

## Religion as a Question of Style:

### Revising the Structural Differentiation of Religion from the Perspective of the Analysis of the Contemporary Pluralistic-Religious Situation<sup>1</sup>

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The differences in the way religion is "lived" at holy times and in everyday life are as old as religion itself. How people deal with these differences has changed. Fortunately, tolerance and dialog have become ethical guidelines in the modern age, given some milieu-specific differences, of course. Although the differences between various religious convictions and practices have not diminished, the general rule is now to perceive and accept them in their diversity with an open mind.

The analysis of the contemporary religious landscape presents us with a new situation. The continuing disintegration of tradition and increasing individualization have placed the burden of dealing with religious differences on the shoulders of the individual. This change also manifests itself in the great variety of subcultural religious forms, both with and without church affiliation. Leaving a church or not participating in church services does not necessarily lead to a loss of religion or to a hatred for it.<sup>2</sup> The crumbling of the bonds of tradition has exacerbated the problem. The path leading "from destiny to choice" has been set upon irrevocably, meaning

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2 Indications of this are to be found in the results of the Third Study of Church Membership (Studien- und Planungsgruppe der EKD [Ed.]: *Fremde Heimat Kirche*, Gütersloh [Gütersloher Verlag] 1997): 20% of those who left the church answered no when asked whether they had left because they no longer had a need for religion. Roughly half of them could imagine "being a Christian without a church." A similar tendency is discernible in the results of the 11<sup>th</sup> Shell study (*Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell [ed.]: Jugend '92. Lebenslagen, Orientierungen und Entwicklungen im vereinigten Deutschland*, vols. 1-4, Opladen [Leske + Budrich] 1992) regarding personal prayer in young people not closely affiliated with a church: 10% of non-denominational youths and roughly 30% of those who had not attended a church service in the last four weeks stated that they prayed sometimes or regularly.

that access to religion has become a matter of individual preference and lifestyle for a broadening range of social strata, and for young people in particular. The plurality spiral thus seems to have once again made a neo-religious and syncretic turn.<sup>3</sup>

Not only has there been a change in the plurality of forms in the modern age, but the perspectives on religious differences have also changed: from an initial perspective based upon dogma or theory to a view of the "lived" religion experienced by individuals. The differences seem to have become "finer" and more diverse, as has the interpretation of these differences. This is augmented by an additional, complicating perspective: we now allow children more independence in dealing with their own religiosity, something which is by no means a matter of course.<sup>4</sup> This brings with it the more far-reaching view that religious orientations change and, indeed, are allowed to change throughout the course of an individual's lifetime, a view that has found an increasing level of general acceptance.

Anyone seeking to explore and analyze the contemporary religious landscape is well-advised to assess the available analytic tools, extending and modifying them to adapt them to the changed situation. One aspect of this task is the clarification of the theoretical and methodological means of differentiating between various religious orientations. This must take into account both the (external) plurality of choices and the (internal) plurality of biographical changes. The models used to investigate the creation of religious meaning and religious judgement in terms of developmental psychology present one possible perspective on religious differentiation. These models of *structural differentiation* of religious orientations form the starting point of my investigation. I shall seek to evaluate what they accomplish and to what extent they must be modified and extended in light of the pluralistic religious situation. My central thesis is that the differentiation of religious styles allows us to understand one of the key dimensions of both the internal historical pluralization and the external pluralization of religious orientations. I will deal with this aspect in the first part of this article. In the second part, I would like to develop steps leading to a multi-perspective concept of style in religion, a concept linking both sociological and psychological factors in an effort to take into account the biographical and lifeworld embeddedness of religion. The value of a multi-perspective differentiation of religious styles as I propose it here must finally be measured by its ability to enable analytic approaches capable of doing justice to the pluralistic contemporary religious landscape.

3 Cf. the articles resulting from a Bayreuth colloquium on this topic in Volker Drehsen/Walter Sparr (eds.), *Im Schmelztiegel der Religionen – Konturen des modernen Synkretismus*, Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlag) 1996.

4 Friedrich Schweitzer, *Die Religion des Kindes. Zur Problemgeschichte einer religionspädagogischen Grundfrage*, Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlag) 1992, has traced the difficult struggle for the recognition of children's religion throughout the history of pedagogy and theology.

## 1. Cognitive-Structural Differentiation of Religious Styles

I would like to begin with two of the most influential theories of religious development as initial perspectives on the differentiation of religious styles. Twenty years have passed since the publication of James Fowler's *Stages of Faith*,<sup>5</sup> ten years since its translation into German, and seventeen years since the publication of Fritz Oser and Paul Gmünder's *Der Mensch. Stufen seiner religiösen Entwicklung*.<sup>6</sup> This is not a very long period of time in light of the recognition these theories now enjoy in the fields of practical theology and religious education – and this in spite of the fact that from the beginning, Fowler's and Oser's writings met not only with interested acceptance, but also with criticism and skepticism.<sup>7</sup> Today, many questions still remain unanswered and many aspects still have yet to be addressed. The time has come to take stock of their theories from the point of view of their contribution to the analysis of the pluralistic religious situation.

Cambridge was the place of origin for both of these cognitive-structural theories of religious development. The intriguing possibility of classifying different forms of religiosity in terms of developmental psychology as inspired by Lawrence Kohlberg played a formative role in the theories of Oser and Fowler. Classification in this sense means arranging the different religious orientations along the central thread of a sequence of stages that, since Piaget, has been postulated for the development of cognitive structures. It is for this reason that they are known as cognitive-structural theories of religious development. Cognitive-structural theories of religious development thus build upon the assumption that the differences in religious constructs of meaning and religious judgment can be understood and classified structurally on the basis of the development of *cognitive competencies*. Oser and Fowler have described this approach and investigated it empirically. Both theories analyze the differences in religious-cognitive orientations in terms of their

5 James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco (Harper & Row) 1981.

6 Fritz Oser/Paul Gmünder, *Der Mensch – Stufen seiner religiösen Entwicklung. Ein strukturgegenetischer Ansatz*, Zürich/Köln (Benzinger) 1984; English translation: *Religious Judgement. A Developmental Perspective*, Birmingham (Religious Education Press) 1991.

7 Cf. Hans-Jürgen Fraas/Hans-Günter Heimbrock (eds.), *Religiöse Erziehung und Glaubensentwicklung. Zur Auseinandersetzung mit der kognitiven Psychologie*, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1986. For particular criticisms of Fowler, cf. James W. Fowler/Karl Ernst Nipkow/Friedrich Schweitzer (eds.), *Stages of Faith and Religious Development*, New York (Crossroad) 1991. In that same volume, especially see Gabriel Moran, *Alternative Developmental Images* (149-161); John Hull, *Human Development and Capitalist Society* (209-223); and, for an overview of criticism in English, Sharon D. Parks, *The North American Critique of James Fowler's Theory of Faith Development* (101-115). Cf. also Romney M. Moseley, *Becoming a Self Before God. Critical Transformations*, Nashville (Abingdon Press) 1991. Critical statements on Oser's theory can be found in Anton A. Bucher/K. Helmut Reich (eds.), *Entwicklung von Religiosität. Grundlagen, Theorieprobleme, Praktische Anwendungen*, Freiburg (Universitätsverlag) 1989.

dynamics and sequentiality from the perspective of the development of logic. Because the limits of space prevent a detailed introduction to these theories here, I would like to present a few exemplary insights into their interpretation of religious differences.

