

Salvation Goods and Religious Markets

Theory and Applications

Jörg Stolz (Ed.)



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Franz SCHULTHEIS

Salvation Goods and Domination: Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of the Religious Field

1. Introduction

After the "breakthrough" of his work "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste", there was a non-stop stream of contributions to the reception and interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the social world. In countless variations, his central theoretical concepts, like habitus, capital, fields or illusio, were considered, the epistemological premises underlying his theory analysed, and comparative and theoretical perspectives presented; his work was situated either in the field of the contemporary social sciences or in the context of the great theoretical traditions. Bourdieu – according to the international citation index, the most quoted social scientist of the post-war era – is generally treated today as a classic and his praxeological sociology is not only respected and used by sociologists, but also by anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, pedagogues, art historians and, last but not least, scholars in the study of religion. His work is regarded as an important fund of knowledge on theoretical perspectives and methodology, and even as a theoretical coordinate system for the analysis of social reality.

Bourdieu's work covers a very wide number of topics – his theoretical positions were developed in constant interaction with empirical research beginning in the mid 1950s when, as a newly qualified philosopher and graduate of the Paris elite university, *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, he was sent to Algeria on military service and there taught himself the craft of field research in the social sciences. This led him

from studies on the influence of Berber cosmology on architecture, through the reproduction crisis in the French farming community, to educational sociology, and the analyses of our dealings with photography, fashion, museums and consumer trends. Accompanying this were his pioneering analyses in the sociology of literature and art, as well as socioanthropological research on questions of symbolic order. Religion was also the object of Bourdieusian research and theory; in fact, this work led to a new paradigm, but astonishingly this remained unnoticed and unheeded at first. As will be shown, it was through the study of Max Weber's sociology of religion that Bourdieu was led to develop his theory of fields; and from the resulting structure and dynamic of the religious field, the basic pattern for the analysis of other social fields emerged.¹

This contribution presents an approach to Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical construction and sociological analysis of religious fields and covers several stages and aspects. Firstly, the concept of the field is explained in the context of Bourdieu's theory on social space and his sociotopographical approach. Then follows a brief description of his sociogenetical reconstruction of the emergence of the religious field using the logic of his "genetical structuralism". This leads, in the third part, to a look at the structure and dynamic of the religious field which closely follows Weber's sociology of dominance. Finally, the Bourdieusian concepts of "field" and "habitus" are presented in their complementarity.

1 It should be remembered that Bourdieu in his concept of "capital", as used in "religious", "cultural" or "symbolic capital", clearly adopts Weber's concept of "salvation goods" (Biens de salut) borrowing at the same time Weber's pointed hypermaterialistic view of religion.

2. The social space and its fields: Bourdieu's sociotopographical approach

When seeking systematical access to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields in general, and his analysis of the religious field in particular, one must first examine his thinking on social space.

The concept of "space" plays a central, systematic role in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the social world. Visualized as an ideal type, and made plausible by Bourdieu using the Calder Room Compositions,² the "global social space" presents itself in an abstract way as a "field, i.e. at the same time as a field of force, the necessity of which is imposed on the agents who move in it, but also as a battlefield in which the agents confront each other with varying means and goals, according to their positions within the structure of the field of force, thereby contributing to maintaining or transforming that structure."³ For Bourdieu, social space also means in concrete terms an ensemble of positions which coexist at varying distances from each other, and these distances are describable and measurable by means of a multi-dimensional coordinate system. In this way, for instance, two cities on the globe can be clearly situated by means of longitude and latitude, the distance between them can be exactly determined and there is no quibbling about the fact that one can only be in one place at one time.

