
Journal of Religious Culture

Journal für Religionskultur

Ed. by / Hrsg. von

Edmund Weber

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

in Association with / in Zusammenarbeit mit

Matthias Benad, Mustafa Cimsit, Natalia Diefenbach, Martin Mittwede,
Vladislav Serikov, Ajit S. Sikand, Ida Bagus Putu Suamba & Roger Töpelmann

in Cooperation with the Institute for Religious Peace Research /

in Kooperation mit dem Institut für Wissenschaftliche Irenik

Assistent Editor/ Redaktionsassistentin Susan Stephanie Tsomakaeva

ISSN 1434-5935 - © E.Weber – E-Mail: e.weber@em.uni-frankfurt.de;
<http://publikationen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/solrsearch/index/search/searchtype/series/id/1613>;
<http://www.irenik.org/journal-of-religious-culture/blog-post/>

No. 264 (2020)

On a Dialectical Theory of *Religion*

Fundamentals and Applications

By

Edmund Weber

Religion in the proper sense i.e. authentic religion means the original act of *existence*. This act consists in the *holistic dealing*¹ of *mind*² with its *dialectical relationship* of its *two moments*: the *infinite constitution* or *abysmal foundation* on one side and on the other side the *finite construction* or *formative culture* of *existence*³.

Abysmal foundation is mind's infinite power of *transcending* all its cultural constructs. Formative culture is mind's finite power of *constructing* existence.

The dialectical relationship of these moments should not be confounded with authentic religion. Religion is confronting and grappling i.e. dealing with that relationship as its proper object.

Whereas that relationship is the objective nature of mind; religion, the basic act of mind's subjective nature, however, is only dealing with his relationship. Religion does not at all create his a priori given dialectical nature.

That relationship is a *dialectical* one because it connects two contradictory elements to a *concrete unity*.

This unity is a *concrete* one because the two moments - although contradictory - are nevertheless indissolubly *grown together*.

The elements of that concrete unity are relative moments which are not only inseparably belonging together but their relationship as a dialectical one means it is substantially tense. The energy produced by this existential tense is the life of the mind.

That is why any negation of the concrete-dialectal relationship by negation of one moment, by isolating abysmal foundation or formative culture as independent substances or their identification turns both convers both relative moments into abstract chimeras.

The negation of the cultural moment (by mysticism) or by the substantial separation of both moments (by dualism) or the identification (by monism)

of that moments would mean the death of mind. However, mind as foundation of existence is always revolting against its own crippling.

Only within the concrete-dialectical relationship the two contradictory moments get their existential truth.

If religion means the holistic dealing with the concrete-dialectical relationship, then both moments are indeed necessary not only mediated objects of religion – mediated by that relationship. That's why abysmal foundation (trad. the sacred, the holy) can never be the immediate and only object of authentic religion.

Religion has always and only to do with the complete-dialectical relationship even if in their original act of religion human beings cover that given human condition.

One should also not confound religion and its *result*.

While religion betokens only the original act of existence, i.e. the holistic dealing, *religious culture* however means its *result*, its objectivation und expression.

The original act of religion is the condition of human existence at all.

Therefore, human existence starts only with the existential dealing i.e. with authentic religion.

Religion is autonomous and not terminated by any cultural purpose. It is the pre-condition of all cultural realisation. In this concern religion is absolute. And that's why it cannot work as an instrument for cultural targets, aims or visions. Calling such an instrument 'religion' is nothing else than an ideological strategy to repress the inevitability of existential dealing. Repressing religion from consciousness means covering the freedom of existence by apotheosising finite cultural products of mind.

The understanding and use of culture result from religion because the existential dealing determines the all the following cultural works.

Every pseudo-religion used as a motivating or justifying instrument for cultural e.g. scientific, moral, economical or aesthetic purposes is indeed not religion in the proper sense. It is only a pseudo-religious and in fact a cultural product used as a drug to cover the ultimate meaninglessness of apotheosised culture.

The same applies to the understanding of pseudo-religion as an illusionary satisfaction of unsatisfied cultural desires. Religion does not satisfy cultural desires rather questions their right to need completeness.

Obviously. religion and culture do not belong to the same existential level of meaning.

However, formative culture or existence forming work on one side and abysmal foundation on the other side belong to the same existential level.

If religion is mind's dealing with its dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and formative culture of existence, then religion does never support but indirectly rescinds culture. Support for cultural purposes can only come from other cultural items.

The existential dealing i.e. religion can block out but cannot extinguish that existential reality.

The dialectical relationship being independent of actual religious culture is always working either openly or subcutaneously according to a human being's respective religious act.

The abysmal foundation leaves no doubt about the finiteness and transience i.e. the ultimate existential meaninglessness of even the highest cultural aspirations and achievements.

All interpretations of culturism i.e. the ideology religion would be only one exemplar of many cultural constructions of existence, aim for covering the dialectical relationship.

In this concern it does not matter whether the culturist judgement about religion and religious culture is positive or negative. On the other side if a so-called atheist acknowledges the dialectical relationship as the truth of existence does not belong to such culturism.

On reason of culturised understanding of religion and religious culture as a primitive and irrational consists in the possibility to use so-called religion as an instrument for maintaining an oppressive culture. However, this judgement about religion is rather a psychological self-defence mechanism than a rational theory of religion.

