bibliography of economics of religion by Anne Koch (Munich) http://www.religionswissenschaft.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/rel_oek_bibliografie/index.html (accessed May 23, 2009).

have recently mapped the changes in the contemporary religious landscape of Europe (Knippenberg, 2005).

As mentioned previously, studies of pre-Christian religious traditions in Western Europe are an established field of study. Sociologists of religion have undertaken a number of studies on the contemporary religious situation in various countries (see part II [Stausberg, 2008, p. 311]) and of Western Europe in general (see, e.g., Hervieu-Léger, 1992; Davie 2000a, 2000b; Halman and Riis, 2003; Friedly and Purdie, 2004; Cipriani, 2009). Secularization remains a powerful, yet increasingly challenged narrative and theoretical point of reference. Moreover, as already mentioned in the context of national religious histories, historians are increasingly interested in various aspects of religious history, not only of the European Middle Ages or other past eras, but now also including modern developments (e.g., Brown, 2001; Lehmann, 2004). The same holds true for other related disciplines, including folklore studies, art history, musicology, and law.

Hence, Burkhard Gladigow's 1993/95 launch of the program for a religious history of Europe (*Europäische Religionsgeschichte*) was seen as a liberating stimulus, at least in German-speaking areas (Gladigow 1995, 2005, pp. 289-301). Gladigow's program successfully provided an umbrella legitimacy for all sorts of studies on European religious history,⁹⁴ especially since Gladigow devised the subject matter in such a way as to include not only traditional religions but the entire spectrum of formal and informal (diffuse/invisible) systems of meaning-construction and interpretation, which in a broader sense can be qualified as 'religious'.⁹⁵ This also applies to what Gladigow (2005, p. 294) refers to as 'vertical transfer', i.e. the impact that elements of other societal sub-systems such as the natural sciences and arts have on the religious sphere; this process also includes the reinvention of

⁹⁴ However, to my eyes, his claim (Gladigow, 2005, p. 28) that Europe is the region of the globe with the highest 'density' of different religions does not stand the test of cross-cultural comparison considering, to take just one example, the case of India.

⁹⁵ A religious history of Europe thereby covers a much wider terrain than a history of religions in Europe.

religions by means of their scholarly representation, for instance by scholars inventing new religions or by them making religious texts available for consumption by larger audiences who may appropriate these texts in ways not original intended by the scholars. This approach can be linked to debates going on in sociology, e.g., on ‘invisible’ religion (Luckman, 1967; see Prandi, 2005), ‘diffused’ religion (Cipriani, 1988), ‘dispersed’, ‘liquid’ or ‘implicit religion’ (see the journal *Implicit Religion* [1988-]), ‘non-institutionalized religion’ (see ter Borg, 2006),⁹⁶ or ‘secular’ forms of religiosity (Piette, 1993), studies of the appropriation, discovery, imagination/imagining, invention, reception and recreation of ‘other’ religions in European history,⁹⁷ media representations of religions,⁹⁸ and the vibrant field of studies on migration and diasporas.

The study of history of religion in Europe as devised by Gladigow to some extent cross-fertilizes with the blossoming, but politically suspect, field of study of Western Esotericism⁹⁹ which has undergone a process of scholarly professionalization and institutionalization in its own right: at present, there are three chairs (at Paris [EPHE], Amsterdam, and Exeter) with related MA-programs, a sub-department at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Amsterdam, a Centre at Exeter, a scholarly journal (*Aries: journal for the study of Western esotericism*, see the programmatic essay Hanegraaff, 2001) as

⁹⁶ In 2006 a chair was founded at Leiden University (Institute for Religious Studies) for the study of non-institutional religion in the Netherlands held by Meerten B. ter Borg, formerly Lecturer of Sociology.

⁹⁷ Part of my own previous work (Stausberg, 1998) analyzes the early modern history of the reception of the figure of Zoroaster in various intellectual contexts and literary genres as part of a discursive history of religion in Europe.

⁹⁸ Museums offer an interesting case. The first public museum focusing on religions in general established within an academic Religious Studies framework was the Religionskundliche Sammlung started by Rudolf Otto at the University of Marburg in 1927. The collection of the museum is to some extent based on objects Otto had collected himself during his travels. Otto devised the museum in explicit contrast to museums of anthropology, arts, and history. His collection was supposed to throw light on the specific character of religion and to present religion as a living reality. The museum is now headed by the chair of *Religionswissenschaft* at the University (currently Edith Franke); in addition, there is a curator (Katja Triplett) in charge of the scholarly aspects of the collection. In 1993, the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art was opened in Glasgow, Scotland, in close proximity to the Gothic cathedral. In fact, the idea for a museum of religion has developed out of the original plan to open a visitor centre for the cathedral. For a sociological study of visitor reactions, as witnessed by the (respectively positive, neutral, or negative) comments left by visitors on the “comments board”, see Michel, 1999; for the representation of religion in museums in general, see Bräunlein, 2004.

