

Editorial Note

In four contributions to this issue, authors explore their self-understanding of Religious studies as an academic field. One of the major aims of practitioners in the field has been an attempt to identify and formulate core factors on the basis of which the conceptual territory of Religious studies can be defined, and which would help scholars to transcend emotionally charged disputes over parochial, nationalistic or other ideologically and institutionally constrained formulations of the discipline and its subject matter.

Timothy Fitzgerald explores boundary issues between Religious studies and Theology by tracking changes in the usage and role of such central English terms as *religion*, *secular*, *sacred*, *profane*, *the state*, *politics* and *civil* in constituting – and rhetorically constructing – the domain of the religious. He exposes the historical roots of our habitual scholarly discourse, according to which there exists a non-religious domain of the secular as a neutral platform on which religious realities and concepts (the domain of the sacred) are constructed as an inseparable element in processes of social formation.

Kim Knott too looks at the relationship between Religious studies and Theology. Starting from the spatial methodology that she has developed for locating and studying ‘religion’ within the secular, she analyzes the cultural and to a certain extent also cognitive organization of socio-spatial language at work in the discourse of academics. Her intent is to show how a familiar figure of speech used by scholars in the field uncovers mental and social constructs that are used to create and authorize disciplinary spaces and their boundaries.

Morny Joy takes a critical look at the controversial notion of culture and its conjectural neutrality in studying religion. She paves the way for Religious studies as a mature discipline by implementing the study of religion as part of Cultural studies, pointing out the significance of such theoretical schools of thought as postcolonial critique, gender theory and postmodern theory for making sense of religion in the 21st century.

Willi Braun argues that the fragmentation of disciplinary identities can be corrected by an intellectual disposition based on anthropocentric theorizing. The foundation on which the *raison d'être* of Religious studies as a discipline can be built should be an acknowledgement that the study of religion is about people and about people’s discourses, behaviors and institutions in specific sociocultural settings. Proposing that the scholar of religion should identify him/herself as a practicing social scientist, ethnographer or anthropologist,

Braun posits that 'a theory of society that is not at the same time a theory of religion is hardly a theory of society at all'.

In the fifth article, Tuomas Martikainen discusses the governance of Islam in Finland and observes ways of domesticating Islam by national and local authorities through various administrative means at their disposal, including funding, auditing and resourcing.

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