Nature of Religion
The Cognitive-Developmental Approach as the Grand Theory of Religion

Georg W. Oesterdiekhoff [a], [*]

[a] Karlsruhe Institute for Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany

Abstract
Religious studies form an important part of research in several humanities. The "grand theory of religion" has to be capable to encompass all relevant characteristics observable in the religions both of tribal societies and civilizations. It has to refer these empirical elements such as belief in divinities, belief in the immortality of the soul, divine government of reality, punishment and reward on earth and in afterworld, prayers and sacrifices, etc. to common structures that can be deduced from one comprehensive theory. The following essay demonstrates that only developmental psychology has all the tools available in order to formulate the grand theory of religion that fulfils the necessary requirements. Developmental psychology can refer the main particularities of religiousness and religion to those characteristics, which are parts of certain psycho-cognitive structures developmental psychology has detailed. Thus, the grand theory of religion entails a full theory of agnosticism and atheism, too.

Keywords: developmental psychology, piagetian cross-cultural psychology, functionalism, cognitive structures, religion, atheism, agnosticism, divinities, god, ancestor worship, magic, immortality, creation, myth.

1. Introduction
The aim of this essay is to draw the outlines of an encompassing and groundbreaking theory of religion. This theory demands to explain nature and existence of religion and religiousness, and all relevant characteristics and features of religious life. The contention is that only the cognitive-developmental approach provides the means which are necessary in order to encounter the whole phenomenon. Sociological theories or biological-evolutionary theories do not have the tools and the possibilities to explain religion and religiousness. Neither theories of general psychology nor of functionalism, but only the cognitive-developmental approach respectively developmental psychology has all relevant prerequisites to complete the task and to give an answer to the question: what is religion?

2. Discussion
In search for an encompassing theory of religion
This contention seems to be astonishing and dubious. Many readers of the ordinary literature about religion do not find such statements there. Usually they have never heard or read that developmental psychology could be a key to decode the nature and essence of religion. Moreover, the overwhelming part of scientific literature on religion does not occupy with tries to explain

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[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: Oesterdiekhoff@t-online.de (G.W. Oesterdiekhoff)

religion at all. They may deal with religious traditions, rites, myths, legends, and some practices, but only sparsely with explanations to the entire phenomenon. Not only the common people but also scientists take religion and religiousness as self-evident phenomena, as something whose existence does not need any explanation, at least not beyond the level of some remarks. However, a critical study of the scientific endeavours to explain religion reveals the low number of theoretically demanding and flamboyant approaches. Furthermore, it shows that not one single theory has won the status to appear as a groundbreaking and a convincing theory, widely known and accepted by a majority of experts (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Michaels, 1997; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015). Thus, there seems to be a gap between the actual missing of a great theory of religion on the one side and the recognition of this lack among experts on the other side. There is no great theory of religion but only a few scholars recognize this obvious fact and seem to wish a change of this situation. There is no extraordinary effort to develop such a theory because people presuppose that this task has been accomplished for long or is superfluous due to the self-evident character of the phenomenon.

But when we focus religious phenomena, as they are to find in society and history, we can immediately discover its strange or peculiar character respectively the necessity for a flamboyant explanation. How can people believe that a great god or a group of gods master the world, make sun and rain, punish or reward people by bad or good incidents? How can people believe that all incidents and regularities are ruled by gods? How can people believe that god created the world by magic or whatever? How can people believe that they will have a life after death, preferably in very good circumstances, as the ideas about the prospected life in paradise promise? How can they believe that they must earn their staying on earth and in paradise by praying, offering sacrifices, leading a honest life, repenting their sins, avoiding to commit sins, and executing good deeds? How can they believe that gods such as Zeus, Odin, Ahura Mazda, Osiris, Kali, or Diana really exist? How can they believe in the reliability and truth of uncountable legends and myths? Why do they believe in divine ancestors, divine stars, or other gods? Why do they believe in entities the five senses do not seem to perceive?

A complete theory of religion must present convincing answers to all these questions. Otherwise the theory does not fulfil the principle of the sufficient reason. The encompassing theory of religion has to cover the essentials of religion detectable in the religions of the world, the religions of tribal societies, agrarian, and modern societies as well. According to famous scholars in the field of religious studies, we can discover common structures of religion and religiousness across all world religions and cultures. The beliefs into divinities, divine rule on earth and world, divine origin and creation of the cosmos, reward and punishment on earth and in heaven, and praying and sacrificing are to find in all religions and all cultures. These core elements of religion are manifest in the religions of tribal societies and of ancient agrarian societies around the world as well (Frazer, 1994; Eliade, 1974, 1961; Durkheim, 1965; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015).

