

Religion or Religious Studies

What Difference Does it Make?

Robert Ensign, Morris Brown College

Abstract

Unique among other disciplines in the academy, religion is almost exclusively approached as an *object* of study. Study *of* religion becomes study *about* religion. This approach, where religion becomes religious studies, is the product of the science-based *Wissenschaft* principle, which is often perceived to be wholly objective, without presupposition, and value-free. However, a post-modern critique shows that this principle itself is really none of these. This paper represents a call for re-orienting our approach to religion in the academy. Using a specific case at a specific institution - a historically Black, church-related liberal arts college - we will develop an approach in which the discipline of religion becomes *subject* of study: study *of* religion becomes study *by* religion. We will show that such an approach is not only possible in the academy, but also desirable.

A Specific Situation

[1] At small private liberal arts colleges, even church-related ones, academic programs in religion often seem trapped in a state best described as *anoikia*, homelessness. Too small to constitute a full academic department of their own, they find themselves attached to various other programs and departments, often taking on the disciplinary characteristics and methods of other fields. It may very well be that the academy, as currently constituted, has no place for the discipline of religion anyway, unless the discipline itself is re-constituted as religious studies. This paper will explore the philosophical and theological background of this issue.

[2] Morris Brown College in Atlanta is a historically African-American liberal arts college founded and supported by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It describes itself as the only institution of higher education in the state of Georgia founded “for blacks and by blacks.” Ties to the African Methodist Episcopal Church have remained strong though not without problems, as with most church-related colleges (see Burtchaell). Historically, Morris Brown’s curriculum includes a religion program offering both a major and a minor. As far back as I am able to determine through previously-published college catalogs, the religion program has been in the above-referenced state of *anoikia*; it has always been part of another department, dominated in method by another discipline.

[3] Most recently, the religion program was housed in the social science department. Beginning with the 1999-2000 academic year, due to an overall academic reorganization precipitated by a new administration, the religion program is now part of a newly-constituted humanities department, which I chair. Our first major task after receiving the religion program was to study its curriculum for possible revision. What we found was a religion curriculum heavily influenced by social science disciplines, assumptions, and methods. The catalog description of a course on the life of Jesus, for example, emphasized the “social and political world into which Jesus came” and examination of the “data available for a reconstruction of Jesus’ life and teachings” A course

on the purpose and program of the Church emphasized study of the Church as a social group. As with most religion curricula, this one included a course in psychology of religion.

[4] Perhaps most telling were the cognate courses required for a religion major. These included courses on social science research methods, social statistics, technical writing, computer application, and cultural anthropology. In addition, graduating religion majors participated with graduates in other social science fields in a research seminar which featured “an opportunity to develop skills in social scientific reading, writing, reporting, and research.” Thus, the curriculum emphasized study *of* religion as an example of a social system.

[5] With the transfer of the religion program to our department, we undertook the task of converting the religion curriculum to one which expressed more of a humanities approach. However, in the process of this revision, we came to realize that, instead of a curriculum in religion, what we had inherited was a curriculum in religious studies. We further perceived that this approach relates rather poorly to the religious experience of African-Americans, our constituents.

***Wissenschaft* Principle - A Theoretical Background to Religious Studies**

[6] This social scientific approach to the study *of* religion - reconstituted as religious studies - expresses an older hierarchy of academic disciplines, determined by a principle known as *Wissenschaft*. Though many believe that this principle as a guide for academic study has been largely discredited, it is still very much in place today, perhaps vestigially. Under this principle every academic discipline is governed by a single, clear, comprehensive methodology and logic, which thus unifies all disciplines under a single method of inquiry. Arising from Enlightenment modernism, this *Wissenschaft* principle made the assumption that all academic disciplines should resemble the natural sciences. Further, in following this *Wissenschaft* principle, each discipline must objectify its subject matter, expressing a Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, subject and object. According to modernist thinking, the *Wissenschaft* principle offers a completely neutral, objective academic approach.