### 1.1. Parallellity of the Two Theories of Religious Development – A Demonstration

As a demonstration, the two religious orientations discernible in the following narrative account from a young woman can be classified in Oser's and Fowler's sequences of steps. This will make the theories more clear, at least in certain points.

The phrase "Beware of people whose God is in heaven" was the motivating impulse for a trainee in domestic science to write an account in which she explains a differentiation in her religious orientations, which she at the same time understands as a biographical change.<sup>8</sup> She writes:

Even as a small child I was told, dear God in heaven is watching over you. They told me about little angels with harps and about the weather prophet they called Peter. We also heard all kinds of things about the devil, who would let us roast in hell if we weren't good.

As a parallel to God in heaven, the devil under the earth is always mentioned. Of course, it's all nonsense, and I think it's irresponsible to tell such stories to little children – it's understandable then that their God is in heaven and not in our hearts, always near to us.

For me, God is conscience, so to speak. Everyone hears their conscience when they are about to do something that isn't allowed. The Catholics go to confession if their conscience burdens them too much. God is here with us and not in heaven. He doesn't make decisions in heaven, rather we ourselves make them, more or less.

People who have this incorrect idea of God don't understand him, or at least they misunderstand him. They think that "dear God in heaven" does everything for us, and then we're fine. But we have to help ourselves, God can only be a comfort, a support for us, and not a magician.

How are these two religious orientations to be located in the sequence of stages? First we consider Oser's perspective, which primarily follows the criterion of the tension between "the Ultimate and the human" for locating religious orientations in terms of developmental psychology.<sup>9</sup> The religious world of her childhood as recalled here by the trainee, a world in which the angels, the weather prophet, and the devil punishing evil deeds all played a role, is to be located at the stage in which a concept of God's "power and authority" has been developed (Oser's Stage 2). This

8 Robert Schuster, *Was sie glauben. Texte von Jugendlichen*, Stuttgart (Steinkopf) 1984, 20.

9 Oser/Gmünder, 1984, 87-104.

idea of God is, however, no longer understood from the "point of view of the one-sided power and authority of the Ultimate" (as in Stage 1). Instead, the attempt is already made to exert an influence by words and deeds. This young woman's *current* idea of God is quite different. He does *not* live in heaven and make decisions there. "For me, God is conscience, so to speak," she writes, and "we ourselves" make the decisions. This religious orientation corresponds to the stage at which the autonomy of the individual establishes itself as independent of and separate from the divine (Stage 3). There is not yet any indication of an awareness of the "a priori prerequisites of all human possibilities" through God (Stage 4). Our attempts at interpretation must remain provisional. They are merely intended to provide a general idea of how religious orientations can be located in this sequence of stages.

If we then compare Fowler's sequence of stages,<sup>10</sup> the trainee's remembrance of her childhood religiosity is to be located in "mythical-literal faith" (Fowler's Stage 2), in which the religious stories and symbols are interpreted within the context of a concrete, literal idea of the world. On the one hand, this mythic-literal faith has progressed beyond the "intuitive-projective faith" (Stage 1) by means of the development of concrete operations and the ability to make narrative connections. On the other hand, this form of faith can develop into a faith that no longer conceives of God and the world concretely and literally, but rather places great importance on interpersonal, conventional consent and a person-like divine counterpart (Stage 3 of "synthetic-conventional faith"). The statement that God is "conscience, so to speak" displays features of "individuating-reflective faith" (Stage 4) in which symbols and stories are stripped of their concretely and literally understood mythology, and thereby reduced to their propositional content. Another factor that speaks for this classification is *how* these ideas of God are put forth, namely in an individualizing and reflective manner.

### 1.2. Concurrence of Strengths and Weaknesses in Both Theories

In spite of the differences between Oser's and Fowler's sequences of stages, both approaches contain a shared, fundamental perspective maintaining that different religious orientations can be understood as stages in a cognitive-structural development. However, the significance of these theories cannot be reduced to the classification of religious orientations in a sequence of stages. These sequences of stages achieve more in that they seek to make clear that each stage is part of a path of development that has both a past and a future. Cognitive-structural approaches are not only interesting because of their psycho-historical aspect, but also because

10 Fowler, *Stages*, 89-213.

of their dynamic view of religiosity, a view that leaves the future open. Such approaches pay special attention to the potential for development, making it possible to conceive of and explain the development of new aspects and new orientations within their theoretical framework. However, clarification is required regarding the precise and adequate description of certain factors of the logic of development.

It is undisputed that what Oser and Fowler have described and investigated are essentially *approaches to understanding* religion, structurally differentiated and ordered in a developmental sequence. More precisely, the claim and the achievement of the cognitive-structural analysis of religion is to analyze the cognitive modi of accessing and dealing with religion and their structural transformations – no more and no less.

One could also say that Fowler and Oser analyze the developmental sequence of cognitive styles of religion. Both base their theories on Piaget and assume that the development of religious cognition is subject to the developmental patterns of logical operations, or is at least parallel to them. Oser's and Fowler's theories could thus easily be understood as genetic epistemologies of religion following Piaget's "genetic epistemology," thereby also attributing the development of religious styles exclusively to the genesis of religious-epistemological structures. Closer scrutiny proves this assumption to be incorrect, since the prerequisite for a plausible genetic epistemology of religion would be the ability to separate the religious-cognitive structures from the respective contents. In this aspect, Fowler and Oser all too readily intend to follow the principles made concrete in Kohlberg's theory and research which has advocated the structure-content separation as indispensable theoretical and methodological necessity.<sup>11</sup> However, both Oser and Fowler realize that religion is more than mere cognition. They both seek to go beyond Piaget, each defining their concept of religious cognition in their own way: Oser through the idea of a "religious mother structure,"<sup>12</sup> and Fowler by the demarcation between the "logic of conviction" ("constitutive knowing") that characterize "faith," as opposed to Piaget's "logic of rational certainty."<sup>13</sup> This makes clear the necessity more clearly to consider specific characteristics of *religious* cognition, which, as I interpret it, cannot entirely do without *functional and content-related* dimensions.<sup>14</sup>

11 See note 16.

12 Oser/Gmünder, 61-72.

13 Fowler, Stages, 98-105.

14 This becomes clear upon closer consideration of Oser's seven polar dimensions: Holy vs. Profane, Transcendence vs. Immanence, Freedom vs. Dependence, Hope/Meaning vs. Absurdity, Trust vs. Fear, Duration/Eternity vs. Transience, and Unexplainable/Magical vs. Functionally Transparent; Oser/Gmünder, 32. This applies likewise for the formation of Fowler's aspects, in particular the aspects "Bounds of Social Awareness," "Locus of Authority," "Form of World Coherence," and "Symbolic Function;" Fowler, Stages of

To anticipate a bit: the concept of style is intended to hold fast to the irreducibility of religion to cognitive operations. The concept of style stands for the inclusion of additional dimensions inherent in religion.<sup>15</sup> Moving beyond Oser's and Fowler's work, speaking of "religious styles" helps to emphasize the relevance of experiences, contents, and functions. Only then could these theories be termed "theories of religious development" in the full sense of the term, an ambitious designation that comprises these additional dimensions.