Although religion consists in holistic dealing resp. deciding upon standing or covering the dialectical relationship, the dealing religion ultimately decides upon the purpose and realisations of culture. It decides whether culture serve as useful construction of secular world or as an illusionary pseudo-abysmal foundation of existence.

Religion does not mean a positive relation only to the abysmal foundation; it decides between either opening or closing the eyes in front of the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation *and* cultural construction of existence.

Alleging the abysmal foundation would be the only object of religion, one only attempts to extinguish from consciousness the dealing of the dialectical coherence of abysmal foundation and culture in order to establish the religious culture of culturism.

In contrast to religion religious culture includes all objectivated expressions of the original religious act, they may be traditional, modern, mythological or atheist or invisible ones.

However, religion, the un-derivable act of existence, is not identical with its expressions. These expressions follow the respective historical cultures, and they are therefore extremely variable. That is the reason why an abstract identification of religion and religious culture identifies the producer and his product, claiming the producer to be his own product only. In this way one takes away the originating freedom of the producer.

Such a reduction of religion to religious culture is typical of many religious studies to-day. However, by the religious-cultural items resulting from the original act of religion can be expressed, communicated and reflected - whether human beings stand or cover the dialectical relationship of existence.

Culture in the proper sense means only the secular or profane i.e. finite construction of existence, while the abyssal foundation of existence means its infinite freedom, its indeterminable essence.

Therefore, one must keep in mind the radical distinction of religious culture and formative culture in the proper i.e. secular meaning.

The term religious culture is justified because it implicates authentic religion and its materialiter contradictory but formaliter necessary cultural items.

The task of religious culture is to express and objectivate the holistic dealing whereas the function of culture consists only in constructing existence.

The latter expressions refer only to the profane world of culture and by no means to holistic dealing.

Although only borrowing its expressions from culture authentic religion conveys a new i.e. non-cultural but a figurative meaning represented by unusual, apart, absurd, unearthly or even monstrous cultural constructs.

The purpose of that sometimes bizarre, quaint and odd modifications of the borrowed expressions consists in saving the functional difference of dealing on one side and of abysmal foundation and constructing culture within the dialectical relationship of existence on the other side.

The specific religious expressions lose their proper purpose however if they would understand only as one kind of cultural expressions. In other words: If they follow the originally cultural form and meaning of the religious-cultural expressions they cover the abysmal foundation, too.

In order to maintain the total *otherness* of the first moment of the dialectical relationship, i.e. the abysmal foundation, religious culture must modify the given cultural expressions. From the standpoint of culture however the religious expressions resist the original cultural meaning and are therefore meaningless. These cultural expressions always retain their shape, but their content has been converted completely. This changing process is indeed a transubstantiation.

Covering the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and constructive culture also happens by expressing religion with un-modified cultural items. Intending to modernise religious culture very often one presents religion in shape of ordinary cultural expressions: in truth, however, one takes away from religion the essential element i.e. its contradictory position against culture. The result is once more the covering the dialectical dealing.

All these anti-dialectical attempts turn religion upside down. Religion has no purpose at all. All cultural purposes ultimately derive from the free holistic dealing with the dialectical relationship i.e. from authentic religion.

Referring only to the holistic dealing; it does not make sense to apply these - from the standpoint of culture - improperly used terms as proper cultural

expressions; therefore adding religious culture to actual culture is indeed a contemporary alienation of religion and the peak of self-estrangement of anti-dialectical religious cultures.

The effect of misusing the figurative expressions of the holistic dealing leads to cultural irrationalism and deformation of its mission of rational construction of existence.

In this way the expressions of religious culture build its own symbolic world - by counteracting the constructed world of culture.

The contradictory use of cultural items by religious culture works only if mind strictly focuses on the non-expressible meaning of the original religious act, of religion, of the dealing with the existential relationship.

Interpreting religion and religious culture a matter of profane culture and considering them as one of many examples of cultural patterns, the anti-dialectical religious culture does not only cover the infinite abysmal foundation, the basic freedom of existence, but also constructs in this way the illusion, culture as such could constitute sense and value as well as failure and worthlessness of existence at all.

Such ultimate judgements on existence are in the light of the indeterminable and uncontrollable abysmal foundation null and ovoid.

Anti-dialectical positions try only to escape the existential reality of the abysmal foundation. But this attempt to give a final judgement on an ultimate value or worthlessness of existence does not work.

The abysmal foundation principally suspends all the cultural efforts to construct an artificial pseudo-foundation of existence.

That is exactly what culturism as an anti-dialectical religious culture is doing by covering abysmal foundation and apotheosising culture.

By treating religious culture as substantially separated from authentic religion one ignores its only expressive function. Extracting its proper meaning and identifying authentic religion with its culturized expressions, of course 'religion' must be understood as a pure cluster of cultural absurdities.

In this way pan-culturism does not stand but covers the dialectical relationship of existence forgetting the even culture transcending nature of the human mind.

During evolution of human encephalon, the instinctive behaviour was reduced. Therefore, mind was forced from the beginning to face the difference of the abyssal abysmal foundation and culture.