Therefore, a comprehensive theory of religion must entail an explanatory theory about the nature of legends and myths, doctrines and ideologies, of worship of divinities and ancestors, of belief in the divine creation of the world, of belief into the divine rule over all incidents and regularities, of belief into punishment and reward on earth and in heaven, of belief into the role of praying and sacrifices, and of related practices and ideas. The theory has to explain all these phenomena and has to deduce them from general theoretical ideas. The theory should refer all these phenomena to common roots and disclose their internal relations. Additionally, this grand theory should inevitably include a theory about agnosticism and atheism. The full explanation to the fact of the rise of atheism among modern societies and of its complete absence in ancient societies has to be a compulsory part of the theory.

The comparison between these so defined requirements and the widespread assumptions about religion opens the way for the proper examination of the known theories. At first we have to discriminate between religious and scientific theories about religion. All those scholars who try to explain religion in terms of anthropological, sociological, and psychological functions should envisage that they do not share the viewpoint of the believers. The believers deny the possibility to explain religion by reference to scientific approaches. They presuppose the existence of the gods – that is their only theory of religion. Religion exists due to the existence of gods. The only form of sciences about religion is then theology. Authors who maintain that anthropological, sociological, and psychological factors are the origins of religion, need inevitably imply the non-existence of the gods or their failing in belonging to the true sources of religion. Even if these authors may concede

the existence of gods and believe into the psychological origin of religion as well, due to contradictious motives and logical incoherencies, they deny the divine source of religion as long as they emphasize sociological and psychological origins of religion. Thus, a scientific theory of religion and religion are deeply opposite. Therefore, I discriminate between a scientific theory of religion on the one side and religion and theology on the other side. A true believer can never accept any theory about anthropological, sociological, and psychological origins and functions of religion. This acceptance would delete the kernel of religiousness.

The limits of functionalism

For example, a widespread theory about religion refers to the fear of death humans usually share. This fear, according to this theory, has originated the belief in immortality. The belief in an eternal life, preferably placed into a paradise, is the psychological answer to the questions of mortality and the fear of death. The paradise is a place close to god, made and controlled by god. Thus, there actually exists a close link between god, immortality, and fear of death. The difference between a scientific and a theological interpretation lies in the fact that a theological or religious interpretation concedes the existence of immortality, whereas a scientific theory emphasizes the psychological need as the only source of this belief.

Similar statements can be made about other sociological, anthropological, or psychological factors, which may account for the existence of gods. Scholars worked out some more anthropological or psychological functions. The life of humans often is dangerous, uncomfortable, painful, and outrageous. People can bear their fate better when they believe in a just order of the world, which lies behind the surface of visible phenomena, and in compensations they will receive in a better world, in exchange for their mischief on earth. Religion is something like a drug that produces illusions in order to make people psychologically stronger to sustain pains and lead their lifes.

Additionally, there is a widespread assumption that religion has sociological functions with regard to social cohesion, social control, and enforcing ethical behavior. Without the belief in a punishing god and ethical compensation people would tend to dissocial conduct, and social life might be endangered. Still Immanuel Kant (1974: 121-128), among many other philosophers, theologians, and common people, presumed that a moral life in society and a basis to ethics may inevitably provide a belief in god. Bigger parts of the sociology of religion of the 20th century regard "god" as metaphor of society, assuming, religion may fulfil several social functions (Durkheim, 1965). People, who believe in a punishing god, avoid dissocial behavior, enhance their moral efforts, tolerate social disadvantages, obey authorities more easily, and whatever.