### 1.3. Main Points of Criticism

On the one hand, the cognitive-structural interpretation of religion – and thus the legacy of Piaget and Kohlberg – opens up perspectives of indisputable importance regarding the differentiation of religious-cognitive styles. On the other hand, this legacy also brings with it a burden in that it prescribes an extremely narrow point of view. One must speak of narrowness in cognitive-structural theories of religious development to the extent that the guidelines for "hard" cognitive-structural theories are applied unquestioningly to "religion" and the dynamics of its development. Kohlberg suggested the differentiation between "hard" and "soft" stage theories in order to separate the structural-developmental grain from the ego-psychological chaff, in accordance with the seal of approval given by premises of the logic of development, premises that set forth a sequence of irreversible, invariant, hierarchical stages, describing and structural wholes.<sup>16</sup>

In view of religious development, such narrowness must be spoken of precisely because the cognitive-structural logic of development strives to be considered not only as the central thread of religious development, but also as its *motor*. Consequently, dimensions of contents, experiences, and functions of religion are methodically excluded. The shift of emphasis, indeed the overloading of the cognitive development is one aspect. The other aspect is the neglect of a number of other dimensions that are of equal significance for the constitution, *Gestalt*, function, and development of religious orientations:

15 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 249, 252, also occasionally speaks of "structural style," although more often of "orientation." Fowler himself indicates that the concept of style may be suitable for the differentiation of the stages that can do justice to "faith" (244f, 252): He uses the "style" concept in particular when describing the sub-stages into which he would like to further subdivide Piaget's formal-operational thought from the perspective of his stages of faith – namely, subdivisions consisting of an "early," a "dichotomizing," a "dialectical," and a "synthetic" style of formal-operational thought.

16 Lawrence Kohlberg/Charles Levine/Alexander Hewer, The Current Formulation of the Theory, in: Essays on Moral Development, vol.2. The Psychology of Moral Development, Lawrence Kohlberg (ed.), San Francisco (Harper & Row) 1984, 212-319.

The *psycho-dynamic-intrapersonal* dimension (the psycho-dynamics of the *self-self* relationship)

The *relational-interpersonal* dimension (the dynamics of the *self-other* relationship)

The *interpretative, hermeneutic* dimension (the dynamics of the *self-tradition* relationship)

The *lifeworld-milieu-related* dimension (the dynamics of the *self-world* relationship)

I shall explain some of the problems burdening the cognitive-structural theories of religious development due to their close connection to the "hard" model. To put it briefly, they lead to a reduction in the spectrum of factors relevant to development and also to an obscuring of the internal and external pluralism of religious orientations.

### 1.3.1. Critique of the Exclusion of Functional Aspects

Regarding the exclusion of functional aspects, Rainer Döbert has pointed out exemplarily but aptly that according to strict cognitive-structural analysis, no form of pressure for development can be assumed beyond Oser's mainly "profane" and often "atheistic" Stage 3,<sup>17</sup> as demonstrated in the young woman's narrative quoted above. On the contrary, upon reaching Stage 3, religious development has maneuvered itself into an impasse, Döbert says. He holds that the gains are entirely on the side of the "profane self," while the religious self has hardly any more motives for growth. Döbert thus describes Oser's Stage 3 as a developmental impasse, a vicious circle in which most young people find themselves lodged. Döbert finds the reason for this in the discernible loss of religion's functional role in adolescence. That is, only by means of a critical deviation from and extension of the "hard" cognitive-structural interpretation can a plausible explanation for the "profane" style preferred by the majority of young people be established, while at the same time explaining the empirical marginality of the higher stages.

### 1.3.2. Critique of the Exclusion of Content Dimensions

Methods seeking to exclude content dimensions aim to isolate the "pure" developing structures of religious judgment or faith. The possibility and feasibility of the exclusion of contents is doubtful, as Döbert demonstrates for the moral sphere<sup>18</sup> and as Gil Noam maintains in general for all domains,

17 Rainer Döbert, Oser and Gmünder's stage 3 of Religious Development and Its Social Context: A Vicious Circle, in: *Stages of Faith and Religious Development*, James W. Fowler/Karl Ernst Nipkow/Friedrich Schweitzer (eds.), New York (Crossroads), 1991, 162-179.

18 Rainer Döbert, Wider die Vernachlässigung des "Inhalts" in den Moraltheorien von Kohlberg und Habermas. Implikationen für die Relativismus/Universalismus-Kontroverse, in: *Zur Bestimmung der Moral*, Wolfgang Edelstein/Gertrud Nunner-Winkler (eds.), Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1986, 86-125.

with the exception of the cognitive operations themselves.<sup>19</sup> Concerning religion in particular, the attempt to exclude contents and to work exclusively with structures could only succeed at the expense of a serious reduction.<sup>20</sup> I have pointed this out elsewhere, especially in view of Fowler's faith development theory, and have made suggestions for modification.<sup>21</sup> A rigorous, methodological content phobia would make us blind to the hermeneutic-interactive constitution of religious identity and its relevance for development, especially concerning the processes of transformation to the higher stages. From the perspective of our topic, it must be emphasized that the plurality of religious styles can only be perceived in full if contents are not excluded. With a stronger reception of Rizzuto's perspective, Fowler<sup>22</sup> has recently taken steps that may lead to a stronger consideration of the content dimension of "the image of God."<sup>23</sup> However, as I will explain in more detail below, this modification refers only to the first stages of faith in early childhood.

### 1.3.3. Critique of the Marginalization of the Interpersonal Dimension

Critique of the marginalization of the interpersonal dimension has already been thematized in the lively criticism of Kohlberg's theory begun by Gilligan. The pluralism and multi-dimensionality of their interviewees seem to cause problems for cognitive-structural theories. These difficulties arise in particular because such theories cannot incorporate certain orientations and styles empirically and also fail to integrate them theoretically. In moral development theory, dismay has been expressed concerning the marginalization of a moral orientation motivated by care and responsibility.<sup>24</sup> If the progress of both cognitive and moral development is understood from the "hard" cognitive-

19 Gil G. Noam, Selbst, Moral und Lebensgeschichte, in: *Moral und Person*, Wolfgang Edelstein/Gertrud Nunner-Winkler/Gil G. Noam (eds.), Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1993, 171-199. Gil G. Noam, *Beyond Freud and Piaget: Biographical Worlds - Interpersonal Self*, in: *The Moral Domain*, Thomas Wren (ed.), Cambridge 1990, 360-399.

20 Unfortunately, Fowler's reference to the "structuring power of the contents of faith" (*Stages of Faith*, 273, 276, 281) remained theoretical and has yet to be put into effect more thoroughly.

21 Heinz Streib, *Hermeneutics of Metaphor, Symbol and Narrative in Faith Development Theory*, Frankfurt am Main (Peter Lang) 1991. See also note 53.

22 James W. Fowler, *Faithful Change. The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*, Nashville (Abingdon Press) 1996.

23 Karl Ernst Nipkow had already suggested in 1986 to include an aspect "image of God" in faith development theory: Nipkow, *Who is the Author of My Biography? Historical and Systematical Remarks to a Theology of Individual Faith History*, Paper presented at Emory University, Atlanta, 1986.

24 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1982; Carol Gilligan, *Do the Social Sciences Have an Adequate Theory of Moral Development? in: Social Sciences as Moral Inquiry*, Norma Haan/Robert N. Bellah/et al. (eds.), New York (Columbia University Press) 1983, 33-51.

structural perspective as an increasing decentration and principledness, then an "ethics of care and responsibility" receives less recognition – and this is problematic also from the perspective of plurality. However, this does not so much raise the question of a gender bias in Kohlberg's theory as it does the neglect of a "connected" self, which the work of Gilligan and others has sought to explicate,<sup>25</sup> and the neglect of a "relational self," interpreted from a psycho-dynamic-biographical perspective by Noam, and from a narrative perspective by James Day and Mark Tappan.<sup>26</sup> Relationality and intersubjectivity are important starting points for my reformulation.