This evolutionary pressure has been the reason for the development of religion and the resulting religious culture.

Religion was the immediate and necessary mental reaction due to the significant losses of natural determinate instincts which seems to have been triggered by the increase of brain.

By free but necessary target setting and non-fixed producing of appropriate instruments both processes interactively enforced the development of the free mind.

Facing these losses, the human being had to organise an artificial culture constructed by its mind's self-created imaginations.

Naturally fixed drives have become undetermined energies and emotions; their control has been adopted by the basically free will, the executing agent of mind's intentions.

The new unavoidable holistic dealing produced the first religious culture: mythology. This first multiple expression of the original religious act of holistic dealing turned into imaginative form.

Losing its natural instinctive determination, the mind was forced to develop slowly the artificial culture as the new method of organisation of existence; but at the same time human consciousness recognised the difference of artificial culture and abysmal foundation. While dealing with this existential difference consciousness became aware of it; this awareness was originally expressed in figurative imaginations. The first kind of religious culture.

This differentiation of abysmal foundation and formative culture was indeed the greatest mental effort of the first humans.

However, out of the freedom of mind, of the abysmal foundation, the dealing could result in standing or covering the dialectical relationship.

Mostly covering the abysmal foundation and establishing illusionary divine orders of culture the mind hoped to escape the freedom of its existence and to stay with the meat pots of instinct control.

On the other side humans always revolted against these surrogates realising freedom as the very nature of humanness.

In the beginning of human history mythological imagination allowed the articulation of both ways of dealing.

Some modern religious cultures like atheism, positivism, and other kinds of anti-dialectal *weltanschauung* attempt to exterminate and to denunciate that humanising product of mind considering it as unsubstantial and destructive irrationalism or even dangerous disease.

The truth of the abstract fight against mythology is the attempt to cover even all those mythological traditions which recognise and stand the dialectical relationship of culture and abysmal foundation.

The dialectical dealings of many mythologies in East and West had been combatted and even persecuted in mythological as well as in post-mythological times.

There is no doubt, mythological imaginations have been the first expressions of humanisation.

Covering the non-cultural abysmal foundation of existence, many cultural ideologies understand all mythology as a wrong and outdated example and phenomenon of primitive culture allegedly refuted by science, technology and social progression.

This position uses culture, science etc. to cover the dialectical relationship d - especially the abysmal foundation of existence.

Using culture in that way humans are subjecting themselves under the mostly violent domination of their own finite products and by that repressing the unavoidable basic freedom of their existence.

The essence of man is constituted by the uncontrollable freedom of the abysmal foundation and constructed by formative culture.

In this concern taking culture as constituting moment of existence deprives the human consciousness of the basic freedom i.e. basic truth of existence and heads them into existential unfreedom, into self-made bondage.

In contradiction to the anti-dialectical religious cultures or ideologies the great German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) adopted another course. In his lectures on philosophy of religion he recognised mythological religious culture as a substantially true expression of mind's dealing with the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and culture. Mythological items were necessary expressions of that dealing in view of particularly the infinite abysmal foundation. Even monstrosities, the fantastic and even grotesque mythological expressions were nevertheless media by which the early humans reflected, backed up and preserved the dialectical relationship of culture *and* abysmal foundation i.e. they didn't reduce their existing to culture, to their ever day experience only.

By means of the mythological religious culture it was possible to face the radical difference of both moments of the dialectical relationship.

Hegel makes a clear distinction between form and content of mythology.

The content i.e. the existential dealing resulting in e.g. dialectical religious culture had an alienated form which means that the abysmal foundation is supposed to be a separated i.e. an alien thing. The abysmal foundation i.e. the mythologically called the Divine was considered as a non-relative substance within in the dialectical relationship.

In order to suspend the mythological alienation Hegel considered the conceptualisation of mythological imaginations of the interrelationship as necessary. Conceptualising does not mean the abstract negation of mythology; just the opposite is true: it means the thinking elaboration of the essence of mythologically communicated truth of existence.

Conceptualising mythology mind reveals the existential truth of the Divine as the constitutive moment of the dialectical interrelationship.

Nevertheless, one must also keep in mind meaning and substance of mythological as well as conceptual religious culture are the same:

Both versions of the existential dealing of the dialectical relationship fully can represent the truth of existence.

Hegel even suggests the mythological version is more powerful than the philosophical conceptualising. There would be no need to make all the people philosophers or to outroot mythological religious culture.

Religious culture containing the whole of explicit and implicit expressions of religion includes not only the movements traditionally called 'religions' but also all the other existential resp. religious cultures even if they usually call themselves - in order to separate themselves from traditional 'religions' - secular, atheistic, enlightened, rational, scientific etc.

But all dialectical and all anti-dialectical religious cultures root in the same necessity of religion respective of existential dealing.

However, one must add to these collective, public, and articulated religious cultures the secret, private or not even subjectively articulated but still working religious cultures.

Mythological or traditional and non-mythological or modern religious cultures are not identical with dialectical and non-dialectical ones. There are anti-dialectical traditional religions believing in justification by work or strict karmism. But there are dialectical traditional and modern religious cultures believing in grace as substance of existence.

The relation of religion i.e. the original religious act and religious culture is - as mentioned above - necessarily ambiguous.

