

The Brill Dictionary of Religion

Edited by Kocku von Stuckrad

*Revised edition of Metzler Lexikon Religion
edited by Christoph Auffarth, Jutta Bernard
and Hubert Mohr*

Translated from the German by Robert R. Barr

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the world. Steiner understands art, with a reference to Goethe, as a kind of knowledge. This concept is unthinkable without the Platonic doctrine of the Ideas and the Allegory of the Cave, but it composes the 'Ideas' ('original images') once more in a oneness of the cosmos, the latter being available to experience in 'supra-sensory knowledge' of the true self, which is a part of this oneness. The concept accordingly takes its place among the monistic designs inspired by Neoplatonism.

1. Plato, *Politeia*, book 4, init. (514a-518b).
2. NIETZSCHE, Friedrich, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorrede*, 1885.
3. STEINER, Rudolf, *Die Philosophie, Kosmologie und Religion in der Anthroposophie*, Dornach 1980.

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→ *Antiquity, Aristotelianism, Atlantis, Augustine, Esotericism, Gnosticism, Heresy, Hermeticism/Hermeticism, Islam, Kabbalah, Late Antiquity, Mysticism, Renaissance, Utopia*

Agnes Imhof

Pluralism

1. Immanuel Kant, following Christian Wolff, offers the first definition of 'pluralism' worthy of discussion: by contrast with the 'egoist,' the 'citizen of the world' tests his judgments and his practical goals against the judg-

ments and goals of other persons. Kant is thus a 'pluralist.' But he cannot show what protects these pluralists or this pluralism from becoming either a reservoir of chronic hesitators, waverers, and relativists, or else developing into a collective conformism through an increasing joining together into each other's judgments and goals. The pluralistic cultures and societies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, on the other hand, have developed complex structures, which offer a solution for these problems. Thus, they adopt various historical, cultural, and societal developments (Schwöbel), which differentiate, in themselves and mutually, their respective guises of knowledge, norms, forms of communication, and institutions, but no longer order them in a simple hierarchy. Various multi-hierarchical coinages are developed—from ecclesial life, theological (Lehmann, Mehlhausen, Tracy, Welker) and religious life (Hick, Knitter, Ogden, Rouner), from the moral life (Kekes, Rescher) and that of the 'worldview' (Hermes, James), from the political and legal life (Galtung, Hollerbach, Preuss), from the scientific life (Diemer, Hampe, Spinner)—and finally called 'pluralistic.'

2. Pluralism consists of a complex, but clear, form of social, cultural, and religious coexistence. True, pluralism is still repeatedly confused with a certain vague 'multiplicity,' a 'diversity,' a 'plurality,' or a 'pluralization,' to which persons may ultimately react only with diffuse enthusiasm, or diffuse fears and defensive attitudes. Just as misleading as the confusion of pluralism with sheer plurality is the identification of pluralism with individualism. Although pluralism certainly supports individualism, it is nevertheless a configuration of community forms. In → North America, where the multiplicity of cultures and religions is taken for granted, in the 1970s the level of recognition and acknowledgment was reached in which—still somewhat oversimplifying—a 'community of communities' was spoken of. To put it more exactly, pluralism necessitates a point of departure in a multiplicity of cultural, social, religious, or other groupings, each with its own history, its own norms and evidences, but likewise with a capability of developing, in various degrees, common goals, common value concepts, and so on. Relative communalities and relative differences among institutional and normative forms are indispensable in pluralism.

At the same time, pluralism necessitates an inquiry into mentalities and forms that not only mediate among these organizational forms, communities, orderings, institutions, and illustrations, but also maintain and reinforce their difference and individuality. Not simply the taming of selfishness (Jünger), not simply integration and unification, but the maintenance of differences, the mediation and simultaneous cultivation of difference of forms—this is what composes pluralism. In order to create and to maintain the complicated 'power cycles' of pluralism (Habermas), two different forms of 'variety' and their interplay are necessary, as becomes clearly recognizable on the level of societies:

a) Sociologists call one form of variety 'associations.' The overall connection of associations—to the extent that they affect the other 'variety'—is also designated today, in sociology and the cultural sciences, 'civil society' (Gramsci, Habermas). Here it is a matter of alliances of persons for determinate ends, with determinate goals, with determinate ethics, with determinate value conceptions. These associations extend from spontaneous citizens' initiatives to parties and well-organized interest alliances. These associations

Community and Communities

Civil Society and Differentiation of Systems

Relativism or Conformism

come into existence, alter, and go out of existence with the interests, the ethics, the value conceptions, and the goals of their members (→ Charitable Organizations).