In summarizing sociological, psychological, and anthropological theories of religion, I conclude that they all have common traits. They try to explain religion by its useful functions for the stability of society and social order or for the stability of psyche, self-esteem, and personality. Religion helps societies and individuals to stabilize their existence and well-being. I designate theories of this type as functionalist theories. These theories seem to be so convincing and self-evident that people and scientists often cannot recognize their actually weak and problematic status. This failing becomes apparent when we ask some questions about the relation between the functions on the one side and the ingredients of religion, as described above, on the other side. Why does and how could the fear of death, presumed to have caused religion, originate the belief in divine punishment, in the divine creation of the world, in the myths that present biographies of gods, and whatever? Why does and how could the wish to enhance the moral behavior of people, carried out by the assumption a great god would always observe, control, and punish people, additionally create the belief gods need animal sacrifices for their food, make rain, sunshine, and all other incidents, originated world and cosmos, and whatever?

Religion may have and execute the presupposed functions, but religion entails more ingredients than all these functions altogether. It is impossible to explain religion by a list of the needs and wishes of man. Functionalism does not fit the principle of sufficient reason. It explains some aspects of religion, but neither its existence and main functions nor its growing disappearance in modern societies.

Religiousness and atheism

As I said above, a theory of religion must explain both religiousness and atheism. Functionalism cannot explain atheism and therefore: it cannot explain religion. If wishes for

immortality, ethical enforcement, social control, compensation for disadvantages, etc. may have created religion (in Pleistocene or whenever), then functionalism has to answer to the question why modern atheists could have surmounted the adherence to such needs and wishes. Atheist and agnostic people obviously are mortal as religious people are and share their fear of death but not their capability to create illusionary worlds. Atheist and agnostic people share the need for compensation of disadvantages, for social control, and for ethical behavior but do not use religious beliefs and practices in doing so. Moreover, they have no compensation for the fact of the end of life but face it as unavoidable. Atheist and agnostic people cannot believe into gods who made the cosmos and rule the world. The question arises why can religious people believe in the existence of gods, whereas atheists are incapable or unwilling in this? Thus, the mere existence of atheists and agnostics refutes functionalism completely. Religion cannot be explained in terms of needs and wishes, neither sociologically nor psychologically, neither biologically nor anthropologically. Additionally, it would not be enough to maintain that atheists and religious people may share the same needs but atheists are mentally incapable in satisfying these needs by creation of illusionary worlds. For example, the idea that god created the cosmos and ruled all incidents, does not reflect psychological wishes and sociological functions mainly, but intellectual standards and cognitive structures. The incapability of atheists to create illusionary worlds reflects a growth of mind and reasoning abilities. Conversely, the tendency of religious people to believe in immortality of the soul, paradise and hell, punishment and reward on earth and in heaven originates in lower stages of cognition and childlike mental states.

When we want to find the real causes behind the religious phenomenon, we have to inquire into the nature of atheism. First of all, we envisage the fact that atheism is a phenomenon that originated in the past centuries with a growing tendency. It is a phenomenon bound to modernizing societies only. Experts on religion in pre-modern societies around the world agree that there is no atheism to find there. All members of primitive and agrarian societies share religious beliefs that are stronger and deeper rooted than the beliefs in modern societies. Atheism is practically unthinkable in ancient societies. People who deviate from common ideas often have to face their liquidation. Aaron Gurjewitch (1997: 470) says Europeans of the sixteenth century couldn´t imagine atheism at all. Innocent Oyibo (2004: 23) maintains with regard to current Black Africa: „There is no thinking and action without religious influences. Africans have no idea of atheism.“ John Mbiti (1974: 3) writes: "African peoples can´t even imagine a life without religion." All intellectuals and philosophers of antiquity and Middle Ages in the Western and the Eastern part were believers. The first atheists seem to appear during the 18th century. In Europe during the 19th century many atheists appeared, not only in the intellectual elites but also in the masses. Nowadays nearly 50 % of the peoples in Europe and 65 % in Japan deny the existence of god and immortality, whereas roughly 90 % of the peoples in developing countries confess to be religious (Dawkins, 2006; Lynn, 2009).