[7] An expression of this *Wissenschaft* principle is found in B. Alan Wallace’s definition of science: “Science is a discipline of inquiry entailing rigorous observation and experimentation, followed by rational, often quantitative, analysis; and its theories characteristically make predictions that can be put to the empirical test . . . One of the central ideals of this discipline is that of a disengaged observer, capable of objectifying the surrounding world and suppressing emotions and inclinations, fears and compulsions in order to pursue research in an unbiased and rational manner” (17-18). Wallace notes that this definition is “divorced from philosophical and theological underpinnings.” Thus, our liberal modernism, with its Enlightenment background, would suggest that Wallace has stated an essential, value-free definition of science, wholly neutral and wholly objective, upon which the *Wissenschaft* principle is based. In turn, all academic disciplines would do well to follow the lead established by modern science. (Although Wallace does not himself embrace the *Wissenschaft* Principle for academic study, he does offer what I judge to be a widely-held, non-controversial description of science fully consistent with the *Wissenschaft* Principle.)

[8] Under the *Wissenschaft* principle, however, all academic disciplines are clearly not equal. Disciplines such as mathematics, physics, and to a slightly lesser degree chemistry and engineering are able to follow this principle quite strictly. Thus, in academic history in the

Western world, these disciplines have become the ones by which all others are judged. They are the “pure” sciences, and thus “higher,” “more neutral,” and “more objective” than other disciplines.

[9] For biology the *Wissenschaft* principle is not nearly so well-displayed or well-practiced, and biology is thus lower on the disciplinary hierarchy than other sciences. For the “human” sciences - such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology - the *Wissenschaft* principle is even weaker. These disciplines do not, and perhaps cannot, conform strictly to Wallace’s definition of science. Thus, they lie much lower on the *Wissenschaft* hierarchy. Even lower lie the humanities: art, literature, philosophy, and music.

[10] Perhaps those disciplines displaying the weakest *Wissenschaft* are religion and theology, which least resemble mathematics and physics. In their Western expressions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - they not only refuse to conform to the above definition of science; they seemingly outright violate it. Under the *Wissenschaft* principle, religion and theology are thus notoriously flawed means of doing objective, academic study.

[11] Although the terms “religion” and “theology” can be used interchangeably, and indeed do refer to similar disciplines, I hesitate to use the term “theology” in this context because of its predominately Christian connotation. Although the religious interpretation for which I will argue certainly includes theology in the Christian sense, the emphasis on religion is intended to give the approach a broader possible application to other religious traditions as well.

Academic Implications: Religion to Religious Studies

[12] The response of the academy to the situation posed by the *Wissenschaft* principle leads to the situation that we find at Morris Brown and other liberal arts colleges. Since religion itself will never conform to this *Wissenschaft*, as an academic discipline, religion is transformed and given the new name, religious studies. The implications of this transformation are indeed profound. In order to strengthen its *Wissenschaft*, that is, to become more “scientific,” religious studies as a discipline tends to objectify religion. It becomes the *object that we study* rather than the *means by which study takes place*. Academically, we habitually employ other disciplines with a “stronger” *Wissenschaft* to study religion (thus, religious studies). Although the *Wissenschaft* of each discipline (e.g., sociology, psychology, history, and literary criticism) is “weaker” than that of the mathematics-physics-chemistry axis, each is still “stronger” than religion itself and thus can be employed to “study religion.”

[13] This characteristic of the academy is a manifestation of the Cartesian concept of foundationalism: some knowledge is more fundamental than other knowledge, and we employ the more fundamental to explain the less fundamental. For the academy, the objective *Wissenschaft* principle is most fundamental. It seeks universal principles, unaffected by context, and values predictability. Thus, in the academy, we have a field (and even a journal) on the “scientific study of religion.” But rarely does the reverse take place. “Theology of science” receives little attention. In addition, since the Enlightenment we have viewed the secular as more fundamental than the religious.

[14] One of the basic tenants of Enlightenment thinking suggests that if one were to strip away the religious person from the modern human, one would find the secular person lurking underneath. This secular person, shorn of any “prior commitments,” was the foundational human. Religious and other commitments were somehow added on, by choice or by coercion. In

the academy we have, through the transformation of religion to religious studies, made a similar move: We have stripped the “religion” from religious studies and found a “secular” discipline lurking underneath. One religious studies professor at a state institution states: “We do not teach, practice, or advocate religion in religious studies” (Wentz: A72). Academically, religion must be explained in secular terms (see McCutcheon). But rarely do we see the reverse: there is little “theology of secularism.” Religious studies often become studies of religious behavior, accessible through history, psychology, sociology, and even philosophy, while again the reverse does not - and perhaps should not - take place. In the academy, the *Wissenschaft* principle and foundationalism still mightily reign. And thus religion, once an academic discipline of its own, is reconstituted as religious studies.