The concept of "space" is in Bourdieu's view of the social world primarily of heuristic importance, in that it forces one to think in relations and structures; in particular, it offers the possibility of avoiding

2 "I remember that many years ago I sometimes said to my students: Take a sheet of paper and draw me a social world". Almost all drew a pyramid. Since then, I see, to use another picture, the social world like a perpetuum mobile from Calder, where there are small universes, which turn and change in a multidimensional room with and against each other." In Bourdieu, P. (2002) "Lire les sciences sociales, 1989-1992", quoted from: *Sciences Humaines*, N° special: L'oeuvre de Pierre Bourdieu, p 94.

3 Bourdieu, P. "Espace social et champ du pouvoir", in *Raisons pratiques*. Paris, 1994, p 55.

spontaneous substantialistic or essentialistic theory.⁴ First and foremost, the task of sociology for Bourdieu is to study the forces and conflicts involved in the relationship between individual and collective agents in a space that is created and developed by these forces; social reality manifests itself for him mainly in the form of mutually dependent and exclusive elements, which produce this space through their interactions.

In this relational view, the elements that populate the space of social reality, i.e. individuals or groups, exist primarily by means of their difference, that is, they take relative positions in a space of relations, which is not immediately visible as such, but nevertheless constantly proves the effectiveness of its reality through the manifestation of its elements. This idea of difference and distance is decisive for Bourdieu's concept of social space.⁵ The latter is comprised of mutually exclusive positions, and their proximity also corresponds to their valency in the hierarchy of positions which are either next, under or over each other. In this ensemble of interdependent positions, an individual can take only one place at any one time and Bourdieu's sociology aims to analyse the correlation between the position of an individual and his or her disposition to judge and act in specific ways.

With regard to Bourdieu's view of individual agents, this relational thinking leads to them always being seen as occupying a social position – an epistemological assumption incompatible with the premises of methodological individualism. In Bourdieu's theory of habitus this point is decisive; each individual finds himself in a specific place in

4 In the common-sense perspective of an individual, "society" is as a rule a system of circles, which surround the individual at varying distances, from the family through the local community to the state or world society. Here "society" is too often understood as anthropomorphous and "holistic", or as a kind of "super subject", which thinks, wishes, does etc. Bourdieu's field perspective tries to break with this objectivistic misjudgment of "society". Society is perceived purely as relational or structural: it is the ensemble of relationships, which are maintained by the individuals who belong to society, it "is" this structure of interactions, no more and no less.

5 This view reminds us, not without reason, of the structuralistic theory of language.

social space at a certain time in his biographical flight path and perceives the social world from that standpoint's perspective, whereby previous standpoints are revealed more or less distinctly in relativizing or reflective attitudes (views and expectations).

For Bourdieu's view of social classes, this relational view of the social world also leads, by way of the space paradigm, to desubstantialization (building on, but also criticizing Marx).⁶ The sociological perspective should not dissect the social world into classes – a too rigid, objectivistic and unhistorical way of thinking – but rather conceptualize social spaces, in which individual and collective elements emerge in various configurations. Then, according to the sociohistorical context, classes can in fact be portrayed and analysed. Bourdieu's theory of social fields is empirically based and historically specific – whether we are referring to the literary field at the time of Flaubert, the debate about impressionism surrounding Manet or the attempt to objectify one's own biographical flight path sociologically. For any concrete empirical analysis, the aim is to identify the forces that work and compete in that field at a certain point in time and to investigate the dynamic of these competitive struggles. For this, Bourdieu often uses the game metaphor, in order to make the idea of the field more tangible. To put it simply, each field can be seen as a "game", in which "players" fight according to specific rules for a specific "stake", which appears to them "worth" the time and energy that have to be invested in the competition. For each of these "games", from capitalist market competition to the contest for academic reputation, from competitive sport to the struggle to find religious truths, the belief in the meaning of the game is a prerequisite and each game has its own logic, as well as being relatively independent of the other games which are "played" in parallel by other agents according to other rules. In each specific case, it is then possible to establish whether certain demographic factors (gender, age, ethnic affiliation) or sociological characteristics (occupational position, education,

6 Schultheis F. and Vester, M. "Soziologie als Beruf. Hommage an Pierre Bourdieu", in *Mittelweg*, 36, No. 5, 10/2002: 41-58.

income) are of importance in the dealing of the "cards" or not. But this question has to be addressed when analysing a specific field. It is important from Bourdieu's viewpoint to discover, or theoretically construct, the constitutive logic of inclusion and exclusion in such a field.

