

Differentiation Theory and the Sociology of Religion and Secularity

Boundaries of Religion: Demarcations and Negotiations

Workshop at the Centre for Advanced Studies
"Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities", Leipzig University
3/4 June 2021, online via zoom

Convenors: Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig University), Christoph Kleine (Leipzig University),
and Daniel Witte (University of Bonn)

Approach

The second workshop on the usability of differentiation theory for research on secularity turns to the meso and micro level of social differentiations and conceptual distinctions in relation to 'religion'. It explores concrete empirical and historical cases that are instructive for the demarcation and negotiation of boundaries between 'religion' and other social spheres and practices. What are the activities and spheres between which the drawing of boundaries becomes visible? Which actors are involved? Which conflicts does the process evoke? And what are the underlying social problems and dynamics to which differentiation processes are related?

By putting both structural and conceptual boundaries of religion centre stage, we also want to address the relation between social and epistemic structures: Which semantics and interpretations (positive and negative) accompany (underlie, follow from etc.) the practical and institutional processes of differentiation? To what extent do conceptual demarcations and the shifting of semantic distinctions possibly also follow a logic of their own, which then affects structural patterns of societies?

Finally, research on processes of societal or institutional differentiation, on the one hand, and conceptual or semantic distinctions, on the other, also require attention to oppositional and adversary tendencies: Are there contrasting cases in which such differentiation and distinction would, in principle, be possible, but in fact does not take place? Are there cases in which previously existing differentiations are again dissolved? Do we find cases in which differentiation is introduced only on the surface level? And, if so, what are the reasons for that?

The workshop aims at a comparative perspective by bringing different regional and historical constellations of religion and its respective others together. This does not imply that the single papers need to be explicitly comparative. However, our goal is to relate papers on different contexts to one another and to discuss them in a comparative perspective.

The workshop will take place online via zoom. The corresponding connection data will be made available to all registered participants shortly beforehand. **People interested in attending may register at multiple-secularities@uni-leipzig.de by 31 May.**

Schedule

3 June 2021

09:00–09:30 Opening Session

Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (Leipzig University) / Christoph Kleine (Leipzig University) / Daniel Witte (University of Bonn)

09:30–10:30 Session 1 – Paper Presentations

[Dietrich Jung \(University of Southern Denmark\)](#)

"Niklas Luhmann and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. Boundary negotiations between religion and science in the Abbasid Empire"

[Karolin Wetjen \(University of Kassel\)](#)

"Demarcating the Religious and the Secular in the Colonial Sphere. Protestant Mission and the Entangled Perception of Circumcision and Polygamy in East Africa"

[Magnus Echtler \(Leipzig University\)](#)

"King and Messiah: Demarcating the religious field in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa "

Comment: [Detlef Pollack \(University of Münster\)](#)

10:45–11:45 Session 1 – Discussion

13:15–14:00 Session 2 – Paper Presentations

[Christoph Kleine \(Leipzig University\)](#)

"From Normative to Functional Differentiation? The Conceptual Reorganisation of Japanese Society According to Suzuki Daisetsu's (1870–1966) New Theory of Religion (Shin-shūkyō ron 新宗教論; 1896)"

[Thao Nghiem \(University of Groningen\)](#)

"From Feudalistic to Communist Understanding of Religion: An Analysis of Religious Governance in Vietnam during the Nguyen dynasties (1802-1945) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-1975)"

Comment: [Adrian Hermann \(University of Bonn\)](#)

14:15–15:15 Session 2 - Discussion

15:45–16:45 Session 3 – Paper Presentations

[Sudipta Kaviraj \(Columbia University\)](#)

"Historical thinking about religion and analytics of Durkheim and Weber"

[Jens Greve \(University of Innsbruck\)](#)

"The secularization of religious reasons in modern society"

[Hubert Seiwert \(Leipzig University\)](#)

"Social Differentiation, Religion, and Ideology in Early Modern China and Modern Societies"

Comment: [Daniel Witte \(University of Bonn\)](#)

17:00–18:00 Session 3 – Discussion

4 June 2021

09:00–10:00 Session 4 – Paper Presentations

[Kai Preuß \(Hamburg University\)](#)

"The Powers of Selfdistinction. Secularity and Pastoral Power in St. Augustine"

[Sita Steckel \(University of Münster\)](#)

"Differentiation theory and historical secularities: A perspective from the European past (Pt. II)"

[Thomas Kern / Insa Pruiken \(both Bamberg University\)](#)

"Social Differentiation and the Rise of New Forms of Religious Organization – The Case of Protestantism in the US"

Comment: [Philip Gorski \(Yale University\)](#)

10:15–11:15 Session 4 – Discussion

11:45–12:45 Session 5 – Paper Presentations

[Christel Gärtner \(University of Münster\)](#)

"Secularity as a point of reference: Demarcations between religious and secular sphere in biographical positioning"

[Uta Karstein \(Leipzig University\)](#)

"Art and Religion – the Case of Michael Triegel"

[Fabian Hempel / Uwe Schimank \(both Bremen University\)](#)

"Literary Reflections on the Differentiation of Religion and Science in Postcolonial Formations of Modernity"

Comment: [Monika Wohlrab-Sahr \(Leipzig University\)](#)

13:00–14:00 Session 5 – Discussion

15:00–16:00 Closing Discussion