[15] In a specific sub-discipline, biblical studies, this *Wissenschaft* approach is especially pronounced. Critical studies of biblical texts become “scientific” studies, expressed in the hegemony that historical criticism still enjoys. (Newer literary critical studies may also be an attempt at establishing a *Wissenschaft* principle in biblical studies, but of a different kind.) In fact, one can take any number of “secular” approaches to biblical studies: historical, sociological, psychological, literary, and political.

***Wissenschaft* and the Post-Modern Critique**

[16] This paper will make no judgment on the efficaciousness of the rather nebulous philosophy or ideology known as postmodernism. However, it will employ what is commonly called the “post-modern critique” to evaluate the *Wissenschaft* principle and its allied concepts. Modernism, deriving from the Enlightenment, perceived that certain ideas, concepts, and attitudes are self-evident and universal, and that they can be known through the action of any rational, objective mind which has freed itself from all “prior commitments.” These ideas, concepts, and attitudes would form a foundation for all other, derived, knowledge. Such prior commitments may include religious belief, social conditioning, irrational and emotive thinking, and any kind of bias or *a priori* thinking. Freed from these prior commitments, the rational mind can indeed perceive the foundation: neutral, objective, essential, and value free.

[17] The post-modern critique, however, contends that *no* ideas, concepts, and attitudes are self-evident and universal. None are neutral, objective, essential, and value free. Every human thought or system of thought is derived from the particular setting - social, psychological, cultural, philosophical - of the thinker. Thus, no thought is foundational. It is self-evident only in certain cultural systems (for a much fuller description of the post-modern critique, see Grenz and Franke).

[18] The post-modern critique shows us that the *Wissenschaft* principle is neither essential nor value-free; it is neither neutral nor truly objective. Nor is science, from which it derives, “divorced from philosophical and theological underpinnings,” as Wallace suggests. Wallace’s description itself contains no fewer than ten philosophical concepts, all of which can be argued, (de)valued, and debated. Thus, the *Wissenschaft* principle cannot be foundational.

[19] According to modernist thinking, the secular is more foundational, and thus more objective, than the religious. However, the post-modern critique reveals the error in this assumption. One does *not* strip away the religious person and find the secular person underneath: the secular person must be *created*. The modern, secular human is a modern creation. Likewise, the study of religion as a secular subject is also a modern creation. According to Hans Frei, the

Enlightenment - beginning with the eighteenth century - dramatically changed our perception of religion itself, a change that has in turn manifested itself in the current religion curriculum. Modern theology has often perceived its task as one of correlation: theology relates religious belief and practice to more general forms of human existence. Frei states that through most of the Church's history the "world of the Bible" has been the primary world through which life is interpreted. But with the Enlightenment and modernism, a reversal has taken place. We no longer employ the Bible to interpret the world; instead, it is "a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story, rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story" (130). This approach defines the religious studies curricula.

[20] For the study of religion in the academy, the assumption that the *Wissenschaft* principle is foundational has led to a distortion of our understanding with regard to the discipline. A hypothetical analogy might illustrate this distortion. Suppose we were to develop a curriculum by which the study of biology becomes study about biology. Biology would become an *object* of inquiry, rather than its *subject*. We would study biology as a social phenomenon, through social structure and organization. We would study its historical development and how various historical movements influenced its method and expression (indeed, its beliefs and "rituals"). The curriculum could include consideration of the psychological aspects of biology's expression, such as why people become biologists. We could subject its texts to various forms of literary criticism. And of course we would inquire into its philosophical background. In other words we would approach biology as one expression of a more generalized form of human existence, of which there are of course many others.

[21] Now, interesting and enlightening though such an approach may be, clearly something is missing. Should we follow such a curriculum, certainly none of us would claim that we understood biology itself, regardless of whatever value such studies might have. We truly begin to understand biology when we apply its insights, its methods, and its worldview as an *interpretive system* for understanding the living world. Thus, we present biology as a *subject* of inquiry, rather than its *object*.