3. On the sociogenesis of the religious field: processes of inclusion and exclusion regarding access to religious goods and processes of domination

Following Bourdieu's way of looking at the structure and dynamic of the religious field, which is influenced by Weber but at the same time goes further, it is advisable to start from a very simple idea. Religious practice (rituals, symbols, doctrines, etc.) has no limitations, as long as it is not subject to monopolization but is in general freely available to everyone for everyday use; thus one is happy or unhappy according to one's own taste and needs for religious things. If necessary, anyone can recite a magic formula or say a prayer, kneel down, honour a totem or anything furnished with extraordinary powers (*charisma*), as well as develop symbols or rituals, etc. However, as soon as a group of individuals claims, and enforces, the exclusive rights to legitimate transactions with these goods and meets with active approval or passive toleration from those excluded (in fact "dispossessed"), then an interesting elementary form of associative relationships (*Vergesellschaftungen*) emerges. The result is the dialectic between inclusion and exclusion, whereby one group claims, or usurps, the monopoly of the legitimate use of religious objects, constituting a corps of "chosen" people, of religious experts or virtuosi. In this same process, but on the opposite side, those excluded from this monopoly are (dis)qualified, institutionalized and negatively defined as the social category of the "laity", the religiously untalented or the profane.

The religious field emerges through these processes of monopolization in two ways:⁷

– firstly, through social differentiation on the level of agents, their roles and functions. The "holy"/"profane" dichotomy is reflected here by the opposition between "priest" and "layperson", representing an elementary form of the religious field's structure.

– and also through the differentiation or specialization of social facts. According to the social anthropology of Marcel Mauss, it can be assumed that social facts are "total" in their archaic or elementary form, i.e. that material and symbolic, economic and religious meanings and functions appear to be merged. This linkage or interpenetration of the spheres or "fields", so typical of simple societies, was broken only in the course of societal differentiation and complexification (according to Durkheim, particularly through the increasing division of labour); it then finds expression in the juxtapositions of different societal "games", each with different societal rules and stakes, but always showing the same basic patterns. From the viewpoint of the sociology of dominance, developed by Bourdieu and based on Weber, their common denominator is the monopolization or control of goods by social groups.

Characteristic of the religious field is the dichotomy between the positively qualified persons, the "experts" with extraordinary qualities (gifts and talents), and the mass of unqualified; this is, therefore, the basic structural pattern of all social fields, even if it is not always visi-

7 In one of our discussions about the reconstruction of his theory of the social world, Bourdieu related that he became aware of his model of the religious field, as it is represented here in the annex, during a lecture at the University of Lille, as he was introducing his students to Weber's sociology using self-translated passages from *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* and thereby came to speak of the aspect of sociology of religion. As he, for didactic reasons, drew on the blackboard the structure of relationships between the people on the one hand and the various religious expert groups on the other hand, he suddenly became aware that these relationships could not simply be understood as interaction structures which realised themselves in the interaction, but rather completely in contrast represented an "objective" structure which provided, so to speak, the "elementary form" of all fields.

ble with the same clarity. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the religious field displays an extreme form of power concentration and its organization is hierarchical and authoritative, so that long before the emergence of modern states it represented a kind of prototype of the dominant order. While this "mother" of all dominant orders was able to penalise disobedient members by excommunication (and in the case of the inquisition by even more terrible punishments) – to use a common and apt example from Christendom's medieval history, institutions from the artistic and intellectual fields, for instance, have far fewer powers of direct sanction. Whoever grasps the chalice or performs consecration without authorization, whoever questions the doctrine or preaches his or her own religious truths, will be punished for this sacrilege.