If, however, the "hard" logic of development also understands the religious progress of development as an increasing decentration and autonomization (Oser) or as an increasing reflexivity, and, at least up to Stage 4, as stages towards individualization (Fowler), then less attention is paid to the relational, interpersonal and milieu-related dimensions of religion. In his foreword to the German translation of *Stages of Faith*,<sup>27</sup> Fowler admitted that his theory and methodology had not dealt adequately with the relational style of faith, a style that is possibly preferred by women. Fowler thus self-critically accepted the criticism expressed by Gilligan and others. Referring to Belenky, et al., Fowler would like to expand his stages of faith, especially Stage 4, to include the style of "connected knowing."<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Fowler objects to the differentiation between "hard" and "soft" exactly because it neglects the style of "connected knowing."<sup>29</sup> There is much work to be done here, both theoretically and empirically.

The narrow views found in the cognitive-structural theories of religious development are not unavoidable, but they nevertheless demand a more thorough revision. We are thus dealing with a bundle of problems: the focus on cognitive structures, the premises of logical development

25 Lyn M. Brown/Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads. Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, Cambridge/London (Cambridge University Press) 1992, Lyn M. Brown/Carol Gilligan, *Listening for Voice in Narratives of Relationship*, in: *Narrative and Storytelling: Implications for Understanding Moral Development*, Mark B. Tappan/Martin J. Packer (eds.), San Francisco (Jossey-Bass) 1991, 43-62. Carol Gilligan/Lyn M. Brown/Annie Rogers, *Psyche Embedded: A Place for Body, Relationships, and Culture in Personality Theory*, in: *Studying Persons and Lives*, A. I. Rabin/Robert Zucker/Robert A. Emmons/Susan Frank (eds.), New York (Springer) 1990, 86-147.

26 James M. Day, *Speaking of Belief. Language, Performance, and Narrative in the Psychology of Religion*, in: *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 3, 1993, 213-229; James M. Day/Mark B. Tappan, *The Narrative Approach to Moral Development. From the Epistemic Subject to Dialogical Selves*, in: *Human Development* 39, 1996, 67-82; see n.61. Gil G. Noam, *Stage, Phase, and Style: the Developmental Dynamics of the Self*, in: *Moral Education. Theory and Application*, Marvin W. Berkowitz/Fritz K. Oser (eds.), Hillsdale, NJ (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates) 1985, 321-346.

27 Fowler, *Stufen des Glaubens*, Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlagshaus) 1991, 18f. Cf. also his comment on this in Fowler, *Response to Helmut Reich. Overview or Apologetic?* in: *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 3, 1993, 177f.

28 Mary F. Belenky/Blythe Clinchy/Nancy Goldberger/Jill Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing. The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, New York (Basic Books) 1986.

29 Fowler, *Response to Reich*.

for "hard" cognitive-structural theories in which cognition serves as the central thread and motor for religious development, and methodological exclusion of the content dimensions, experiences, and functions. Neither of these perspectives provides a necessary explication of religion, let alone a sufficient one. I have thematized the critical comments in the cognitive-structural discussion here with the intention of delineating the starting points for my reformulation. My reformulation should help avoid some of this narrowness, especially regarding the embeddedness in biography and the lifeworld as well as the aspect of multi-perspectivism and pluralism. For this reason, I shall also make the concept of style my focal point.

## 2. Steps towards a Multi-Perspective Concept of Style in Religion

### 2.1. On the Multi-Perspectiveness of Cognitive-Structural Theories

Kohlberg's criteria for "hard" cognitive-structural theories puts an end to the apparent, almost harmonious, harmony between Oser and Fowler thus far. Fowler's theory was described as a "soft theory of stages," at least as the "softer" of the two.<sup>30</sup> Criticism has also been expressed concerning the definition of the term "faith" in Fowler's theory. His cumulative description of faith, including seven "aspects" simultaneously, refers to an overly broadly defined "everything and nothing faith,"<sup>31</sup> which can hardly be expected to produce stringent scientific results.<sup>32</sup> This has to do with the fact that Fowler attempts to take into account a wide spectrum of factors for the development of the stages of faith, both analytically and empirically. In other words, this also results from his greater openness for multiple perspectives. In its approaches toward multi-perspectivism, the *faith development theory* differs from other cognitive-structural theories. Fowler's theory should not therefore be termed "softer." Instead, it is multi-perspectival and phenomenologically more inclusive. This multi-perspectiveness can be developed further. Fowler's correlative linking of different theories provides an indication of his multi-perspectival inclusivity.

30 This is, for example, the opinion of Clark Power, *Hard Versus Soft Stages of Faith and Religious Development*, in: *Stages of Faith and Religious Development. Implications for Church, Education, and Society*, James W. Fowler/Karl Ernst Nipkow/Friedrich Schweitzer (eds.), New York (Crossroad) 1991, 116-129.

31 The broad scope of Fowler's concept of faith inspired Karl Ernst Nipkow (*Grundfragen der Religionspädagogik*, vol. 3, Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlag) 1982) to suggest translating "faith" as "Lebensglaube" – of course for theological reasons and with great general agreement with Fowler's theory and research approach.

32 See Anton Bucher, *Bibelpsychologie. Psychologische Zugänge zu biblischen Texten*, Stuttgart (Kohlhammer) 1992, taking up critical statements of J. Harry Fernhout, *Where is Faith? Searching for the Core of the Cube*, in: *Faith Development and Fowler*, Birmingham (Religious Education Press) 1986, 65-89.

ity. Fowler has not only theoretically and empirically opened a perspective on such a synopsis of different domains or aspects, he has also succeeded in presenting it clearly on paper in the form of a model. Fowler's heptagonal model<sup>33</sup> illustrates the view that (A) the "form of logic" according to Piaget,<sup>34</sup> (B) "perspective taking" according to Selman,<sup>35</sup> and (C) the "forms of moral judgment" according to Kohlberg,<sup>36</sup> together with the aspects added by Fowler: (D) the "bounds of social awareness," (E) the "locus of authority," (F) the "forms of world coherence," and (G) the "symbolic function," all develop simultaneously in a correlative network, and that the perspectives presented by these theories all taken together describe *one* style of "faith" respectively, in a multi-perspectival and correlative manner.

Fowler himself continued to work on the linking of development theories as implemented in the heptagonal structure of faith<sup>37</sup> in the correlation of his seven-fold faith *development perspective* with Robert Kegan's *development of the self*.<sup>38</sup> Fowler thereby undertook to integrate *one* of the dimensions included in his "Multi-dimensional Model of Faith Development"<sup>39</sup> (a work in which he had already in 1982 made an exhaustive compilation of the different factors playing a role in the dynamics of *faith development*), namely, the psycho-dynamic dimension. More recently, some colleagues have continued theoretical and empirical work on this type of multi-perspectivism, correlating Fowler's stages of faith with Oser's stages of religious judgment and also with Erikson's psycho-social sequence of crises.<sup>40</sup>

However, even multi-perspectivism has its limits with Fowler. In the end, all of the aspects that he has compiled and described are to follow

33 James W. Fowler, *Faith and the Structuring of Meaning*, in: *Faith Development and Fowler*, Craig Dykstra/Sharon D. Parks (eds.), Birmingham (Religious Education Press 1986) 1980, 15-42; Figure 1 on p. 32.

34 Jean Piaget/Bärbel Inhelder, *Die Psychologie des Kindes*, Frankfurt am Main (Fischer) 1966.

35 Robert L. Selman, *The Growth of Personal Understanding. Developmental and Clinical Aspects*, New York (Academic Press) 1980.