[22] Although this approach may sound absurd when applied to a discipline such as biology, this is exactly the approach many religion and religious studies programs (including the inherited one at Morris Brown) employ for the study of religion. The *Wissenschaft* principle requires that we objectify religion, and therefore we do religious studies. As stated by Wentz previously: "We do not teach, practice, or advocate religion in religious studies." Plausible and logical as that statement may sound at first, if we substitute "biology" for religion and "biological studies" for religious studies (or any other academic discipline), the statement becomes utterly absurd, even astonishing.

[23] This propensity to approach religion as religious studies, as a result of the *Wissenschaft* principle, becomes all the more absurd when we consider that, according to many thinkers, the principle itself has been "discredited" (Wolterstroff 2001: 19f). Further, in an academic setting such as Morris Brown College, this approach to religion is alien to African-American experience. As recent Black theology has shown us consistently, African-Americans tend to employ religion as a comprehensive interpretive system, in fact their primary interpretive system, both in academic and "real-world" settings (Coleman 2000, and in personal conversations; Cone 1983: 72-75; Evans).

[24] The post-modern critique has “leveled the playing field.” With the sciences no longer foundational because there truly *is* no foundation, various academic disciplines can meet once again as equals. For the discipline of religion (as opposed to religious studies), this leveling may suggest that the time has come for an academic approach that truly presents religion as subject. We can then use religion primarily as a means of understanding human existence, an *interpretive system*. Indeed, as the post-modern critique allows for many varied interpretations, we can include a specifically *religious* interpretation in the academy.

[25] In place of a foundationalist approach, related to the *Wissenschaft* principle, the post-modern critique suggests a different schematic for religion in the academy than the one presented above. Under the religious interpretation scheme, religion can be employed to study these various disciplines, along with all others. Or better, the post-modern critique suggests that we conceive of the academy as a web of disciplines, in which we see a mutual movement of “interpreting/being interpreted” between all disciplines.

[26] This religious interpretation would still employ the insights of such disciplines as psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, African studies, and literary criticism. But they would be employed not primarily to understand and “study religion,” but as tools religion itself can use in interpreting human existence. A religious interpretation would not only address many of the flaws inherent in a perception of religion based on the *Wissenschaft* principle. For an institution such as Morris Brown College, it also lies much closer to an African-American understanding and experience of religion.

Study By Religion: A Tentative Description

[27] A description of this study-by-religion approach in the academy, a specifically religious interpretation, must at this time be preliminary and tentative. We cannot immediately resume practicing what we have abandoned some two hundred years ago, nor will we practice in the same way as we did two hundred years ago. It is important to note that a religious interpretation is decidedly *not* a return to a pre-critical approach. Rather, it is post-critical, and does not pretend that the Enlightenment or modernism never occurred. The post-modern critique, though, has reminded us that secularity, that criticism, that academic study are neither neutral, nor objective, nor value-free. They are not the result of some discovery of universal, self-evident foundations. However, a religious interpretation is more than willing to employ modernist criticism, thoroughly recognizing the value in such endeavors. In biblical studies, for example, a religious interpretation recognizes the value of the history of interpretation. And modern criticism itself represents one such interpretation.

[28] Although a fully-developed description of a religious interpretation in the academy will need to wait for another occasion, we do have at our disposal numerous scholars whose work can contribute to and enlighten the project. I mention here a few whose work we have found relevant to our situation at Morris Brown College, in our attempt to provide this religious interpretation. It is clear that, while each of these scholars may to a degree question the hegemony of the historical approach, none of them rejects it. In fact, the suggestion that a religious interpretation is merely a return to pre-critical scholarship seriously misunderstands the work of these scholars. All appreciate the contributions that critical scholarship has made; most continue to employ critical scholarship in their own work. However, they do understand the *limits* of critical scholarship, much as we have attempted to understand the limits of the *Wissenschaft* principle and the religious studies approach in this paper.

[29] Much of the thought on a religious interpretation presented in this paper derives from the work of the so-called “Yale School” interpretation. Scholars and theologians of this mindset are carrying on the work of their too-soon deceased colleague, Hans Frei, especially that found in his ground-breaking work, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*. Frei’s work reminds us that prior to the modern era, the world of the Bible was the “real” world, and life was interpreted through it. In the modern era, however, a reversal has taken place. In the academy we now “read the Bible through the world,” thus forming the basis for religious studies as opposed to religion.