Institutions of the 'Part-System'

b) The other 'variety' is more stable. It consists of institutions and systematic forms that gain their stability on the societal level by reason of the fact that they perceive indispensable basic functions for the whole of society. Politics, the economy, education, the legal system, the religious system are forms that were also called "differentiated part-systems of society." Many sociologists have recognized, instead, a small role for the associations vis-à-vis the part-systems (such as Luhmann against Habermas). It is characteristic of pluralistic societies and cultures that this plurality of part-systems cannot be ordered according to a simple hierarchy. For educators, education may be most important; for politicians, politics; for theologians, religion; for jurists, law; and so on. But one cannot be replaced by another or permanently preferred to another. Rather, as soon as a particular part-system becomes all too dominant, pluralistic societies react with uneasiness and counter-directions.

Dynamics of Systematic Forms

For the pluralistic culture, it is indispensable that the difference among the part-systems, the difference among the associations, and the differentiation of these two forms, be maintained, cultivated, and constantly renewed. Societal pluralism limits human power in its interference in societal reality and its shape and form. At the same time, it boosts power within the bounds of the systems, inasmuch as the systems shield themselves from considerations and interferences with other indispensable tasks in the maintenance of the common life, by promoting specializations and professionalizations (→ Specialists [religious]). Simultaneously, system-differentiation stimulates the development of associations that aim partly at maintenance and stabilization, partly on the destabilization and alteration of the systematic forms: parties seek to promote or correct prevailing policies; citizens' initiatives work on the legal system or on social mechanisms and pressures; parents' groups and academic associations acquire preservative or critical influence on the educational system. While associations of civil societies can render the boundaries between systems problematic, they must be intent on their solidification. The tensions bound up with them are often felt painfully.

Dangers of Pluralism

3. The high importance of a complicated pluralism, the highly developed, but also endangered form of coexistence in freedom that it offers, is recognizable precisely vis-à-vis its actual or looming destruction. An especially striking annihilation of an emerging pluralistic communality was experienced in Germany at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. It began with populist movements that drowned out or absorbed the differences in the associations of civil society. But if the differences in civil society are leveled out through comprehensive populist movements, the systematic differences (in politics, law, religion, education, and so on) are in danger of being themselves 'brought into line.' With irresistible force, such a movement soon monopolizes most societal systems of function across the board. Mass media and politics are the first to succumb, since they themselves, in pluralism, are absolutely dependent on echo and resonance. Through politics and the mass media, the influence of the great populist movement becomes

authentic and genuine power. The 'getting into line' (*Gleichschaltung*, as Fascism expressly formulated it) of the economy and the educational system is then only a question of time. Nor does even the legal system or religion manage to keep immune from this development. Unfortunately, the history of Germany in the twentieth century teaches this lesson twice.

The inner composition of pluralism is not only in danger of being rolled up into balls by populism, through a relentless dictatorship of the majority, or by other totalitarian developments. It can also be unhinged and wrecked by an epidemic of selfishness and egotism, or paled and obliterated in the grey of conformism. Hannah Arendt has described the danger of a mass society destroying the powers and vitality of social groups, and thus their potentials for freedom (→ Masses). Her point of departure is that, in a society of masses and the mass → media, the public political area will be slowly eroded and effaced (but see also Berger, Rescher). An interplay of administration, method, and self-entrenchment then replaces the living shaping of common life by citizens—free, and politically and culturally mature.

In a broader perspective, Jürgen Habermas sees an endangerment to the strength of the associations of civil society and thereby to pluralism. He uses the name 'system-paternalism' for the danger that the societal part-systems would absorb, intimidate, paralyze, and incapacitate the associations. He warns against releasing the function-systems from their instrumental role, and offering 'societal discourses' on 'administration' as a coalescence of function-systems and free associations ('supervision state'), or even merely to wish to do so. In multiple fashions, the strength of pluralism in terms of civil society is weakened, not so much by intimidation and direct impediments, as by monopolization and compression through the function systems. At our present turn of the century, the mighty connection of market, technology, and electronic mass media threatens to destroy the strength of civil society. The media force some themes and repress others; they engender illusions of public communication and persons' participation. In so doing, they interfere massively in public space. Doubtless they stimulate plurality, and forms of individualism. But they threaten pluralism as a demanding and sophisticated form of human coexistence. It remains to be seen whether and how pluralism may be able to tame the 'system-paternalism' of the media.