Furthermore, pre-modern populations believe stronger. Their belief has an another character than the belief of modern people. Their belief is not a belief but a secure and undoubted knowledge about the nature of god. "The difference between the nature of primitive and that of modern belief, then, is not a question of degree of religious fervour, or even of the degree to which one may admit of doubt in one´s own mind, but rather a question of whether or not one is able to recognize the possibility of doubt. Whereas in our own society even the most devout believer will recognize that it is possible for one to be uncertain in one´s belief, or not to believe at all, in primitive societies that possibility is not understood to exist… Neither here nor in other medieval writings do we find the accusation that another people (or another individual) does not believe that there is a God. What we find instead are accusations of not ´directing one´s heart´ or ´entrusting one´s spirit´ to God, and so forth. Often, of course, the ´unbelievers´ do not accept the divinity of Christ, but nowhere do we find evidence of disbelief in the existence of God." (Le Pan, 1989: 166)

Religion and religiousness are not ideas pre-modern people can choose or deny but they are inevitable parts of their psyche and personality. Religious feelings and basic ideas cannot be choosen or denied by pre-modern people but appear as unavoidable parts of their psyche, personality, and thinking. They belong to them as their basic functions such as the experience of time, causality, chance, and probability do. Religiousness reflects anthropological levels.

Education and intelligence seem to be the relevant causes in eliminating religion and religiousness. Scientists of today usually are not religious. Already James Leuba (1916: 250)

determined that in the United States in 1916 only 41 % of US-scientists said to believe in god, with 41 % of non-believers and 17 % doubters or agnostics. The faith decreased a lot in this group of scientists between 1916 and 1999. Only seven percent of the members of the American Academy of Sciences say in 1999 they believe in god. Only three percent of the members of the Royal Society of London are believers, whereas 78 % of them "deny religiousness completely" (Dawkins, 2006). There is a strong correlation between the level of education and intelligence on the one side and religiousness on the other side. 100 % of believers in strictly traditional societies, roughly 90 % of believers in developing countries, approximately 50 % of believers in Europe, 35 % in Japan and three or seven percent among the top elite of scientists deliver most important information about the nature of religiousness and atheism (Lynn, 2009; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015). Religiousness belongs to lower stages of cognition and education and diminishes by the influence of education, intelligence, and culture. Furthermore, the low percentages in the most advanced societies and especially among the intellectual elite reveal the fact that religion will completely disappear in highly educated cultures. The numbers of today are by no means final positions of this development but hint to further stages upon them religion may be nearly or completely vanished. When civilization will grow in the future to the same rate as it did in the past 200 years, then it is thinkable that religion in the next 200 years will be either completely vanished or at least minimized to an unimportant phenomenon. Thus, religion is by no means an inevitable ingredient of human´s psyche. It does not belong to the eternal nature of man. The mere existence of atheists, their origination roughly 250 years ago, and their growing number worldwide in recent times evidences that more and more future generations will have been surpassing the adherence to religious beliefs.

Nonetheless, the pre-modern humankind did not know atheists and agnostics but only believers. Religiousness was then an inseparable part of psyche and thinking of pre-modern humankind. They had no other choice in experiencing the world than upon religious and mystical terms. Focusing only pre-modern populations, religion might appear as part of the nature of man, to the same way as language, reason, and sociality. Focusing only pre-modern people, religiousness is more a part of their nature than ideas, ideologies, and philosophies of any kind. People can be strongly convinced by ideas about communism, necessity of virginity before marriage, and other things. However, it is quite possible to persuade even the most convinced communist and strongest supporter of sexual liberty of giving up their ideas and to overtake divergent positions. Such persuasions and conversions, however, are not possible with regard to religiousness among pre-modern populations. It is not possible, by whatever means, to eradicate religiousness in hearts and minds of pre-modern populations. Religiousness is not an inevitable ingredient of man´s nature but of pre-modern man´s.

Developmental psychology can hand over the answer to these questions. It distinguishes several stages of psychological states that characterize humans. These stages are something like cages that determine both abilities and borders of intellectual capacities. Religion is always present on the lower stages of human development as developmental psychology found out. Thus, religion is a necessary part of the lower stages of human development but weakens or disappears on the higher stages. Developmental psychology can illuminate the psychological sources of religiousness and atheism as well. Thus, developmental psychology delivers all the tools we need in order to explain these phenomena.

Ludwig Feuerbach as predecessor of the developmental approach to religion

I regard the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach as the main predecessor of the theory of religion I am going to present. Ludwig Feuerbach (1985) developed a theory of religion that deeply based on developmental assumptions although the entire discipline of developmental psychology did not exist at that time (1841). According to Feuerbach, "religion is the childlike stage of humankind". He emphasized that the modern man of industrial society (1841!), the "educated" man of "reason" cannot be religious. The grown reasoning abilities of the "educated man" do not allow him any more to adhere to magic, superstition, and religion. The "educated man" of the modern culture cannot believe in immortality of the soul, divinities, legends, and myths. The humankind is destined to become agnostic and atheistic. Conversely, humans of pre-modern societies are uneducated and have a "childlike psyche" therefore. This childlike psyche is not only the single source of religion, it is essentially religious itself. According to Feuerbach, childlike psyche and religion are

more or less synonym terms. Only the childlike psyche can create and maintain the belief into uncountable divinities, divine creation of the cosmos, and immortality of the soul.

