

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue (*Implicit Religion*): The discourse of religion in contemporary social formations

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Scholars of religion with diverse disciplinary affiliations have traced the concept of religion to its early roots in the so called War of Religion and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th century (e.g., Jonathan Z. Smith, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Timothy Fitzgerald) and linked it to “its Siamese twin ‘secularism’” (Talal Asad). According to this line of argument, the concept of religion is together with ‘secularism’ a child of early modernity. Roughly in parallel with this discussion among scholars of religion, contemporary social formations have been theorised in social and cultural studies as late capitalist (e.g., Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas), neoliberal (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe), post-fordist (e.g., Nancy Fraser), (post)colonial (e.g., Homi Bhabha) or (cognitive-)cultural capitalist (e.g., Allen J. Scott, Slavoj Žižek, Andreas Reckwitz). These terms relate to macro-sociological transformations and the production of power while each zooms into different aspects of these dynamics such as culture, identity and socio-economic structures.

The general aim of the special issue is to bring both areas of scholarship into conversation in order to carve out the ideological work of the discourse of religion in contemporary social formations. Bruce Lincoln recently stated that “religious coding offers the best protection for systems, structures, privileges, and inequities that are otherwise very difficult to defend” (Lincoln 2018, 33). We follow his lead by broadening his statement in the sense that “religious coding” is a potential resource for the legitimization of hegemonic claims and positions as well as for those claims challenging hegemony. In this perspective, the discourse of religion (re)produces and circulates conceptualizations of religion and corresponding classificatory systems which compete for hegemony. Similar to the meaning of other floating signifiers, “which organize the great classificatory system of difference” (Jhally & Hall 1996) such as race, ‘religion’ cannot be fixed to a specific meaning and locked in its totality across time and space.

We invite contributions that analyse the unfolding of the discourse of religions in different social fields, contexts, groups and at different levels, from micro-politics in everyday interactions up to processes of institutionalization and dynamics on a global scale. Furthermore, contributions relevant to the dynamics as outlined before using diverse approaches from ethnographic case studies to general theorization are welcome.

The following questions may serve as points of departure:

- (1) What role does the discourse of religion exactly play in social formations? In how far can we detect transformations of concepts of religion and the corresponding classificatory system in this discourse and relate them to macro-sociological changes?
- (2) How do concepts of religion link up with other classificatory systems producing difference in contemporary societies such as race, class and gender? What configurations emerge from these discursive entanglements? How do they shape contemporary subjectivity?
- (3) How is hegemony/power inscribed and produced in the discourse of religion in contemporary social formations? What is marginalized or excluded?
- (4) What kind of subjectivities are produced and challenged in the discourse of religion?
- (5) How are materialities (bodies, technologies, architecture etc.) implicated, produced and formed in the discourse of religion?

Abstract should be no longer 500 words and be send to Steffen Führding (fuehrding@irw.uni-hannover.de) until 30 April 2020. We will react to the submissions until end of June. The special issue is planned for 2021.

Implicit Religion offers an international platform for scholarship that challenges the traditional boundary between religion and non-religion, the secular and the tacit assumptions underlying this distinction. It invites contributions from a critical perspective on various cultural formations that are usually excluded from religion by the gatekeeping practices of the general public, practitioners, the law, and even some scholars of religion. Why is this data boundary-challenging? What do such marginal cases tell us about boundary management and category formation with respect to religion? And what interests are being served through acts of inclusion and exclusion? Furthermore, *Implicit Religion* welcomes contributions that focus on the micro-politics of this boundary work, the production of identities and their interplay with (other) socio-cultural dynamics.

For further inquiry, please contact Steffen Führding at fuehrding@irw.uni-hannover.de

References:

Jhally, Sut, and Stuart Hall. 1996. *Race: The Floating Signifier*. Film. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation.

Laclau, Ernesto. 1993. „Discourse“. In *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, herausgegeben von Robert E. Goodin und Philip Pettit, 431–37. Cambridge (MA): Blackwell.

Lincoln, Bruce. 2018. *Apples and Oranges. Explorations in, on, and with Comparison*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.