[30] Others of the “Yale School” are still very much active and very much involved in what is sometimes called the post-liberal project. In theology George Lindbeck has understood religions - including Christianity and Judaism - as specific “cultural-linguistic” systems, rather than simply expressions of universal, generalized human experience. Thus, religious beliefs, expressions, and practices must be understood within the context of religious communities. To objectify these beliefs, expressions, and practices - by either liberal or conservative means - is to distort and misunderstand them.

[31] In biblical studies, the work of Brevard Childs, Christopher Seitz, and Luke Timothy Johnson has contributed to a religious interpretation. While never rejecting critical study nor doubting its value, Childs contends that a hegemony by criticism in biblical studies proves a distortion. To focus almost exclusively on the pre-history and composition of biblical texts neglects the fact that biblical texts come to us as a *canon*; thus, individual texts must be interpreted in light of the whole. Seitz and Johnson remind us of the (obvious?) fact that biblical texts are primarily religious and theological documents, and only secondarily literary and historical ones. In philosophy, Nicholas Wolterstorff has employed speech-act theory to explore the concept - common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike - that “God speaks.” Though much of the “Yale School” thought raises as many problems as it solves, in broad ways we can appreciate the direction of these scholars.

[32] Stepping outside of the “Yale School” we find that the work of other scholars will also strengthen the religious interpretation project. In Jewish biblical studies, Jon Levenson has explored the various “self-evident” assumptions that modern biblical criticism makes, and finds their origins in a specific form of thought from the Enlightenment. Like Childs, he calls for and practices biblical interpretation that recognizes the validity of the rich *history* of interpretation. Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder, along with Stanley Hauerwas, emphasizes the social and political implications of religion as academic study. Evangelical scholar Stanley Grenz has done much perceptive work on the place of the post-modern critique in theology (see especially, Grenz and Franke: 28-54). Kevin Vanhoozer has done some original work of the theological concept of revelation, which can serve as a much-needed counter balance for the near-total reliance on empiricism displayed in the *Wissenschaft* Principle. John Milbank has shown that the social sciences - which appear much removed from theology and have taken on a purely secular form - actually have religious and theological origins. Bartholomew, Greene, and Moeller are in the process of editing a series of volumes which emphasize the diversity of biblical interpretation, beyond the hegemony of modern criticism. Stephen Fowl also carries on similar work. Stanley Hauerwas in addition offers a thorough-going critique of the attempts to find general and universal expression and experience - usually individual - in religion.

[33] Another obvious source for us at Morris Brown College lies in African-American religion and its more academic expression, Black theology. We are consistently reminded that for American Blacks, who are by some measures the most religious people in the world (Carter: 60,

citing study by Gallup and Castelli), there is ultimately no distinction between the sacred and the secular, no distinction between the academic and the practical, no distinction between critical study and belief, no distinction between the world of the present and the world of the Bible (Coleman, personal conversations; Cone 1983: 72-27; Wills: 236-44). The thirtieth-anniversary evaluations of James Cone's work are thus well appreciated (Hopkins 1999). African-American religion and Black theology further confirm the post-modern critique, which suggests that specific religious communities develop their own unique expressions, reified in beliefs and practices. These expressions simply cannot be reduced to psychological or sociological categories; they are understood poorly if reduced to examples of universal, generalized expression. Thus, at Morris Brown College itself, in some preliminary ways we have begun to strengthen our relationship to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a move that we realize is quite the reverse of the trend nationwide. We contend that financial support is *not* the most important contribution that the African Methodist Episcopal Church makes to the College. Its theology, tradition, and heritage are much more valuable.

[34] Though at Morris Brown we have chosen to employ primarily the work of the "Yale School" and Black theology in developing a study *by* religion curriculum, other approaches are clearly possible. Liberation and feminist theologies might likewise lead to such a curriculum, along with both recent and traditional Catholic and Anabaptist theologies. All have the potential to provide a distinctly religious interpretation.

Uniqueness of a Religious Interpretation: Why a Religious Interpretation is Necessary for the Academy

[35] It is one matter to present a religious interpretation in the academy as an intrinsic good: it would be better for the discipline of religion itself. However, such an interpretation should also have extrinsic value for the academy as a whole. Although many would contend that the *Wissenschaft* principle has been discredited as an academic standard, in much of the academy it still lingers, remaining strong, perhaps even reigning supreme. Overall, a religious interpretation would continuously offer an alternative approach to the science-based approach presented by the *Wissenschaft* principle. This alternative would not be *anti-science*, but would provide an approach that is *allo-science*, *other-than* science. Important and valuable though science may be, it is not comprehensive. It has its limits. Below are a few preliminary *allo-scientific* elements that a religious interpretation would provide.