4. Class and religion: from Weber to a Bourdieusian theory of fields

Bourdieu's theory of class-specific salvation needs is very strongly influenced by Max Weber's writings.⁸ At the stage where fundamental differentiation between the qualified and unqualified, the experts and the profane, the elite and the masses takes place, this elementary form of the field is already similar to a market, in which producers and consumers of "salvation goods" confront each other. Those who have the monopoly of legitimate transactions with religious symbols and rituals offer their expertise to the religiously "untalented",⁹ who can request

⁸ See Weber (1922/1985), (1920/1988).

⁹ The status of the non-expert or untalented and "simple-minded" emerges with the claim for the monopoly of competence and virtuosity on the part of the self-appointed elite of the chosen in the dominant group. As soon as this claim of a minority finds the acceptance of the majority – an act of subjugation, which Bourdieu describes as symbolic violence – then autocratic usurpation becomes a legitimate claim to power. With this recognition of their superiority and having

religious goods of varying quality according to their "salvation needs"; and offer the producers something in return for their religious services (e.g., sacrifices, gifts, the buying of indulgences, alms, church taxes, etc.). Interestingly, Weber's sociology of religion, similar to that of Gramsci, differentiates between class-specific salvation needs, "habitus" and life styles of the population, which lends the idea of a market for salvation goods additional plausibility. This sociological conception can be transferred without too much trouble to other areas of social practice and everyday life, as well as, for example, to the class-specific way of furnishing one's house, where the connection between class position, need, taste, and kind of life style points to a very similar structural pattern.

4.1 Social classes and their salvation needs

According to Weber, salvation needs differ according to the actual class position and the functions of religious representation corresponding to that position: for instance, the dominant classes seek justification of their privileges, the dominated classes the promise of salvation, and the intellectuals are looking, in particular, for religious knowledge and convictions which meet their needs for rational investigation and organisation of fulfilment in earthly life – a disposition which expresses itself prototypically in the search for systematic, aesthetic stylization and "design" (*Gestaltung*) of everyday life.

Because of its strong dependence on the forces of nature and its contingencies, the rural/popular milieu is, according to Weber, much less open-minded about rational religious convictions than urban occupational categories and remains to the present day particularly susceptible to magical or pagan practices. The religious dispositions

at their disposal the monopoly for production of legitimate symbolic goods (religious, scientific, artistic etc.), this elite is then optimally equipped to prove this superiority and to continually increase the distance between themselves and the mass of laypeople or the profane.

and practices of the upper social classes, on the other hand, are as a rule clearly more "rational", i.e. free of magical connections and oriented towards specific social and ideological functions (the theodicy of their privileges and claims to power). However, the salvation needs of the educated classes in general, and intellectuals in particular, seem to tend towards a strategy of, as Nietzsche would put it, "self-deification" *qua* systematic stylization and aesthetization of their everyday way of life. One aspect common to the religious dispositions of the dominant classes is that they see its key function in the symbolization of distinction vis-à-vis popular (vulgar) religious attitudes and practices. This pattern of elite differentiation between their own and the common taste of common people is in no way limited to the magical and religious domain, but is characteristic of the whole spectrum of symbolic action.

4.2 *The differentiation between religious specialists: priests, prophets and magicians*

First of all, the emerging religious field was structured along the polarization of "experts versus laity", followed by the development of class-specific salvation needs and demands for religious goods. This led on the side of religious experts to almost simultaneous differentiation between the three positions struggling for monopoly of the legitimate definition and handling of religious goods, as is clear from Bourdieu's sketch showing the structures of the religious field in the appendix,

In the centre of this field we find the church; which has crystallised into an institution after lengthy processes of assertion and monopolization. During such processes a religious movement of "chosen people" around a charismatic leader can develop, through the intermediate stage of a sect, into a multinational concern for the production and administration of salvation goods. Once achieved, this position of monopoly permitted the church to claim universal validity of its truths and the right to assert these both outwardly against the resistance of