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→ *Conflict/Violence, Constitution, Democracy, European History of Religion, Group (Religious), Modernity/Modern Age, North America, Polytheism, Science, Secularization*

Michael Welker

Polemics

1. There is a rhetorical 'attack strategy' for quarreling: *polemics* (Gk., *po-lemiké téchne*), identified by irrelevantly aggressive, but overpoweringly argumentational, discourse. Its intent is the annihilation of the opponent's position, or even of his or her person. Thus, its address is to an audience that offers evaluation, but that can be fictitious, as well. The corresponding counterpart is *apologetics* (from Gk., *apologetikós*, '[discursively] defending'), as a technique of reacting to polemics defensively and in an attempt at justification. Together, both forms issue in a fluctuation in many ways, in which attacker and defender are no longer distinguishable.

2. Polemics is not limited to the religious area, but does take a key position there. Accordingly, the spectrum of themes and occasions is a broad one. For example, ritual differences, such as the seemingly secondary question of what clothing monks should wear, led, in the twelfth century, to very virulent controversies between black and white Benedictines. But the Christian edifice of dogma as well—and especially the necessity of a closed canon of teachings—has arisen from apologetical-polemical situations. The need for an attempt at justification vis-à-vis state and society, confrontation with Christian 'deviators,' and aggressive closing off from foreign religions—similarly through external defense and internal stabilization—has contributed to the formation of Christian groups' identities.

The medieval confrontations between Pope and Emperor are among the climaxes of polemics in history: they led to reciprocal reproaches that have endured to our very day: Pope Gregory XI or Emperor Frederick II was the → Antichrist. According to a thesis of C. Erdmann, the first state propaganda arose in reaction to papal assaults, and this precisely in the year 1076, as Henry IV, in a skillfully stylized polemical writing, countered Gregory VII's threat of excommunication.

3. Religious polemics has survived in the linguistic usage of → science and the press down to our own day. Stigmatizing expressions like → superstition, → heathen, → heresy, anti-pope, → magic, and → animism are used to discredit various religions by appealing to negative 'heterostereotypes' (→ *Prejudices/Stereotypes*).

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→ *Anti-Semitism, Conflict/Violence, Group (Religious), Heresy, Pluralism, Prejudices/Stereotypes, Theology*

Achim Hack

Political Religion

The concept 'political religion' (in Fr., *religion politique; religion séculière*, Fr., 'secular religion') is used to denote totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, such as → National Socialism, Stalinism, and Maoism (→ Mao [Cult of]), under the viewpoint of a union of church and state, a condition so pregnant with consequences. It was political scientist and philosopher Eric Voegelin who offered the first systematic treatment of the theme, against the background of a strengthening National Socialism in 1938, with his essay, *Die politischen Religionen* (Ger., "The Political Religions"). In political religion, he saw a process typical of the modern age: the relocation of transcendent Christian salvation into world and history (→ Secularization). The separation of the secular and spiritual areas, harking back ultimately to → Augustine, with the help of a Christian anthropology, had rendered it possible to relate the two disparate quantities, Voegelin held. Thomas Hobbes, he said, had surrendered this relationship-in-distinction, to the advantage of an identity of the worldly governmental area and the Church, and consequently described the pattern of totalitarian systems. A few years before Voegelin's publication, the relationship of religion and state, discussed ever and again since antiquity, had become the object of a renewed confrontation, carried on mainly between state juristic scholar Carl Schmitt and theologian Erik Peterson. Peterson, on theological grounds, rejected the political theology that Schmitt had drafted as a legitimization of state sovereignty. Schmitt's concept of political theology is to be distinguished from J. B. Metz's 'new political theology'—appearing from the end of the 1960s—which had been influenced by Latin American → liberation theology, and at whose midpoint, in the sense of a social criticism institutionalized in the form of the Church, stands the Christian proclamation. Only since the 1970s has the (by now clearly perceived) religious aspect of the totalitarian systems shifted to the foreground even of research in totalitarianism. With a point of departure in parallels between political speech and presentation, on the one side, and religious speech or religious cult on the other, totalitarian regimes have now been conceptualized, in the approach taken under this theory, as 'inner-worldly religions.' For the purpose of a legitimization of their government, these totalitarian regimes, in the form of 'inner-worldly religions,' relate to absolute values, and propagate religious-seeming *Weltanschauungen*. (Religious speech and cult are interesting and productive for analysis on the example of the Nuremberg Reich's Party Day.)

Polemics and Apologetics

Formation of Identity by Way of Situations of Apologetics and Polemics

Polemics and Propaganda