36 Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development*, vol. 1. *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, San Francisco (Harper & Row) 1981; *Essays on Moral Development*, vol. 2. *The Psychology of Moral Development*, San Francisco (Harper & Row) 1984.

37 James W. Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Philadelphia (Fortress Press) 1987.

38 Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self. Problem and Process in Human Development*, Cambridge (Harvard University Press) 1982.

39 James W. Fowler, *Stages in Faith and Adults' Life-Cycles*, in: *Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle*, New York (Sadlier) 1982, 178-207; Figure on p. 200. In this model, Fowler puts together the following factors: (A) Time (Biological and Cultural Time Clocks - Scheduled and Unscheduled Choices & Marker Events), (B) Operational Structures of Knowing and Valuing in Faith, (C) Structuring Power of Contents of Faith, (D) Life Structure, (E) the Powerful Role of the Dynamic Unconscious, and (F) Impinging of Life's Field of Forces.

40 A similar correlation of perspectives has been attempted by Reich, *Integrating Differing Theories: The Case of Religious Development*, in: *Journal for Empirical Theology* 6, 1993,

a common cognitive-structural developmental line. The different religious styles are ordered along the cognitive-structural thread. The dynamics of other biographical factors of development are marginalized. To put it more sharply: it is precisely the narrow view focusing on the cognitive structures that obstructs the recognition of a broader spectrum of biographical factors of development. Noam has expressed criticism of such a narrow view in reference to Kohlberg's theories:

It is my view that cognitively based theorists have overlooked the central structuring activities of the self by defining the epistemic self as the sole representative of structure. In the process, I believe, the cart was placed before the horse, life history became content to the structure of the epistemic self. [...] Epistemology replaced life history.<sup>41</sup>

Noam's metaphor of the cart (cognitive competencies) that the cognition theories have placed in front of the horse (biography) makes the problem clear. His criticism refers above all to the neglect of the emotional, psycho-dynamic dimension.

The same criticism applies to the cognitive-structural theories of religious development. Although the proponents of these theories acknowledge the fact that religious development naturally involves deep layers of emotion, and also maintain that their theories take this into account, in fact, structuring power is primarily ascribed to cognition, while the psycho-dynamics are dealt with only in passing or are completely excluded. A stronger emphasis on the psychoanalytic or psycho-social aspects would lead to the ousting of the cognitive-structural view as the sole key theory.<sup>42</sup> "Going beyond Piaget" is therefore Noam's motto.<sup>43</sup> I therefore make the following proposal: a serious obstacle to the multi-perspectival approach to the development of religious styles must be removed. The primacy given to the transformational dynamics of cognitive structures as motor and central theme of religious development must be discarded. The horse

39-49; and, within the context of empirical studies, by Tamminen, *Comparing Oser's and Fowler's Developmental Stages*, in: *Journal for Empirical Theology* 7, 1994, 75-112; and finally, by the Tübingen study of the relation of development to religious instruction in Friedrich Schweitzer/Karl E. Nipkow/Gabriele Faust-Siehl/Bernd Krupka, *Religionsunterricht und Entwicklungspsychologie. Elementarisierung in der Praxis*. Gütersloh (Kaiser; Gütersloher) 1995; Gabriele Faust-Siehl/Friedrich Schweitzer/Karl E. Nipkow, *Die Berücksichtigung der religiösen Entwicklung in der Praxis des Religionsunterrichts*, in: *Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik*, Bd. 6, Neukirchen-Vluyn (Neukirchner) 1990, 209-216.

41 Noam, *Beyond Freud and Piaget*, 378.

42 Signs of this are also to be found in Kegan's model of an evolving self.

43 Gil Noam, *Beyond Freud*; cf. also Gil Noam/Robert Kegan, *Soziale Kognition und Psychodynamik: Auf dem Weg zu einer klinischen Entwicklungspsychologie*, in: *Perspektivität und Interpretation*, Wolfgang Edelstein/Monika Keller (eds.), Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1982, 422-460. One could also speak of "placing religious theories of development on their feet instead of their heads," as with Tilman Sutter/Michael Charlton, *Soziale Kognition und Sinnstruktur*, Oldenburg 1994, in reference to Piaget.



should no longer be harnessed behind the cart. Instead, the focus should be placed more clearly on *biography* and *the lifeworld* when speaking of religious development, as I shall seek to explain in the following.

However, a stronger emphasis on biography and the lifeworld means that the concept of style should be strengthened and defined more precisely. In my perspective, the *concept of style itself* can make a crucial contribution towards the relativization and reversal of the cognitive primacy, particularly if its strong connection to biography and the lifeworld is taken seriously. Noam used the concept of style in this sense in order to emphasize the importance of biography within the framework of cognitive-structural theories of development. My qualification of the tools available for the perception of the contemporary religious landscape moves beyond this and seeks to be understood as a (*social-*)*phenomenological* reworking. This is my aim in using the concept of style as it relates to biography and the lifeworld.

## 2.2. The Biographical Embeddedness of Religious Styles

Provisionally and in careful modification of the cognitive-structural perspective, I define "religious styles" as the biographically generated modi of accessing and dealing with religion. These modi are thus subject to "biographical changes."<sup>44</sup> In order to make this initial definition more precise, I would like to emphasize two dimensions that characterize the biographical embeddedness of religious styles: the *self-other dynamics* and the *world of stories*.

*Self-other dynamics.* Biography is determined by the self-other interaction. This interaction has a history and it has found expression in life themata. Styles are contingent upon biography; their roots are interpersonal. Styles also are a means of expression. With their help, we impart something<sup>45</sup> and they are part of the dynamics of a relationship, an interaction.<sup>46</sup> However, because this interpersonality has a history beginning with events lying far back in the biographical past and finding its expression in the patterns of communication and style developed at that time, present-day styles do not come into being isolated in the here

44 "Biographical change" is a "less exact" but nevertheless apt initial definition of religious development according to Schweitzer, *Lebensgeschichte und Religion. Religiöse Entwicklung und Erziehung im Kindes- und Jugendalter*, München (Kaiser) 1987.

45 James Day, *Speaking of Belief*, outlines a plausible definition of religion from the perspective of psychology of religion, when he starts with the character of religion as language, intending to communicate something.

46 Both Gergen, *Belief as Relational Resource*, and Murken, *Believing in Speech*, *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 3, 1993, 231-235, 237-240, insist on this in their critical comments on Day, *Speaking of Belief*. I see the relational character of religion in Day's model, but also agree with the necessity to make this clearer, as called for by Gergen.

and now. Instead, for all their cognitive and emotional transformations, these styles have biographical roots.

Self-other dynamics imply the inclusion of psycho-dynamic patterns of explanation, such as the perspectives set forth by Erikson and Rizzuto.<sup>47</sup> The necessity for a greater correlation with Erikson's psycho-social development has been pointed out on several occasions.<sup>48</sup> Despite the general difficulties that Fowler's theory has in integrating the psycho-social perspective into the cognitive-structural one, it also contains three interesting seminal paths. First, in the interpretation of the interview with Mary,<sup>49</sup> the psycho-social perspective almost plays the role of a second supporting pillar and brings out both the psycho-dynamic-biographical and the lifeworld factors and resources in a way that is not at all characteristic of cognitive-structural theories and research. Second, in correlating his stages of faith with those of Kegan, Fowler has taken clear steps towards the reception of psycho-dynamic models.<sup>50</sup> Third, at least for the early stages of faith, Fowler, in his 1996 book, has taken up the model set forth by Anna-Maria Rizzuto, whose work is based primarily on Winnicott and Erikson and explicates a view of religious development from a psycho-dynamic perspective.