[36] *A religious interpretation reminds us of the value of tradition.* Many academics in the sciences are quite puzzled that those in the humanities can use and quote sources from years - indeed centuries - earlier. What possible relevance could a fourth-century thinker such as Augustine have for today? I once submitted a paper to an interdisciplinary journal, in which I used a 1961 quotation from Karl Barth. The journal editor remarked that this source was "dated."

[37] Science is an enterprise that can often be disdainful of its own tradition, perhaps necessarily so. The past is often viewed as an unenlightened time of ignorance that the progress of the present and future must continuously overcome. One might even go so far as to say that science *destroys* its own tradition, remaining in a constant state of adolescence. We see a reflection of this approach in the discipline of religious studies, in its commonly-practiced denial of any validity, or even contempt, for pre-critical interpretations of biblical texts.

[38] However, in doing so, science is quite unique, not only philosophically but also historically. Through most of intellectual history, the majority of thinkers have been quite respectful of their tradition. The idea that we progress by disregarding and disdaining the past, or even destroying it, is a product of the Enlightenment and modernism. Granted, in science progress most often occurs when one *does* disregard one's tradition. But this necessity simply makes science unusual, not foundational. Science does not and cannot honor the past in the same way that religion and theology (and other humanities) can and do. Thus, a religious interpretation strengthens the academy by providing a store-house of tradition.

[39] *A religious interpretation reminds us that, we have ways of knowing available to us, such as revelation, besides the ways mandated by the Wissenschaft principle.* This reminder would provide a corrective for the hegemony of rationalism and empiricism, which has historically shown itself to end in logical positivism. The science-based *Wissenschaft* principle has treated rationalism and empiricism as methods by which all academic disciplines demonstrate their validity. However, there is a logical flaw inherent in this assertion: if we apply the methods of rationalism and empiricism to themselves to establish their validity by using their own methods, we find they simply cannot do so. They cannot rationally or empirically demonstrate their own value. This understanding leaves them with two alternatives: one, they must either exempt themselves from their own requirements for validity; or two, they must view themselves as "givens," dependent on other ways of knowing.

[40] In this paper, we cannot begin to explore and elaborate upon the varied ways of knowing that humans not only can practice, but indeed do practice. Wallace's recent work, along with an earlier work by LeShan and Margenau provide examples of these varied ways of knowing. We might suggest specifically a common religious way of knowing: revelation. Contrary to the usual *Wissenschaft*-type perception, revelation is not a privatized way of knowing. History and practice have shown, on the contrary, that it is normally quite public. A renewed emphasis on revelation as a way of knowing - which was an acceptable way of knowing until the advent of the Enlightenment and modernism - may even once again be not only possible, but desirable, in the academy (see Placher on Aquinas: 21-36).

[41] *A religious interpretation reminds us that science itself is a highly-philosophical, highly-theological venture.* As we have suggested in this paper, one of the legacies remaining in the academy of the *Wissenschaft* principle is the tendency for religion to take on - often uncritically - the content and especially the methodology of science. Through this appropriation, religion hopes to demonstrate its academic legitimacy, hence, religious studies. Currently, this tendency shows itself in the appropriation of social science methodologies. Witness the location where the religion program ended up at Morris Brown College. Milbank characterizes this tendency of absorbing the methods and conclusions of the social sciences as religion's or theology's "pathos." "The pathos of modern theology is its false humility. For theology, this must be a fatal disease, because once theology surrenders its claim to be a metadiscourse [and] no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology" (1). Milbank not only shows secularization which has taken place in the social sciences, but forcefully demonstrates that the social sciences derive from a distinctly theological base.

[42] These days, we in religion hear many pleas that we consistently modify our thinking to accommodate modern science. Many scholars and theologians attempt to show that religion and modern science are indeed "compatible." Only the foolish among us would ignore such pleas.