"other believers or non-believers" (crusades or compulsory conversion) and inwardly (the fight against heresy of all kinds). Its claim to truth is, on the one hand, questioned by the figure of the magician, on the other hand by that of the prophet – both of whom struggle with the church for the monopoly of religious truth, and all strategically turn to the laity or certain categories of laypeople, in order to give emphasis to their teaching. Bourdieu's sketch of the religious field makes clear that religious experts, if they want to be successful, have to take into consideration that receptivity to religious messages of prophetic or magical provenance will vary for each social class.

Thus, a magician offers salvation goods which precisely meet the practical, magical and religious needs (dealing with the contingencies of life, exorcism of fate ...) of uneducated strata (the key clientele of the church) and he therefore stands in direct competition with the salvation goods offered by the church. Prophets, in contrast, deliver salvation messages that are in competition with the church's orthodoxy and the monopoly of interpreting god's will. Prophet and magician have in common that both their salvation competence and their salvation claims are person-specific, i.e. are charismatic, while those of the church, and that is its main constitutive characteristic, are commonplace and ordinary, institutionally embedded in the "charisma of office". This "charisma of office" is partially passed on to the representatives of the church, the clergy; however, whether or not this "embodiment" is convincing relies to a great extent on the personal charisma of the individual.

4.3 *The religious field as a model for other social fields*

The configuration outlined here of the competition for a monopoly is characteristic of the structures of other social fields, and a lot points to the fact that, here too, we are dealing with elementary forms of associative relationships (*Vergesellschaftung*) and their dynamics. In the field of medicine, for example, faith healers as well as alternative

medicine question the monopoly of orthodox medicine. Similar processes apply to the practice of other sciences, where the claim to truth of universal knowledge and the "charisma of office" of homo academicus can be attacked by competitors from outside and inside. In fields like those of artistic production, these processes are much less clear due to the lower degree of institutionalization, but here too struggles are well known between established (legitimate) positions and the heretics and prophets (popular or avant-garde artists), who question the former's monopoly. Here again, the positions that confront each other claim legitimacy of varying quality and origin: on the one hand, there is the institutionalized cultural capital in the form of codified and documented competencies, in the same pattern as the church's "charisma of office", which offers the respective agents participation in the accumulated symbolic capital of their institution. On the other hand, there is the personal charisma that stems from the extraordinary competencies of specific individuals, who, thanks to these qualities, are able to create and satisfy demand on the market of symbolic goods. We are dealing here, therefore, with elementary forms of society, which can appear, like transformational generative grammar in Chomsky's sense, in a theoretically unlimited number of possible, empirical, concrete cases in constantly new variations of the same theme. Here it is advisable to make a short detour and look at the social-anthropological perspective of the field. From very early on, Bourdieu was extremely interested in the sociology of Marcel Mauss, for whom he felt an affinity and with whom he shared many basic perspectives on social theory. One of these was the conception that specific social parts, which were later perceived of as "autonomous" and "auto-logical", crystallised during the social differentiation process out of a preceding ensemble of undivided "total social facts", to use Mauss's words. On the basis of the theory of "the gift", Mauss had made plausible in a modest but brilliant way that archaic societies definitely did not differentiate between economic, social, cultural and religious realities and functions, but regarded them all as simultaneously active "dimensions" of one and the same act or object. The "splitting" of the more or less autonomous parts of the

social world during the social transformation from archaic to historical and, later, to modern societies is in itself part of a double process of domination – of people over nature and of people over people. This process is manifest in the structure of the emerging fields of religion, economy or politics through the concrete processes of monopolization and appropriation. Therefore the perspectives gained by Bourdieu following Weber's thinking on the religious field can also be applied to all other fields, as they describe the logic that is the basis of this differentiation process.