Feuerbach delivered an approach that sufficiently evidences the roots of the core aspects of religion. He especially emphasized wishful thinking and fantasy, childlike characteristics, basing the entire phenomenon of religion. Thus, he worked out an approach that more or less fulfilled the principles of the sufficient reason, apart from the above criticised theories of functionalism. For example, his theory explains the universality of religion across pre-industrial societies and the rise of atheism in modern ones.

Feuerbach regarded his theory as watershed of the development of culture, as watershed of the history of philosophy and sciences. He saw his theory as the first theory that described properly the thinking of previous humankind and the new stages humankind would climb in future. I support his estimation of his work. Although his person and work are famous by today, both are not as highly estimated as they may have deserved.

I regard my theory of religion (2015) as the heir of Feuerbach´s approach. However, the tools of developmental psychology, as they have been developing in the past 100 years, are much more elaborated. They can confirm the core idea of Feuerbach, religion may be a childlike phenomenon, to an incredible amount, by scientific tools, which did not exist at all in 1841. Thus, it is very surprising that there are only a few scientists worldwide who seem to have an insight into these obvious coherencies.

Developmental psychology respectively structure-genetic theory programme

I am going to present now the possibilities modern developmental psychology can offer in order to evidence the childlike nature of religion. First of all, it is necessary to show that pre-modern populations stay on childlike psychological stages. Then, that the modern humankind has attained higher stages of consciousness and reason. Finally I have to show that modern developmental psychology can really prove that religion is a part of lower psychological stages and therefore, that atheism has originated in psycho-cognitive growth. Only then are the crucial facts procured and collected in order to evidence the argumentation of Feuerbach and my theory of religion, too.

The most elaborated approach within the realm of developmental psychology is the theory of Jean Piaget. He divided the ontogenetic development from infancy to adulthood in four stages. The sensory-motor stage of the suckling is succeeded by the pre-operational stage, which is characterized by the elaboration of language and reason. The stage of concrete operations, which develops in industrial societies between the sixth and the twelfth year of age, is defined by logical operations in the handling of objects. The forth stage, the stage of formal operations, unfolds between the tenth and twentieth year of life. The rise of this adolescent stage of development largely seems to be bound to educated, industrial cultures (Piaget, 1950; Piaget/Inhelder, 1969).

Humans on these different stages experience world and reality divergently. They live in different intellectual worlds. They have different ideas about physical, social, and moral phenomena. They are humans on higher or lower levels of anthropological development. Humans on formal operational levels have deeper insights, more logical comprehension, more differentiated concepts, and a more elaborated worldview than humans on pre-operational levels. A suckling has no idea of the possibilities a five-year-old child on the pre-operational stage has at disposal, equipped with language and reasoning abilities. A pre-operational child has no admission to the intellectual possibilities a formal-operational adolescent has acquired and can apply. Every stage is an intellectual cage with borders both downwards and upwards. A human on a specific stage has no admission to the thinking belonging to higher stages and has lost previous forms, too (Oesterdiekhoff, 2013).

Piagetian Cross-Cultural Psychology (PCCP), in the past 80 years, has carried out more than 1000 empirical studies across more than 100 cultures worldwide in order to test Piaget´s stage theory. Next to intelligence research, it is said to be the second greatest industry within cross-cultural psychology. All children around the world develop more or less the known patterns of sensory-motor and pre-operational stage, according to the descriptions won in the Western World. Irregularities unfold, however, with the both subsequent stages of operations. Only 30, 50, 70, or 80 % of population, living in developmental regions (= backward, illiterate, and pre-modern milieus within the developing countries), form the concrete operations. The attained percentages

depend both on the tested fields of experience and on the population researched. The insecure and asymptotic development of the concrete operations in developmental regions is followed by the usually total lack of formal operations.