There may be a person convinced to be an anti-dialectical atheist, but unconsciously follows just the opposite, i.e. a dialectical religion. Or a person is convinced of its anti-dialectical piety believing to get meaningfulness or salvation of its existence only by its own performance. Persons may be e.g. a reborn Christians or ascetic monks or strict Catholics or orthodox Muslim or socially engaged Buddhists but nevertheless they all their articulated convictions may not coincide with their ultimately free and uncontrollable conscience. This conscience is the subjective agent of the abysmal foundation of existence which is not necessarily dependent on one's own articulated convictions.

Indeed, delivered religious cultures influence particularly during the process of juvenile socialisation the individual's conscience. But even this process is not identical with the respective elaborated religious culture. Not only the authorities of the respective religious culture influence the child but also and even stronger other agents of that process e.g. family members,

other relatives, teachers, friends, media, etc. etc. In open societies all these interpreters are getting more and more influence than the religious authorities. But all the processes of social adaption during adulthood do not touch at all the level of individual conscience. In realty, every individual has its own invisible or even unconscious religion and religious culture.

Although the two moments of the dialectical relationship - abysmal foundation and constructing culture - completely contradict each other, nevertheless they form a dialectical unity.

This unity is a 'concrete' one because both moments although excluding each other are nevertheless inseparably 'grown together.'

Despite contradicting each other both united moments nevertheless constitute an extremely tense relationship. A relationship however does not separate but connects two even extremely antagonistic items.

The friction of this concrete contradiction effects the dynamic of that unity. i.e. the freedom of thinking, i.e. mind's life.

Tradition imagined infinite mind as God i.e. as a free creator and his free power grace on one side and on the other side the human being as creature realising finite mind through its will and work, its culture, its building of existence.

Building its existence mind makes itself finite. The whole of its finite building we call culture, i.e. the whatever human beings have built or constructed in real history. Contrary to this, abysmal foundation means the ultimate indefiniteness of existence.

Mind's activity is thinking (germ. Denken) which is acting as dynamic abyssal foundation and as constructive building.

This free thinking being the producing subject, the producer of all, is not determinate by any of its products or contents.

Therefore, even mind's own basic forms of sensual perception (time and space) and its basic categories of finite thinking -e.g. rules and categories of understanding like the sentence of excluded middle or the pure concept of understanding cause and effect' – all these items are according to Hegel - mind's own products and not at all unchangeable determinants by nature.

Thinking mind can change even these its own categories and rules because they are its products only. Free thinking is eluding any classification and definition.

In this concern it suffices to mention the criticism of Aristotle's axiomatic two-valued logic by Martin Luther's, G.W.F. Hegel's⁴ and modern multi-valued logic.⁵ Aristotle denied concrete unity and insisted in excluding constitutive contraction.

If free thinking is not determinate by anything else, it is totally independent, then it comprises even those things finite mind has not yet thought, or which are - according to the actual categories – not yet thinkable.

Thinking does not mean only reflecting things. Its substantial meaning consists in creating everything. There is nothing outside thinking because even 'outside' and 'thinking' are only thought items.

On reason of this infinite power of mind's thinking finite products are constantly under pressure to transform. Infinite mind's boundlessness contradicts all borders which, however, are necessary to identify finite items.

But these finite items are always imposing limits on the borderless infinite mind's thinking. However, determinate thinking i.e. its content has borders and is finite.

Anti-dialectical religions try to remove that concrete dialectical process feigning an autonomous identity of culture. But mind's thinking is always working in its own unity of contradiction.

Because of this dynamic dialectic finite items have weak and unsafe borders and are permanently subject to coming and passing, changing, getting new shape or completely vanishing.

Mind is incessantly forcing its own finite buildings to transcend themselves.

Although objectivating itself by producing and exterminating itself in its finite form of culture, mind nonetheless keeps during that basic process its very nature. Its truth is nothing else than transcending as such.

Resisting the transcending force of mind's thinking is useless. All those cultures particularly those ones having already outlived, their temporary meaning and value will in any case go down at last.

The same happens with cultures manipulating the imaging and even thinking perceptions and are violently oppressing life. They will not and did not survive in the long run. Also, all such oppressive cultures have not been and will not be crowned with permanent success in history. History has proven from the beginning of the building of human societies even all tyrannies and other regimes have disappeared with time. No one can escape the sword of transcending mind.

On the other side infinite mind becomes a finite item. After transcending a finite cultural construction only new finite one i.e. another finite objectivation of mind, anew culture, will follow.

Mind's capacity of exposing itself to permanently changing its finite contents - they may be intellectual, moral or emotional ones - reveals its very nature: radically free thinking.

Thinking is creating and dissolving everything. Without thinking not even mind's own category 'nothing' would be there.

If thinking is 'beyond' being and nothing; then about thinking a judgement is not at all possible. Thinking is indeed the mystery of existence.

Therefore, speaking about thinking as such one must know that all the terms in this concern are ambiguous:

There is a difference between expressing and meaning. Thinking as such can only be meant but never immediately and appropriately expressed. Therefore, speaking about infinite mind one must always and without any restriction of any kind keep an eye on the meant idea not only on finite expressions.