5. Field and habitus: social reality in subjective and objective form

In the above-mentioned sociogenetic and field-analytic perspectives, we have directed our attention primarily towards the objective social structures and have neglected the fact that Bourdieu's term, "field", must always be regarded as complementary to that of "habitus", that is, as an ensemble of subjective dispositions, positions and attitudes. The sociogenetic view of the emergence of a field should, therefore, always be accompanied by a psychogenetic reconstruction of the habitus of its agents. For we can only understand a specific social game if the following are made comprehensible: what drives the players who get involved, what strategies do they follow and what investments are at stake for them?

The main question here is: how and under what conditions can people be led to accept an ensemble with more or less compulsory norms and practice, which have a great effect on their physical, psychological, affective and cognitive positions, and which gradually become so "deep-rooted" that they seem like second nature and are taken for granted?

Confronting objective and subjective structures, we find field and habitus, codification and deep-rootedness, canonization and

convictions as complements and affinities. In conceptualising "habitus" as the "structured and structuring principle" of social practice, as the "generative grammar" of forms of practice, Bourdieu was influenced by Weber, who employed this term in his sociology of religion systematically and in a way mostly compatible with Bourdieu's use.¹⁰ However, there were other influences, for Bourdieu interpreted "habitus" in the tradition of Durkheim and Mauss's sociology of religion and knowledge, in as much as with *practical meaning* he means "objective meaning without subjective intention".

It is important to note that Bourdieu's heuristic concepts of field and habitus both resist any substantialization, because he always emphasizes the practical content of the "structure". Therefore, the term "field" only serves to elucidate the "objective" relationships which give action "meaning" and are *shown* in it, without necessarily expressing real relationships. This is a "repeat" of what habitus manages to do as the generic principle of "objective meaning without subjective intention". The "field" is not real, but people's behavior, perception, feeling, thinking and action all take place as if they obeyed its "forces".

6. The dissolution of the religious field?

Bourdieu's pioneering discourses on Weber's sociology of religion and theory of the religious field originated in the early 1970s. At that time, there was an intense debate going on in France on secularisation and the crisis of religion. The discussions on the so-called people's religiosity (religion populaire) and the modernization of Catholicism,

10 The concept of habitus is unfortunately missing in the register of Weber's "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft" (posthumously published). If one takes the trouble to track it down and to analyze and interpret it in the way it is used, then the enormous affinity between the two sociologists becomes obvious.

triggered by the II Vatican Council, were also heated. Bourdieu himself understood these two articles not so much as studies on the sociology of religion but as a contribution to general, sociological theory. Max Weber's work was for him to the fore – Weber being little known in France at the time or "unrecognized" because of a one-sided reception of his work. However, this does no harm to the interest these articles should have for the sociology of religion. On the contrary, Bourdieu's contribution has led to a situation where questions in the sociology of religion have become of paradigmatic importance for the whole discipline of sociology.

Exactly ten years after the publication of these studies, Bourdieu spoke on the topic of "The dissolution of the religious" at a conference on the sociology of religion (cf. Bourdieu 1987b). In the face of the deep crisis of this specific, sociohistorically rooted and institutionalized form of the religious – as it was described and debated at that time, he was confronted with the question concerning the "new clergy". In answer to this, Bourdieu used his theory of fields in order to find a sociologically plausible answer. As the religious field was the venue for struggles regarding the monopoly of the legitimate interpretation of the religious, we found ourselves, according to Bourdieu, in a process where both the market for salvation goods and the suppliers were increasing and becoming more complex. The boundaries between fields like medicine, philosophy and those of specific physical techniques (free dance, martial arts or yoga) as well as areas like psychoanalysis or sexology, which up to then had been relatively clear, were opening up – as Bourdieu says – to an increasingly liberal exchange. Faced with this wide choice of goods for care of the soul and body (goods, techniques, instruments for producing the salvation state), the individuals were helping themselves, to a certain degree, in order to put together their own eclectic or syncretistic forms of representing transcendence and related practices. A decisive contribution to this was made, according to Bourdieu, by the fact that the composition of the clientele for religious salvation goods was radically changed by the sociostructural transformations of the postwar era (tertiarization, decline of the agricultural industry, the