⁹⁹ For a useful survey see von Stuckrad, 2005. In political terms, because of the affiliation of many leading esotericists with right-wing political organizations, many scholars of esotericism find themselves accused of having right-wing political sympathies themselves. Some of those accused deny these claims.

well as a massive and very solid dictionary (Hanegraaff, 2005) plus a professional association (European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism [ESSWE], founded in 2005). Olav Hammer, known for his work on the New Age (Hammer, 2001), who is a former staff member at the Amsterdam Institute and now holds a chair in the study of religion in Odense (Denmark), has in the meantime (jointly with Tim Jensen) started a Research Network on European History of Religions (NEUR), effectively combining both fields of study. Hammer is the incoming co-editor of *Numen* and the book-review editor of the *Journal of Religion in Europe*. Launched in 2008, this latter journal, published by Brill and edited by Hans Kippenberg and Kocku von Stuckrad (co-authors of a recent German textbook [see above] and the latter a prominent figure within the study of Western Esotericism), follows up on Gladigow's program by making 'pluralism' its conceptual leitmotif (see Kippenberg and von Stuckrad, 2008; see also Kippenberg, von Stuckrad and Rüpke, 2009; Auffarth, 2006).

While the field of 'Western' Esotericism clearly includes Northern America, the relationship between Gladigow's model and North American religious history is unclear both conceptually and historically. Be that as it may, as far as I can tell, scholars in American religion do not seem to be aware of the recent upsurge of studies in European religious history, while Gladigow and associates have shown no interest in relating their emerging historical paradigm to the well-established field of American Religion (as another branch of Western religious history). Transatlantic perspectives are emerging slowly (see Lerat and Rigal-Cellard, 2000), mostly among historians (see Lehmann, 2006) and sociologists (see Berger, Davie and Fokas, 2008), while many scholars of American religion look at Europe as providing antecedents of later developments in the US ('European legacies').

In the post-Eliade, post-Smart era and given the current emphasis on dense contextualization, very few scholars dare to lay their hands at a general or universal history of religions (for exceptions see above). While this reluctance is understandable in light of the

increasing specialization of scholarship as well as the diversification, differentiation, and sheer increase of knowledge, the present writer agrees with Volkhard Krech that the avoidance of taking a broader or even a global and comparative perspective also obstructs our view on issues of global importance and possibly relevant macro-perspectives (Krech, 2006, pp. 110-113). The history of religions, it seems, has failed to pay attention to recent discussions on universal history, ‘deep history’ and similar developments in the general study of history. Attention to global history contributes to efforts to challenge different versions of ethnocentrism.

While evolutionism was since the end of World War I replaced by phenomenology as the main paradigm of the study of religion (other competing paradigms being functionalism and existentialism),¹⁰⁰ the crisis of phenomenology since the 1970s was not followed by any one reigning paradigm. Instead, several attempts were made to seek to rehabilitate the study of religion under other umbrellas such as anthropology, the social sciences, or *Kulturwissenschaften*. In many ways, the diagnosis of the state of affairs provided by Frank Whaling and Ursula King a quarter of a century ago still holds true, especially when Whaling talks about an ‘increasing diversification of methodological discussion’ (Whaling, 1984, p. 5) and when King speaks about a ‘current state of criticism and uncertainty’ (King, 1984, p. 149)—the latter tendencies being in the meanwhile intensified by feminism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism. Other, similar descriptors of the situation are fragmentation, hyper-specialization, diversity, complexity, and escalation (see Whaling, 2006; Gardaz, 2009). The publication of various guides, companions, and textbooks is also to be seen in the light of these developments.