There is always the ruthless threat of otherness because infinite mind is essentially present in finite items. Finite without infinite would be a empty platitude. Nothing can be even understood without its otherness or negation.

Abstract positivism is logically and in fact impossible and therefore pure dogmatism.

All the historical revolts against finite self-eternalising, self-rationalising, self-naturalising or self-apotheosising of cultural orders, institutions, ideas, persons and activities root at last in the uncontrollable infinite mind.

The infinite mind, the first moment of the dialectical relationship of existence, traditional religious cultures ns entitled 'God'.

However, the term God with all its variations does not matter so much; important is only its meaning within the dialectical relationship.

Traditional religious cultures are not in the least untenable assertions allegedly invented by cunning religious personal on purpose to exploit good faith of people.

This position favouring the elitist ideology forgets that all cultural constructions in history are constructed by the masses. The leading classes even if they establish terrorist regimes they are nevertheless depending at last on the will and work of the masses.

All secular rulers und religious leaders can only hold on power if the masses want or tolerate them.

Therefore, all elitist theories of historical development are declaring elites to subjects of history and the people to underage and helpless objects of their manipulation or as they call it reasonable leadership, are pure illusions.

Karl Marx is usually considered such a prominent elitist critic of religion. However, being a dialectical thinker, he denied the atheistic abstraction religion would only function as manipulative means to oppress and exploit helpless masses. On the contrary, he recognised the human mind in the form of religion preserved imagination of humanness. He dialectically criticised religion only of its alienated form of humanness. This form due to historical circumstances now has been brought to term and should and could be realised on earth.

In his famous sentence religion is the opiate of the people, Karl Marx just wanted to say: the masses are self-determinate subjects of taking opiate and are just not pure objects of elitists' misuse. The masses take the opiate by themselves wishing to avoid the loss of their humanness not yet being realised.

Karl Marx was not interested in the realisation of a special finite picture of human being. On the contrary, he was convinced the development of modern scientific and technical productivity could liberate all human beings from any outlived labour to eke out their living. When the technical productivity allows the human being to reduce radically the time of necessary labour it could in fact experience its humanness, i.e. disputing its exis-

tential freedom. It would realise what traditional religious cultures prevented the forgetting: of the truth of human existence.

Karl Marx intended the 'material' i.e. socio-economic liberation of the suppressed freedom of existence. This radical freedom is just the opposite to an execution of a finite and arbitrary picture of man. Not being forced to waste its life for their living this freedom means the confrontation with the essence of existence: The freedom is struck for an answer, how to live, how to work and to be. There is no given sense of life, no essential picture of man's destination. The freedom would at last confront human being with the abysmal foundation of existence.

According to the mythological religious cultures human being gets in heaven liberation from all sorrows and its task consist only in praising the sober Lord, i.e. respecting and accepting the indefinable abysmal foundation of existence.

Karl Marx intended a 'realm of freedom' organised by an 'association of free human beings'. 'Free' means that the people must decide by themselves how to live beyond necessary but minimal labour. Therefore, he never favoured any enforcement of a finite picture of a homo novus, new man; such a picture would anew oppress the existential freedom just achieved in a culture free of alienation.

All those pictures of man prescribing how the humans must exist suppose that mind is restricted to an arbitrary historical selfie.

However, its basic nature has no limits. No one can say what the human being liberated from alienating labour will do, think or feel. Reason is mind's essential power of negativity which unmasks all finite pictures of man as desperate riots against the seemingly unendurable freedom of existence.

The mythological sentence that the human being is God's own likeness and God is not determinate had in alienated form developed the existential idea of the freedom of mind.

In contrast to abstract atheism Karl Marx did not understand mythological ideas as false, however their truth must be theoretically purified by contra-

dicting but concrete atheism or de-mythologization uncovering truth of religion.

The result of this process leads to 'positivism'⁶ preserving both moments. But only technical and social liberation from alienating labour realises the basic idea of purified religion.

This real liberation opens the door to an authentic praxis⁷, purposeless doing, free building of existence, an activity mythology attributed to God's likeness, the human mind.

Wladimir Lenin's anti-dialectical and dualist view of religion turned Karl Marx's dialectical understanding of religion and his concept of existential freedom to the opposite saying: religion (i.e. religious culture) is an opiate for the people given by the oppressive classes in order to manipulate them; therefore, religion must be substituted by the finite picture of the homo sovieticus.

While Karl Marx, interpreting religion in a concrete dialectical way, recognised mythological ideas as imagined and therefore alienated expressions of the abysmal foundation of existence.

Instead of their violent extermination, he comprehended that development of 'material' i.e. socio-economic conditions the de-alienated intentions of the mythological ideas could get their true and proper reality.

Having an abstract view of religion Lenin wanted and organised – although in vain - the complete eradication of religions and the violent enforcement of a finite picture of human being. Indeed, he intended not only to destroy historical religious cultures but religion at all, the holistic dealing.

Mao tse-Tung followed the elitist Leninist way. Once he told the Dalai Lama: religion is poison for the people. But his persecution of religions did not work. Nowadays Chinese people are travelling by train to Tibet in order to find a guru who - in contrast to the crude consumism. and abstract constructionism propagated by Chinese politics - could teach them about the abysmal foundation of existence.