In my opinion, a significant advance could be achieved in this respect by integrating the relevance of life themata, as postulated by Noam, into religious development. As Noam has put forth in his writings, it is quite probable that interpersonal experiences and the orientations resulting from them can manifest themselves in formative life themata, depositing themselves in the inventory of our psychological resources.<sup>51</sup> Life themata of this type are therefore a challenge for competencies and *schemata*, the tools that help us try to understand and deal with these themata in the present. The relevance of life themata in terms of developmental dynamics should not be underestimated. Moreover, when analyzing and interpreting religious styles (e.g., in interviews), we must expect that religious styles

47 For example, Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, New York/London (W. W. Norton) 1968; Ana M. Rizzuto, *Religious Development: A Psychoanalytic Point of View*, in: *Religious Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, eds. Fritz K. Oser/W. G. Scarlett, San Francisco (Jossey-Bass) 1991, 47-60; Ana M. Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God. A Psychoanalytic Study*, Chicago/London (University of Chicago Press) 1979.

48 For example, Schweitzer, *Lebensgeschichte*.

49 Fowler devotes an entire chapter to the recounting and interpretation of this interview with a young woman. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, ch. 22.

50 From this point of view, Oser's consideration of the emotional, psycho-dynamic schemata and their relevance for religious development is also of great potential. Fritz Oser, *Die emotionale Dimension der Entstehung Gottes im Kinde*, in: *Neuer Gott für neue Kinder, Alter Gott für neue Kinder*, Vreni Metz (ed.), Freiburg (Paulus-Verlag) 1994, 136-157. Cf. also contributions to the discussion about adult education and religious development in Michael Böhnke/K. H. Reich/Louis Ridez, *Erwachsen im Glauben. Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Entwicklungspsychologie und religiöser Erwachsenenbildung*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln (Kohlhammer) 1992.

51 Noam, *Beyond Freud and Piaget*; cf. *High-Risk Youth. Transforming Our Understanding of Human Development*, in: *Human Development* 39, 1996, 1-17.



from the recent or very distant biographical past may still, or once again, play a role, resurfacing to influence the present style.

Thus, a consequence of this decided multi-perspectivism is also the multi-layeredness of religious styles, which can be referred to as an internal pluralism. The so-called "milestone model" introduced by Jane Loevinger is therefore more suitable for illustrating the development of religious styles than ascending or even stage-like models.<sup>52</sup> The "milestone model" describes the respective phase of development or the respective style as an ascending curve, which falls back after it has reached its peak. Nevertheless, remains present at a low level, while the subsequent lines of development proceed to attain their respective peaks. This model not only differentiates a hierarchical arrangement of the stages but also reflects the multi-layeredness of religious orientations at a certain point in time.<sup>53</sup>

*The narrativity of the biographical roots of religious styles.* The significance of biographical themata for religious development and for preferences of a religious style can be made even more precise. If we say that we are dealing with scripts, personal myths, and individually relevant stories, then it becomes apparent that these themata have a narrative quality and are conveyed in narrative form. Concerning the formation of identity, we can refer to Paul Ricœur's perspective,<sup>54</sup> according to which it is our intertwining in a web of stories that makes the formation of identity possible.<sup>55</sup> For psychotherapy,<sup>56</sup> pastoral care,<sup>57</sup> and counseling,<sup>58</sup>

52 Jane Loevinger, *Ego Development: Conceptions and Theories*, San Francisco (Jossey-Bass) 1976.

53 In the period between the German publication of this article and its English translation, I have explicated this model in more detail as well as the characterization of religious styles. See Heinz Streib, *Faith Development Theory Revisited. The Religious Styles Perspective*, in: *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11, 2001, 143-158.

54 Paul Ricœur, *Oneself As Another*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1990; Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, Chicago (University of Chicago) 1988.

55 Heinz Streib, *Erzählte Zeit als Ermöglichung von Identität. Paul Ricoeurs Begriff der narrativen Identität und seine Implikationen für die religionspädagogische Rede von Identität und Bildung*, in: *Religion und die Gestaltung der Zeit*, Dieter Georgi/Hans-Günter Heimbrock (eds.), Kampen; Weinheim (Kok) 1994, 181-198.

56 For example, Johannes Cremerius, *Die Konstruktion der biographischen Wirklichkeit im analytischen Prozeß*, in: *Freiburger literaturpsychologische Gespräche. Erste Folge*, Johannes Cremerius (ed.), Frankfurt am Main/Bern 1981, 15-37; Walter A. Schelling, *Erinnerte Biographie. Die Lebensgeschichte im Lichte ihrer psychologischen Vergegenwärtigung*, in: *Wege zum Menschen* 37, 1985, 306-316; Walter A. Schelling, *Erinnern und Erzählen. Psychotherapeutische und autobiographische Deutungen der Lebensgeschichte*, in: *Wege zum Menschen* 35, 1983, 416-422.

57 Albrecht Grözinger, *Seelsorge als Rekonstruktion von Lebensgeschichte*, in: *Wege zum Menschen* 38, 1986, 178-188.

58 Bruno Hildenbrand, *Geschichtenerzählen als Prozeß der Wirklichkeitskonstruktion in Familien*, in: *System Familie* 3, 1990, 227-236; Michael White/David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*, Adelaide (Dulwich Centre Pub.) 1989.

59 Heinz Streib, *Heilsames Erzählen. Pastoraltheologische und pastoralpsychologische Perspektiven zur Begründung und Gestaltung der Seelsorge*, in: *Wege zum Menschen* 48, 1996, 30-44.

the significance of narratives has also been delineated, characterizing such narratives as the reconstruction of biography.<sup>59</sup>

Regarding cognitive-structural theories, the conclusion must be that operations and structures alone do not constitute the key dimension for development, biographically significant narratives also play a role.<sup>60</sup> For *moral development* theory, the beginnings of its narrative reformulation<sup>61</sup> have turned into a concrete plea for a "narrative turn."<sup>62</sup> The developmental relevance of themata, as worked out by Noam, is thus to be understood narratively. The self-other interaction has a narrative character because it has to do with narratively structured life *themata*. Accordingly, a "narrative turn" must also be proposed for the theoretical and empirical analysis of *religious* development.

### 2.3. The lifeworld embeddedness of religious styles

If a multi-perspectival concept of religious style is to be established, its embeddedness in the lifeworld must be emphasized to the same extent as its embeddedness in biography. Embeddedness in the lifeworld is simply the other side of biographical embeddedness. As ascertained by Grathoff, biography must be studied from a social-phenomenological perspective "as a sequence of milieus and as the biographical context of the milieu."<sup>63</sup> The preference for a religious style and the development of this preference grows out of the interweavings of everyday life and is to be located in the intersubjective and meaning-constitutive milieus. In our line of reasoning,

60 Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: Development as Moral Practice*, in: *Narrative and Storytelling: Implications for Understanding Moral Development*, Mark B. Tappan/Martin J. Packer (eds.), San Francisco (Jossey-Bass) 1991, 83-102; Mark Freeman, *Paul Ricœur on Interpretation. The Model of the Text and the Idea of Development*, in: *Human Development* 28, 1985, 295-312; Mark Freeman, *History, Narrative, and Life-Span Developmental Knowledge*, in: *Human Development* 27, 1984, 1-19.