gain in importance of the middle classes and, above all, the education explosion of the 1960s). Expert religiosity, up to then reserved for a relatively small elite, would now be made available to the growing new middle class, which would become the central pillar of the new syncretistic religiosities – a hypothesis which was to be confirmed in the following decades.

7. Future perspectives

Bourdieu's theory of fields, influenced by Weber, has one advantage which should not be underestimated: no specific definition of religion is given and this avoids the risk of having to universalise the socio-historically specific, institutionalized form of religion. Moreover, this approach suggests that the religious field should be regarded as the place of permanent conflict over the monopoly of the legitimate definition of what can, and should, be recognised as religion, and that this should be made the object of specific empirical research.

A great deal of empirical research on the sociology of religion has used Bourdieusian concepts; for example, F.-A. Isambert's important study "Le sens du sacré" has proved the strength and usefulness of this approach. On the other hand, some – like Swartz (1996) – point to the fact that this perspective is less suitable for an analysis of concrete empirical objects, like congregations or religious leading figures, than for the examination of more complex social constellations around the struggle for the monopoly of the legitimate determination of religious truths. Another critique (see, for example, Rey 2004) claims that the perspective of Bourdieu's field theory is too rigid, a critique which is greatly relativated if not dispelled completely, by an apt tribute to the theoretical, methodological and empirical merits of this approach.

Through his view of religion, which is not substantialistic but structural and open to concrete historical variation, Bourdieu's approach in the theory of fields also offers added value in the form of

epistemological vigilance against ethnocentric generalizations and anachronistic stereotypes. A further advantage lies in the fact that the field theory view of the religious is suitable for a comparative approach and can be used to describe similar or divergent structural changes in varying societal domains. The large number of contributions in the journal *Actes de la Recherche et Sciences Sociales*, which was founded by Bourdieu, give evidence of this.

On the other hand, this kind of objectivization of the religious has inevitably been condemned as profanization and a materialistic reduction of the holy. Another reproach is that there is absolutely no "concept" or clear definition of religion and even that the concept of religion is systematically destroyed, in that it mixes such incompatible items as going to church and the sacrament, East Asian meditation techniques, Körperkult (body modification) or reading horoscopes; a reproach which was also mentioned in connection with the field theory analysis of literature and academia.¹¹ Bourdieu would probably answer this by saying that religion was historically created by people and during the different stages of this long-term historical process of self-creation varying empirical manifestations were revealed. At the same time though, he would also agree with the anthropologically oriented hypothesis that, beyond the phenotypical variability of religious conceptions of belief and practice, on the genotypical level we must assume that there is a basic motive for the religious, like an anthropological constant. Thus, from the sociological viewpoint, religion is by no means banished from the social world, rather, the sociohistorical complexity and driving force of this human practice is taken very seriously.*

11 It should be remembered that popular religiosity has always been syncretistic and pragmatic, pointing to its usefulness in concrete matters of concern, a circumstance that incidentally has always been condemned, and even openly fought, by religious institutions and experts.