In the West political groups are propagating the so-called 'Occidental' or even 'Jewish-Christian' culture as the peak of humanness. The most radical

form of these anti-dialectical religions is the ideology of liberal individualism.

Its picture of man claims to represent the very nature of human being. Therefore, a human being not having the possibility for getting cultural liberty has lost the meaningfulness of its individual life, has lost its individual authenticity; in this way its individual existence would become worthless or even nothing.

This religion postulating the cultural liberty of an individual as its essential foundation and therefore denying the freedom of the abysmal foundation of its existence in vain replaces the true abysmal foundation by a picture of man which moreover suits only for a ruling class having access to the necessary resources to fulfil historically and socially constructed desires of an individual.

Another very influential religion is the moralist one penetrating all cultures today. According to this self-understanding the human being gives itself the sense of existence by identifying and practising arbitrary norms of life. This religion preaches meaningfulness of existence would depend on one's own finite performance: In that way finite self-dependency has become enthroned as an illusionary finite abysmal foundation of existence.

All these anti-dialectical religions intend the extinction of existential freedom, that consciousness should forget its very nature.

Reason is to silence the existential dialectic as the heaviest criticism of finitism, of all apotheosising of culture.

Traditional and modern anti-dialectical religions – they may misuse mythological or rational ideas - are mostly promising celestial or earthen happiness.

But that is nothing else than illusion and contradicts totally the freedom of existential thinking. So-called happiness or unhappiness is only finite and

arbitrary products of mind which is yet all the time changeable Insofar a cultural building can never become abysmal foundation of existence.

Other anti-dialectical positions claim the essence of religion would be psychic illness or social poison or mental degeneration, quite the contrary is true.

All those contents of religious culture are indeed results of mind's serious handling the dialectic of existence – even if such items are disgusting and horrible and propagating atheistic and secularistic culturism.

The relevant difference does not consist in the different contents of religious cultures but in recognising or ignoring the object religion i.e. the dialectical relationship.

If mind's genuine essence consists in dealing with his internal dialectical relationship, already in its mythological form it has developed the greatest historical achievement of human being. It realised by help of its capacity of imaging an imagination of something not belonging to his everyday culture and to its surrounding world: Rudolf Otto called the object of this imagination 'the total other'⁸ or the Holy.⁹

This Holy stands in contrast to all contents of finite experience.

Although the humans got the awareness of the Holy in an alienated form, nonetheless they imagined in this way their own proper essence and nature.

Their existential experience is in no way different from ours – may their culture be extremely primitive and crude.

There is another prejudice concerning the origin of the imagined Holy or God. According to this religion the imagination God arose from an alleged

helplessness of the early humans when they had difficulties in constructing their existence particularly with nature.

Just the opposite is true: the imagination God originated from the frightening experience of one's own infinite mind, frightening the borderless abysmal foundation of one's own existence.¹⁰

Functional instrumentalism of religion ignores this infinite abysmal foundation reducing religion to an element of finite cultural building. This culturism is very popular today even in religious studies reducing religion to its finite, arbitrary and very often dysfunctional material expressions; however, what these expressions express, i.e. the result of the holistic dealing of the dialectical relationship of existence one must ignore.

According to all these kinds of constructionism existence consists only in finite targets, functions and instruments, and the human being is only a craftsman setting goals, creating and using appropriate instruments.

Such an anti-dialectical constructionism identifies human being with its self-made aims and works. However, in contrast to the abstract position of constructionism the peculiarity of human being consists in the dealing with the concrete dialectical relationship of indeterminate abysmal foundation on one side and of determinate building on the other side. The dialectical concreteness of both elements excludes all culturist religious cultures.

Functional instrumentalism, a kind of constructionism, understanding human being as a servant and functionary of its own aims and instruments forgets that it is nevertheless always confronted with the negation of its cultural constructions.

This insolvable contradiction is the dynamic truth of existence. Even if one tries to ignore or to repress that existential reality however one remains the mercy of it.

Again: On reason of the slow but steady development of their physical brain humans gradually experienced the loss of their natural determination. They realised anymore being drove controlled and instead getting under the pressure of existential self-management.

Mind was more and more forced to set goals and to develop adequate means including social organisation. This happened in a gradual transition from decreasing natural impulses where he must learn to organise his formation having available only his power inside, thinking. Even as imaging it was not controllable and not incalculable.

Even being an imagination consciousness fully realised in this way infinite mind as its own abysmal foundation.

But it could not only imaginatively face its infinite abysmal foundation; more than that – consciousness could even contact this tremendous internal power, its abysmal foundation.

By contacting God through imagination humans slowly learnt that existence did not only consist in contact with their outer finite world but primarily with their internal infinite mind.

They realised more and more, that contact with God as the most predominant aspect of their life, the most relevant service they had to do.

This service of contacting God was - as G.W.F. Hegel says - the Sunday of their life, the concentration on the abysmal foundation of existence in the imagined form God; but on workdays they concentrated on finite items, on culture, on the building of existence.

Imagination as such producing only finite items the imagined God necessarily became a formally finite object. In this way he was necessarily separated and by that alienated from the imaging finite mind-subject.