61 James Day has been working for several years on a narrative reformulation of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. James Day, *Speaking of Belief*; James Day, *Role-taking Revisited: Narrative and Cognitive-developmental Interpretations of Moral Growth*, in: *Journal of Moral Education* 20, 1991, 305-315; James Day, *Knowing the Good and Doing It. Moral Judgment and Action in Young Adult Narratives of Moral Choice*, in: *Der Kontext: Moralische Urteilen – moralisches Handeln*, Detlef Garz/Fritz Oser/Wolfgang Althof (eds.), Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1991; James Day, *The Moral Audience. On the Narrative Mediation of Moral "Judgment" and Moral "Action"*, in: *Narrative and Storytelling: Implications for Understanding Moral Development*, Mark Tappan/Martin Packer (eds.), San Francisco (Jossey-Bass) 1991, 27-42.

62 In his most recent article with co-author Mark Tappan, Day's assertion of the developmental relevance of narrativity for moral development has become a concrete plea for a narrative turn. James M. Day/Mark Tappan, *The Narrative Approach to Moral Development. From the Epistemic Subject to Dialogical Selves*, *Human Development* 39, 1996, 67-82.

63 Richard Grathoff, *Milieu und Lebenswelt. Eine Einführung in die phänomenologische Soziologie und die sozialphänomenologische Forschung*, Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1995, 428.

the reference to the lifeworld perspective bears corrective relevance for theories of cognitive-structural development, which are criticized – not always unjustly – for individualistic narrowness.<sup>64</sup> Locating religious styles in the lifeworld means taking the cognitive-structural differentiation of styles beyond its cognitive focus, reminding us of its milieu-relatedness. In light of this reminder, continued work with the concept of style seems meaningful.

Work completed in the sociological analysis of lifestyle has also contributed to a deepening and more precise definition of the concept of religious style.<sup>65</sup> Gerhard Schulze's *Erlebnisgesellschaft* is one of the more recent sociological works which promises to capture the pluralistic and individualized approaches to lifestyle questions common today.<sup>66</sup> Schulze's approach is provocative in that he attempts to differentiate between various milieus by focusing especially on everyday-aesthetic factors.<sup>67</sup>

Schulze's approach has not yet been investigated extensively for *religion*, but if his thesis is correct, then preferences for religious styles must also be subject to the laws of everyday aesthetics, and religious milieus could also be differentiated along these lines. Future research should investigate the soundness of this model for the differentiation of religious styles and milieus. However, this undertaking also raises the issue of the need for

64 John M. Broughton, *The Political Psychology of Faith Development Theory*, in: Faith Development and Fowler, Craig Dykstra/Sharon D. Parks (eds.), Birmingham (Religious Education Press) 1986, 90-114; John M. Hull, *Human Development and Capitalist Society*, in: *Stages of Faith and Religious Development*, James W. Fowler/Karl E. Nipkow/Friedrich Schweitzer (eds.), New York (Crossroad) 1991, 209-223. Broughton's and Hull's sharp political and sociological criticism of Fowler's theories also draws attention to the fact that, in Fowler's theory, the developing individual seems removed and released from the social, real-life context. The real-life connection seems particularly problematic for the higher, post-conventional stages. The same applies for these stages in Oser's theory. However, for the lower stages it is already unmistakably clear that the religious styles also result from the respective religious milieu. Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, takes note of this, if only marginally, when speaking of the development of parishes and their influence on the development of the individual.

65 Hans U. Gumbrecht/Ludwig K. Pfeiffer, *Stil. Geschichten und Funktionen eines kulturwissenschaftlichen Diskurselements*, Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1986; Hartmut Lüdtke, *Expressive Ungleichheit. Zur Soziologie der Lebensstile*, Opladen (Leske + Budrich) 1989; Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt/New York (Campus) 1992; Ingo Mörth/Gerhard Fröhlich, *Lebensstile als symbolisches Kapital? Zum aktuellen Stand kultureller Distinktionen*, in: *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile. Zur Kultursoziologie der Moderne nach Pierre Bourdieu*, Ingo Mörth/Gerhard Fröhlich (eds.), Frankfurt am Main/New York (Campus) 1994, 7-30.

66 Schulze, *Erlebnisgesellschaft*; Gerhard Schulze, *Identität als Stilfrage? Über den kollektiven Wandel der Selbstdefinition*, in: *Identität. Entwicklungen psychologischer und soziologischer Forschung*, Hans-Peter Frey/Karl Hauser (eds.), Stuttgart 1987, 105-124.

67 Schulze's differentiation of orientations, recurring in particular to the factor of everyday aesthetics, according to (a) high culture schema, (b) trivial schema, and (c) tension schema puts forth for discussion of style differentiation that divides the contemporary landscape in five milieus: (1) the entertainment milieu, (2) the self-actualization milieu, (3) the niveau milieu, (4) the integration milieu, and (5) the harmony milieu.

theoretical clarification, particularly since the current dispute among scholars of sociology concerning the lifestyle concept and Schulze's everyday aesthetics approach has yet to be settled. This controversy concerns the theorem of individualization in particular.<sup>68</sup> Has religion also become nothing but a question of a lifestyle preference motivated by individual concerns and the aesthetics of everyday life (Schulze), or even a question of mere personal bricolage of meaning (Hitzler)?<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, do class-specific, socio-economic factors (still) play a significant role (Mörth & Fröhlich),<sup>70</sup> and for religious "socialization" as well?

According to my perspective, a one-dimensional concept of lifestyle based on the aesthetics of everyday life must be differentiated – not only but especially in view of *religion*. The danger lies in the neglect of the diachronic perspective of the lifeworld, social and cultural factors causing an individual to become what he or she is, a neglect of the diachronicity of interpersonal relationships, which all seem to me indispensable for an understanding of religion.<sup>71</sup> The social-phenomenological approach to religion also distinguishes itself by a *narrative* perspective, by a special emphasis on the narrativity of the lifeworld, the milieu-related constitution and genesis of religion and its various styles. The narrative reformulation of moral development as suggested by Day and Tappan also seeks to achieve "a paradigm of social construction and intersubjectively possible forms of discourse, in which selves are assumed to be embodied, relational, and thus fundamentally dialogical," for the following reason:

Careful attention to narrative yields an approach in which language plays a much larger role in structuring moral life, generating moral experience, and shaping a far more social kind of self than assumed by the cognitive-developmental approach.<sup>72</sup>

This means taking into account, both theoretically and empirically, that the "social construction of reality" that is ritualized and narratively and symbolically transmitted in certain religious milieus also forms the individual's preference for a religious style.

68 Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp) 1986.

69 Ronald Hitzler, *Sinnbasteln. Zur subjektiven Aneignung von Lebensstilen*, in: *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile. Zur Kultursoziologie nach Pierre Bourdieu*, Ingo Mörth/Gerhard Fröhlich (eds.), Frankfurt am Main/New York (Campus) 1994.

70 Ingo Mörth/Gerhard Fröhlich, *Lebensstile als symbolisches Kapital? Zum aktuellen Stand kultureller Distinktionen*, in: *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile. Zur Kultursoziologie der Moderne nach Pierre Bourdieu*, Ingo Mörth/Gerhard Fröhlich (eds.), Frankfurt am Main/New York (Campus) 1994, 7-30.

71 I therefore advocate the position set forth by Mörth and Fröhlich and would like to retain the generative milieu-connectedness of style preferences, taking this into account for the differentiation of milieus and styles in religion with the aid of a social-phenomenological emphasis on the relevance of intersubjectivity.

72 Day/Tappan, 67.

The following definition summarizes my statements on a multi-perspective concept of religious style: "styles of religion" are modes of accessing and dealing with religion in its narrative, symbolic, and ritual forms of expression, forms that are generated by a multiplicity of factors – namely by both lifeworld and biography. The one-sidedness of structural differentiations of religious styles must be corrected, for the lifeworld and biographical embeddedness of preferences for religious styles is transmitted narratively.