Reviewing the development of the study of religion in Denmark, current IAHR secretary general Tim Jensen points to the following changes: ‘... there can be no doubt that

¹⁰⁰ See Stensvold, 2004 for an attempt to apply Kuhn’s theory for describing the history of religious studies; but see also Krech, 2002, pp. 39-83 for a broader survey of paradigms. Kippenberg, 1994 emphasizes the basic continuity from evolutionism and phenomenology with regard to their basic understanding of religion.

theoretical and methodological issues have become much more an integral as well as explicit part of the business . . . , and historical-philological methods have been supplemented by a multitude of methods, not the least among the younger scholars' (Jensen, 2002, p. 189). Applying a larger (West European) perspective, the latter statements are uncontroversial. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that philology, even if not rated highly in abstract terms, still is the backbone of much, if not most, advanced scholarship in the field throughout Europe and, to my eyes at least, still constitutes one of the strengths of the study of religion in Western Europe. Moreover, philologists who don't hold a chair in religious studies departments continue to make valuable contributions to the study of religion(s). However, philology is certainly no longer the master-method in the study of religion(s), and even the importance of history, let alone the centrality of historical methods, can no longer be taken for granted.¹⁰¹ As to theory, Jensen's statement may be true in historical perspective, but it seems to me that theory does not appear to be high on the agenda in Western European scholarship (with some exceptions confirming the rule). A similar tendency can be observed with regard to methods and methodology. While current scholarship is characterized by a much greater attention and reflexivity with regard to methodological issues, and some introductory books on methods have been published (see above), methodological debates are still rather low-key.¹⁰²

In recent decades, there has been an ongoing shift of interest towards contemporary religions and changing religious environments. Religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism are increasingly studied with ethnographic methods or by combining ethnography and philology. For the future, however, in all likelihood philological methods,

¹⁰¹ See Casadio, 2005a, 2005b for political and epistemological changes that have affected the ways of writing of history (including the historical study of religions).

¹⁰² For a different assessment (mainly formulated for North America, it seems), see Gardaz, 2009, p. 285: 'There is a tendency among some scholars of religion to spend more time analyzing methodological questions rather than studying religion itself'; see also Whaling, 2006, p. 20: 'Methodology . . . is in danger of being seen as the end rather than the means for the study of religion.'

maybe the hallmark of European scholarship for the past century, are doomed to lose further ground—be it only for the simple reason that the training of languages other than English is receding in many countries, in part due to the constraints of shortened curricula. In many countries, education in classical languages is now an exception. This will probably also lead to a diminished interest in acquiring language skills in general. Moreover, philological and historical studies are not much appreciated by politicians and administrators (see Sharpe, 2005, p. 38).

Last but not least, political and administrative issues will certainly continue to influence the shape of the academic landscape, even though Western European scholarship has by and large—exceptions confirming the rule—remained politically uncommitted.¹⁰³ There are many developments of this sort: e.g. the standardization of higher education, resulting in a shortening of the educational period including research training (dissertations thereby getting shorter and less ambitious); enforced mergers of departments; a focus on larger and interdisciplinary research units (at the expense of the classical monograph-style work, building on decades of individual research) operating in briefer periods of time (five people working three years on a topic instead of one scholar fifteen years) and often involving wide networks of visiting scholars; the blossoming of symposia and conferences (resulting in channeling scholarly output away from journals and into edited volumes, often put together in great haste, sometimes mainly to impress sponsors); the increasing quantitative ‘measuring’ of academic and scholarly ‘performance’ and output (resulting in encouraging more short-term activities and an overproduction of publications that hardly anybody finds the time to read anymore); the management and funding of universities as if they were business enterprises;¹⁰⁴ and, last but not least, the politicization of research agendas, with funding agencies deciding on thematic programs and politically correct and ‘relevant’ topics often at

¹⁰³ So far, the political climate has, unlike the United States, not limited the freedom of expression of scholars, nor led to politically imposed self-censorship (see Gardaz, 2009, p. 286).

¹⁰⁴ For reflections on this from a Canadian perspective, see Gardaz, 2006, p. 552.

the expense of ‘research-driven research’ (Weller, 2007, p. 6) and the creativity and innovative power of the lone scholar.

Addenda and corrigenda

- In the first part of this essay I referred to Portugal and Ireland as the two remaining blind spots for the study of religion(s) in Western Europe (Stausberg, 2007, p. 296). That situation has now changed with the establishment of a national association in Portugal see part II (Stausberg, 2008, p. 309) and the establishment of a new subject ‘Religions and Global Diversity’ to the BA Arts degree at University College Cork, where a chair was established in 2008 (held by Brian Bocking, formerly at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London).
- Contrary to my statement in part II (Stausberg, 2008, p. 315), Ugo Bianchi did not sign the Marburg manifest.
- For postwar developments of the sociology of religion in France, see Willaime, 1999.
- For the early history of the study of religion(s) in France, see also Gardaz, 1995.

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