It took centuries that mind conceptually could grasp the truth of that alienated image mirror God. Since modern times the human mind could de-alienate that imagined one by uncovering its thought: the thought of imagined God as infinite mind.

For the ordinary consciousness mostly imaging its world God and his corresponding services are even today the most important way to relate to its foundation and to deal with the dialectical relationship.

As we have seen, religion as this dealing has contradicting options. Either one distinguishes between abysmal foundation and cultural construction or identifies culture and abysmal foundation.

In the second way culturism denies the infinite mind but clutches the finiteness. Ignoring the infiniteness culturism tries to cover the subversive doubt of infiniteness which de-composes all finite decisions and convictions.

Obviously, God has not been imagined on reason of human deficits to organise the finite world and to control the cruel nature or because of tension within the prehistoric family, between father and son. God was originated because of human's frightening experience with the tremendous power of his infinite mind, imagined as God.

Still to-day humans are frightening at their own infinite mind even if they believe in theoretical atheism. Atheism may extinguish the consciousness of the mirror image God claiming that humans' abysmal foundation must be substituted by a positive or negative self-made ultimate aim and sense of life', or other finite products. But then, the power of mind, which may be called grace or freedom of human existence is only forgotten, but in no way lost.

Mind experienced that his own buildings do not suffice for the explanation and foundation of his very nature. All his finite contents particularly one's own present kind of self-interpretation and culture are at the mercy of the infinite mind or in the traditional term depending on God's grace.

This grace - the power and essence of God – is the most dangerous enemy of illusionary religion of finite constructionism. Questioning all finitist religious culture grace is indeed the horrible doubt for constructionism.

Imagined God is the first moment of the dialectical relationship.

However, the imagination of the souverain and self-sufficient or absolute God one must be strictly distinguish from cultural supranaturals.

The imagination of God is related to the abysmal foundation of existence. By this imagination mind preserves the humans from abusing his finite products as their illusionary abysmal foundation.

Usually one understands God as judge of creation. If humans do not follow his law, he arises his wrath and punishes the culprit. But traditional religion experienced the wrath of God as a horrible danger which humans get in if they entitle finite cultural items as their foundation worshipping not God but a creature.

We see the wrath of God is not an absurd fantasy to terrorise people morally wrongdoing. Just the opposite is true: By wrath of God humans imagined their self-created desolate situation when trusting in and worshipping so-called idols being finite buildings only.

But even if one imagination is designated as God does not mean that the abysmal foundation of existence would be its content. We must always prove id the word means: either the guarantor of human constructed world, the culture or the free and souverain Holy, the abysmal foundation of existence.

Very often the term God is used for supranaturals. They are only imagined functionaries of not yet realised or not yet realisable cultural aims and works. Supranaturals have been very important for the development of cultures: They are representing the not yet realised but intended existence.

An example is the plane of God Vishnu's plane, the divine bird Garuda, representing the urgent interest of man to fly like birds. This figure was imagined in a fantastic way; but that fantastic image led the empirical consciousness to realise its proper intention. But without such a mythological idea no plane would fly today.

The confusion of God in the proper sense and the cultural supranaturals is the biggest obstacle to preserve the existentially necessary discrimination of abysmal foundation (grace) and construction of existence.

Therefore, a conceptual distinction of mythology in the proper sense as imaginative dealing of the dialectical relationship on one side and the cultural supernaturalism as the imaginative models of construction of existence not yet realisable on the other side.

The imagination of God and its equivalents containing de facto the characteristics infinite mind substantially differs from those supranaturals containing those of the finite mind.

In this perspective God will never change but supranaturals will vanish when their cultural idea could be empirically realised.

In modern times a lot of these supranaturals have been and are being realised in a scientific and technological way.

Identifying religion with worship of supranaturals misleads human being. Insofar God's actual meaning i.e. of the infinite abysmal foundation of existence, is extinguished from consciousness.

But the old imagined supranaturals now realised as secular moments of constructions of existence are used by constructionism as surrogate self-made 'foundation, hoping to escape its principal doubt.

So-called atheist criticism of religion - ranging from concepts of priestly deception to the psychiatric denouncing of religion as a psychiatric illness – does not want to make any differentiation between God and supranaturals.

Therefore, it cannot work-up in a proper hermeneutical way the amazing mental performance of the idea of the infinite mind traditionally realised as God and the cultural work of finite mind including its fantastic ideas, workers and instruments.

Although since e.g. G.W.F. Hegel the thought of that great and amazing achievement of mind was well-known, abstract atheism should have got the past. But unhistorical and anti-hermeneutical criticism ranging from e.g. S. Freud to W. Lenin and Mao-tse-Tung, religion was interpreted as psychic deformity of an individual or a means of oppression and betray.

All these finitist religious cultures result from their own dealing with the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and culture.

The result of their religion consists obviously in extinguishing the dealing from consciousness by covering and ignoring infiniteness of abysmal foundation but propagating the apotheosis of self-made finite human images (Menschenbilder) as ultimate criteria of existence. But such human images are the most aggressive attack on the and undefinable human existence.

The newly propagated belief religion would be only one of many possible cultural alternatives; and the individual would have free choice to select one of so-called cultural options as its abysmal foundation.