### 3. Prospects for the Future:

#### A Differentiation of Religious Styles as a Contribution towards an Analysis of Today's Pluralistic-Religious Landscape

A hermeneutic approach to analyzing today's religious landscape should do justice to the internal and external plurality of religious orientations. The progressive individualization and pluralization of religion also leads to a broad spectrum of conversion and transformation processes. This places high demands on any attempt to understand and explain.<sup>73</sup> The analysis of styles as I have presented it here claims to meet these demands, at least to open a perspective. By adding external plurality to internal plurality, we can take into account the fact that one style does not necessarily preclude others. On the contrary, we can expect to find that styles are composed of a range of different raw materials. One of the reasons for the inability of cognitive-structural theories to come to terms with internal plurality lies in the premises of "structural wholeness" (Kohlberg) in terms of the logic of development and the corresponding assumptions concerning the transformation of structural stages of religious cognition. These aspects rule out both the simultaneous existence of several styles and the possibility of regression or revival which we see e.g. in fundamentalist orientation. This multi-layeredness can more easily be conceived of in Loewinger's "milestone model" mentioned above.

A hermeneutic of the contemporary religious situation should increasingly ask whether and how current style preferences and processes of

73 The complex interplay of conversion and transformation was first investigated by Romney Moseley, *Religious Conversion: A Structural-Developmental Analysis*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1978. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, devoted an entire chapter to this topic (ch. 23), but neglected to treat important questions such as the stage-specific form of a conversion, or (as I would formulate it) the differentiation of conversion styles from the perspective of developmental psychology. Cf. Friedrich Schweitzer, *Bekehrung und religiöse Entwicklung*, in: *Wer schreibt meine Lebensgeschichte?*, Walter Sparr (ed.), Gütersloh (Gütersloher Verlag) 1990, 296-314. On deconversion from new religious, fundamentalist orientations, we shall present the results of an empirical research project which is located at the Research Center for Biographical Studies in Contemporary Religion at the Bielefeld University. In this research, among other instruments, a modified faith development research procedure yields insights into such internal and external plurality

conversion and transformation are related to lifeworld and biographical embeddedness in religious milieus. The fact that both the biographical and the milieu-related connection are transmitted *narratively* is another reminder that a new narrative approach, more strongly emphasizing the life themata and milieu accounts, would bring about a significant advance in the analysis of the contemporary religious situation.

John Hull, who otherwise expressed sharp criticism of Fowler's theory, has pointed out the potential for faith development theory to contribute to a hermeneutic of the contemporary religious situation that takes into account differences in style. He closed his critical comments with the open perspective that *faith development theory* can be understood as "a kind of hermeneutic of the contemporary religious life".<sup>74</sup>

There are various kinds of religious speech, each of which expresses some perspective on the religious life, and each of which needs to be purged both internally by the "kingdom of God" perspective and externally by the negotiation of one style of speech against another.

Here, Hull also thematizes the limits of the structural analysis of religion and religious styles. I would like to close with a remark on this topic. The structural analysis of religion and the revision of this approach concerning its relationship to the lifeworld and to biography presented herein as style analysis can only be *one* element of research on religion. Structural analysis is limited in its lack of criteria for assessing *what* is recounted and believed, as well as in its lack of criteria for foreseeing the consequences. Questions such as the right to childlike naïveté,<sup>75</sup> and even moreso the judgment of freedom and manipulation, of fundamentalism and tolerance, and finally the question of salvation and alienation can only be answered on the basis of criteria from theology and the philosophy of religion.

From this perspective, the theories of Oser and Fowler reveal their strengths in precisely those points in which they move beyond structuralist limitations and refer to the premises of theology and the philosophy of religion. Oser describes the goal of the developmental approach as a structure of thought for religious consciousness in which the individual's own autonomous freedom is understood from the perspective of "universal communication and solidarity," and thus also in view of that in "which this freedom has its ground, is conveyed and made possible." And this is not possible without mention of a momentous promise "that allows one to bear the effects of guilt, injustice, death, suffering, etc. in the sole trust in a sense of acceptance from the Absolute, also and even moreso

74 Hull, *Human Development*, 222f.

75 Cf. the discussion about "first/initial naïveté" touched off by Anton A. Bucher, *Wenn wir immer tiefer graben ... kommt vielleicht die Hölle*, in: *Katechetische Blätter* 114, 1989, 654-662.

in the midst of failure and pain."<sup>76</sup> Fowler not only candidly admits that the theological turn becomes unavoidable for him in that he can only formulate his sixth stage in terms of the metaphor of the Kingdom of God.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, tendencies of this theological interpretation are also already visible in the formulation of "conjunctive faith" (Stage 5), for Fowler says of this orientation (and this is of utmost relevance for our topic of religious pluralism): "it generates and maintains vulnerability to the strange truth of those who are 'other.'" Even more: beyond national, ethnic, or religious borders, humans at this stage are ready "to spend and to be spent for cause of conserving and cultivating the possibility of others' generating identity and meaning."<sup>78</sup>

Understanding religion as a question of style means thinking beyond structural narrowness and realizing the potential and the openness for development in a pluralistic-religious situation. It also means learning, and the rich narratives of religious traditions provide us with a plethora of thought-provoking metaphors and models.

### Zusammenfassung

Ausgehend von der Notwendigkeit einer tragfähigen Analyse der pluralistisch-religiösen Lage der Gegenwart und der in ihr entstehenden lebensgeschichtlichen Veränderungen von individueller Religion werden die beiden maßgeblichen kognitiv-strukturellen Theorien religiöser Entwicklung auf den Prüfstand gehoben, die von Fritz Oser und Paul Gmünder 1984, besonders aber die von James W. Fowler 1981 vorgelegte Faith Development Theory. Es werden Argumente dafür vorgetragen, dass eine Revision dieser Theorien notwendig ist. Dies betrifft insbesondere deren Engführung auf die kognitive Dimension individueller Religion, derzufolge (religiöse) Kognition als roter Faden und als Motor der Entwicklung in Anschlag gebracht wird und infolgedessen wichtige, gleichwohl entwicklungsrelevante Dimensionen ausgeklammert werden. Die vorgeschlagene Revision geht von der Mehr-Perspektivität individueller Religion und religiöser Entwicklung aus, für die besonders an Fowler angeschlossen werden kann, fokussiert jedoch mit Entschiedenheit sowohl auf die *lebensgeschichtliche*, in der Selbst-Andere-Dynamik begründete und sich als narrative (Re-)Konstruktion entfaltende, als auch auf die *lebensweltliche* Bedingtheit religiöser Orientierungen und ihrer Verschiedenheit. Kern der Revision ist die These, dass der Begriff des religiösen Stils geeignet ist, diese Mehr-Perspektivität zu fassen, und dass die als Differenzierung religiöser Stile entworfene Perspektive religiöser Entwicklung der inneren und äußeren Pluralität von Religion in der Gegenwart gerecht werden kann.

76 Oser/Gmünder, 103 (translated here by Ella Brehm).

77 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 206.

78 Fowler, Stages of Faith, 198. Cf. Fowler, The Enlightenment and Faith Development Theory, in: Journal for Empirical Theology 1, 1988, 29-42, in which he sees the contribution made by faith development theory to the contemporary religious-cultural situation in its providing of a language and system of concepts "for ordering and speaking intelligibly about the clash of cultural levels of development."