However, *how* we attempt this accommodation and show this compatibility is crucial. If we remain within the *Wissenschaft*-type thinking and make religion *subservient* to science, then we have done both religion and science - along with the academy as a whole - a disservice. We risk losing an academically-valuable *allo*-scientific pole. Wallace, despite apparently not recognizing the religious implications of his definition for science (17-18), thoroughly demonstrates the religious base for modern science, especially in its practiced forms which he designates as “scientific materialism” (21-37) and “scientism” (37-39).

[43] *A religious interpretation reminds us of the distinction between “is” and “ought.”* Some behavior may be possible, even likely. We can even theoretically explain “why” it occurs. This question is then a scientific one. It is another question altogether whether or not this possible (and explainable) behavior is *desirable*. This question is thus a religious one. With some risk of over-simplification, we might say that science deals with the “is” of the universe, while religion is concerned with the “ought.” The suggestion that there is no distinction between what “is” and what “ought” is the naturalistic fallacy.

[44] Another way of approaching this point is to reconsider the function and usefulness of Aristotelian teleology. Aristotle held that any event requires four causes: material, efficient, formal, and final. It is chiefly in the final cause that any concept of purpose (the philosophical “ought”) occurs. Modern science, however, has abandoned (for good reason) the search for formal and final causes, recognizing only material and efficient ones. Indeed, modern science could not have developed without this disregard for formal and especially final causes. Darwinian evolution is a prime example of this necessity. Thus, science is “stuck” with the philosophical “is.” Recent attempts to inject teleology into modern science (i.e., “intelligent design”) have so far proven strained.

[45] Science *does not* include teleology/purpose simply because it *cannot*, and thus the picture of the universe that science gives us is incomplete, even distorted. In the academy, then, religion serves the prime location for any teleological thinking, any sense of the “ought.”

[46] *A religious interpretation reminds us of the limits of science in providing understanding.* With its recognition of only material and efficient causes, modern science has developed and still largely recognizes the mechanistic model of the universe. The model of course comes about as a result of science’s abandonment of teleology. In time sequence, cause-effect can run in only one direction: past events cause present ones. In no way can a future event cause a past or present one. Such would violate the mechanistic principle. Further, we can *observe* past events causing present ones, but in no way can we ever observe the reverse. The *Wissenschaft* principle then carries this mechanism into other disciplines

[47] In religious studies, we assume that religious texts are the product of historical events, but rarely the reverse. How historical events “could have” caused the production of religious texts is more observable, empirical, and rational. We thus eliminate the possibility that religious texts could have “caused” the historical events because such a move would reverse the mechanistic model. Likewise, religion itself is product (effect) of social forces: if we study those social forces, we “understand” religion. Herein lies a supreme irony, though. In some quarters of quantum physics, the presumed exemplar for the *Wissenschaft* principle, thinkers are finding that they must abandon the mechanistic cause-effect model. Thus, the irony: quantum physics has begun seriously questioning this model (Davies: 33-40; LeShan and Morgenau: 5, 130-37), while religious studies retains it.

[48] In some quarters, it is claimed that science is on the verge of developing a “theory of everything” (Barrow). Such thinking provides an example of what Wallace calls “scientism.” This philosophical system asserts “that (1) science is our only source of genuine knowledge about the world, (2) science is the only way to understand humanity’s place in the world, and (3) science provides the only credible view of the world as a whole” (37). We can clearly see the effect that scientism has had on historical-criticism and religious studies. Once again, in the academy a religious interpretation consistently provides us with an *allo*-scientific interpretation, one which does not reject science, but does recognize its limits.

[49] Granted, other disciplines display a degree of *allo*-science. But none displays it to the degree that religion and theology do; these disciplines are the most *allo*-scientific. In an academy still dominated by the science-based *Wissenschaft* principle, this *allo*-scientific pole must be maintained and cultivated. As stated above, a religious interpretation in the academy may have its own intrinsic value. However, it also has a value for the academy as a whole, and even for the sciences themselves.

[50] A vital step in moving the academy toward recognition of this religious interpretation is a movement from the study *of* religion as object to the study *by* religion as subject. Or, to paraphrase George Lindbeck, we have probably paid enough attention to interpreting the Bible. It’s now time, even in the academy, to allow the Bible - or any other religious texts - to interpret us. Therein lies the difference that the distinction between religion and religious studies makes, and the difference for the academy.

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