This belief implies also the non-differentiation of abysmal foundation and culture. By that the infiniteness of existence has in fact been changed into a disponible, eligible and disposable mental product of finite human mind.

All these constructionist religions try to abolish the very nature of human beings pushing it to the back of one's mind. But infiniteness cannot not be exterminated: instead, mind has pushed himself again and again will push himself once more into the fore.

Also, modern so-called anti-religious dualism splitting mankind into religious and non-religious people follows the religion of denying the infinite mind as abysmal foundation. Therefore, this dualism believes in an illusionary self-created finite picture of man. By this picture of man dualism tries to achieve its aim by intra-psychic analysis, secret seduction or by external force.

However, people understanding and practising dialectic religion in a traditional and mythological way can meet the challenge of the dialectical human condition.

On the other side, people calling themselves enlightened ones may hide or ignore their own crypto-religious dealing; in this way escaping public discourse and criticism.

Nowadays some research has started under title 'non-religious religion'. Here wee, even dualists are feeling the lack and avoidance of public discourse of self-styled enlightened and rationalist dualism.

All human beings have the same existential problem: they are dealing with their dialectical relationship either they do it openly or hide it.

Mind's independence of all finite products is indeed a shocking experience, sometimes called the fright at the freedom of mind.

Therefore, one usually tries to extinguish that extremely dangerous consciousness of the boundlessness and unavailability of infinite mind, of the fundamental freedom of existence.

Instead of bearing the infinity of mind which is ruthlessly transcending all the finite products; finitism, sometimes called secularism, clutches - completely in vain - its own product as a made-up abysmal foundation of existence.

The severity of the dialectical relationship is also causing orthodoxies always holding on outlived buildings of their religious culture and their culture in general.

These orthodoxies are and have been very often ready to outroot all articulations of grace. mind's intention in creating the image of grace consisted in demonstrating and saving the existential thought existence does not depend on any finite product of mind, on any work.

Discriminating between abysmal foundation and culture and interpreting both as moments of the dialectical relationship mind saved its proper identity.

This identity consists in the dialectical unity of the two existential moments.

The first moment, the abysmal foundation, and the second one, culture, are contrary to each other.

From the point of view of abstract identity i.e. abstracting and reducing itself to culture only – and this is the common one – the abysmal foundation is the non-identity of culture, its otherness and negation. The constitutive abysmal foundation relates to the constructive culture of existence as its own 'total other'¹¹.

In traditional terms this dialectical unity is the unity of two contradicting moments: 1. (works demanding) Law and 2. (nothing demanding, only giving, therefore only believable) grace.

Both moments root in the so-called double will of God: In God these two contradictories have got their unity logical dualism never accepts.

The revolutions of grace - again and again recurring in history - are raising awareness of the dialectical interrelationship of human existence. Although both moments radically differ from each other, nevertheless their unity is of in dissolvable dynamic.

However, one should not confuse grace constituting existence and legal grace. The latter one belongs only to the world of Law i.e. to culture. Its task consists only in attenuating an uncompromising execution of finite laws in order to avoid that such an execution would lead e.g. to disastrous social consequences.

The borderless and dissolving grace is the truth of existence. Facing grace as free and independent abysmal foundation of existence humans may perceive their misuse of culture a pure surrogate of God.

A dialectical theory of religion does not follow abstractive concepts which all together negate the dialectical relationship and concrete unity of abysmal foundation and culture of existence. Culturism abstracts from abysmal foundation and accepts only an isolated culture, mysticism seeks refuge in an isolated abysmal foundation and abstracts from culture; monism dissolves existence in one tenseless substance.

They all abstract from the dialectical relativity of the basic moments of existence.

They all follow the sentence of non-contradiction and therefore favour a theoretical dualism.

A dialectical theory of religion is not a dualist one because it includes the anti-dialectical concepts and religious cultures as possible expressions of religion which is based I on the freedom of existence.

Within the frame of the dialectical theory the freedom of existence makes it possible that religion stands over its object, the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and culture.

It includes also mind's amazing existential work of mythology as an indeed formaliter imaginative but materialiter true expression of religion it may be dialectical or anti-**dialectical**.

32

¹ Holistic means all human capacities i.e. intellectual, emotional and actional ones. Dealing cannot be reduced to one of these capacities.

² Mind is understood as the term 'Geist' in the German philosophy.

³ Existence means the manifestation of mind in the form of the dialectical relationship of abysmal foundation and culture and its dealing of it.

⁴ Cf. *Journal of Religious Culture* Nr. 239

⁵ Cf. Gotthard Günther, *Idee und Grundriß der nicht-Aristotelischen Logik*. Band I. Hamburg 1959.

⁶ Marx's positivism has nothing to do with the modern anti-dialectical 'positivism' of Raimund Popper et alii.

^{7 7} In the old Greek society, the free citizens could realise their life as *praxis*; the slaves however had no *praxis*realising their life as alienating subhuman work.

⁸ Cf. Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige (The Holy)*, 1917

^{9 9} Cf. Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige (The Holy)*, 1917

¹⁰ The term 'concrete' means that something is grown together with something else. The term 'abstract' means that something is separated from something else which it belongs to.

¹¹ Cf. Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige (The Holy)*, 1917