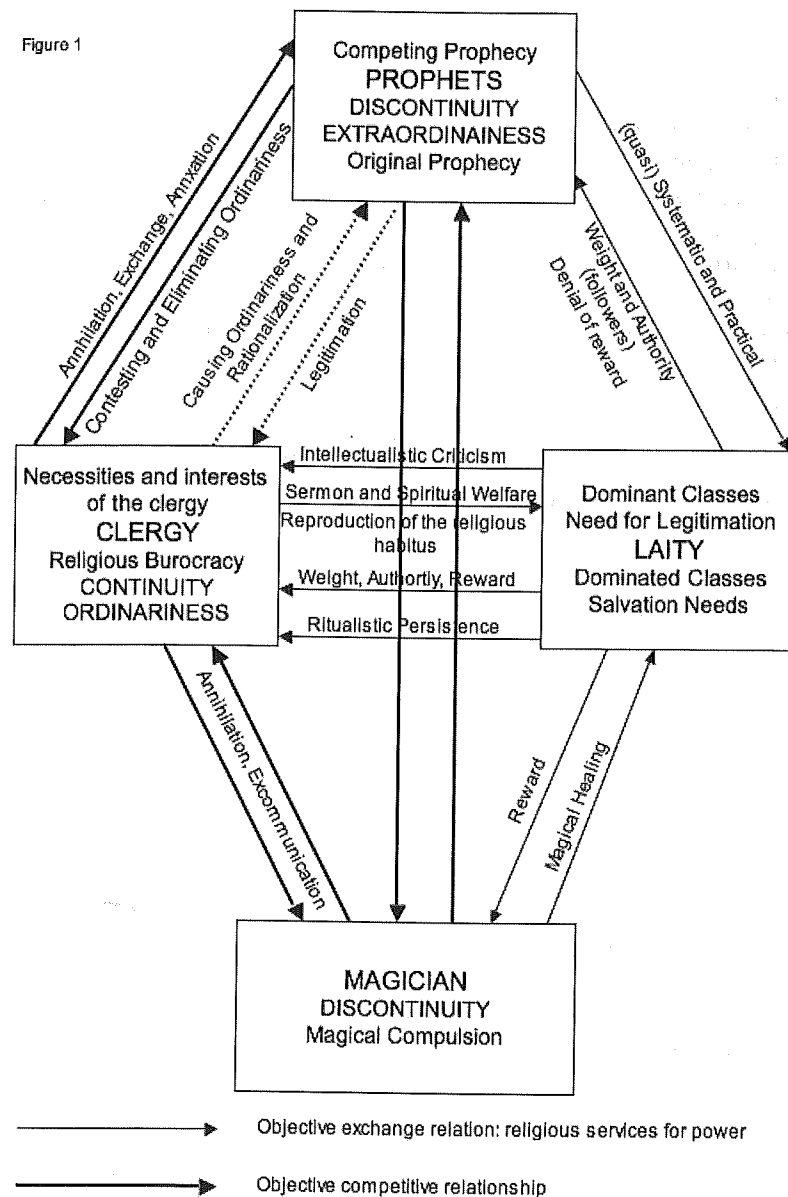
* Translated by Rachel Matthey

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Figure 1



Jörg STOLZ

Salvation Goods and Religious Markets: Integrating Rational Choice and Weberian Perspectives

1. Introduction

The concept "religious market" is presently enjoying a tremendous success. Not only sociologists, but also journalists, politicians and, interestingly, some of the religious actors themselves, are beginning to use the term more frequently. Even one of the most prominent critics of the theory of religious markets concedes that modern societies are characterized by "a largely novel situation in human life: the possibility of choosing a religion" (Bruce, 1999: 3). The theoretical enterprise that has developed and defended the theory of religious markets – rational choice – has, however, been strongly criticized. Just about everything rational choicers have said about religion has been questioned (Ammerman, 1997; Bruce, 1999; Chaves, 1995; Hamilton, 2001; Lechner, 1996). Two of the most important theory-immanent criticisms are that rational choicers have not really worked out their model well enough and have not stated clearly, first, what kind of "goods" we are faced with, and second, under what conditions such goods might be said to be traded on a "market" (Bruce, 1999: 30ff.; Hamilton, 2001: 220ff.).

This article argues that these two problems concerning the rational choice approach can be solved by distinguishing different types of religious goods and integrating them into a larger rational choice framework. In this framework, markets are only one type of "social system" among others in which religious goods may be produced and