This most astonishing fact implies that the adolescent stage of formal operations is usually absent in pre-modern cultural milieus. Humans, living in modern societies, develop the concrete operations fully. They unfold commonly the lower phases within the stage of formal operations, but only 30 to 50 % of modern population elaborate the higher phases within this forth stage (Dasen/Berry, 1974; Dasen, 1977; Flynn, 2007; Hallpike, 1978; Luria, 1982; Oesterdiekhoff, 1997, 2000, 2006a, b, 2009, 2011, 2012b, c; Oesterdiekhoff/Rindermann, 2008).

This implies that the anthropological summit of pre-modern man lies on a childlike level, whereas only humans of modern societies attain anthropological summits between the twelfth and the twentieth year of age. Many pre-modern adults only reach developmental ages beneath the tenth year of age, whereas modern adults scatter within the range of the second decade. Cross-cultural intelligence research has come to the same conclusion. IQ scores of 50 to 75, as usually attained by adult humans living in pre-modern societies around the world, correspond to the intelligence children of industrial societies usually have. „Moreover more backward groups typically fail to progress as far as others along this scale, and though they may develop lower-order skills which are highly effective for survival, their reasoning capacities remain similar in many ways to those of younger children, or even regress through lack of appropriate stimulation." (Vernon, 1969: 215).

The idea that pre-modern man stays on childlike anthropological levels corresponds to ideas widespread across humanities and social sciences for centuries. This idea was common among many classical authors of sociology, ethnology, history, and philology. Many founders of developmental psychology such as J.M. Baldwin, H. Werner, W. Stern, and S. Hall supported this notion. Jean Piaget, in most or all of his books, worked out the common features of children and "primitives" with regard to all spheres of thinking such as logic, physics, and morals.

Christopher Hallpike (1978) was the first to draw the encompassing consequences the empirical results of PCCP imply. He determined the preoperational character of worldview and thinking of the "primitives" and showed that future ethnology will largely depend on developmental psychology. He distinguished between quantitative and qualitative development, thereby meaning that children and primitives share the same qualitative development (anthropological summit respectively developmental age), but diverge in their quantitative development (accumulation of knowledge and life experience).

My theory programme I use to call structure-genetic theory programme, basing on ten books and numerous articles so far, aims to draw the full consequences of developmental psychology to humanities and social sciences. I have shown that it is necessary to apply developmental psychology in order to explain and to reconstruct social change and social evolution from stone ages to modernity, the history of philosophy, sciences, law, morals, manners, etc. It is impossible to describe the history of humankind without the notions developmental psychology contribute. Thus, developmental psychology delivers the decisive foundations to all humanities and social sciences. In this context developmental psychology entails all the means necessary to explain the entire phenomenon of religion. The childlike mentality of pre-modern man carries his religiousness; the rise of formal operations diminishes it and originates agnosticism and atheism (Oesterdiekhoff, 2011: 147-161, 2015).

In the following sections, I show that the core elements of the lower stages of anthropological development carry the central elements of religion. In doing so, the evidence becomes clear that religion is nothing else than manifestation of children´s psyche and related anthropological layer. This conclusion hit the "full religion" (Mircea Eliade) of pre-modern societies. The weaker forms of religion belong to intermediate anthropological layers, whereas agnosticism and atheism originate in their higher forms.

Myths and legends

People know about the existence of divinities by myths and legends. When we ask a pious man or woman about the sources of their belief in gods, no matter in what culture or world region, they will answer that they know about their gods from myths and legends they have heard or read. Zeus, Artemis, Apollo, Kali, Hanuman, Ganesh, Odin, Ahura Mazda, Osiris, Isis, etc. exist because

myths and legends tell about their existence, their lives, and their deeds. Without myths and legends divinities would not exist and we knew nothing about divine personalities and their biographies. In a certain sense we can conclude that religion would not exist without myths and legends. Full religion (vivid or popular religion) always implies the concrete belief in active personalities, beings with a life history full of actions, characteristics, and social relations. For example, Christianity mainly consists of a description of Jesus´ life. The same is true with regard to all godfathers and olympic gods across all world cultures, as the above-mentioned list already indicates. Without the belief in concrete god-persons religions would be poor and bloodless. Thus, every pre-modern popular religion entails a belief in concrete divine personalities, including Hinduism, Islam, and Chinese religion.

However, where and what kind are the sources, which originate the myths and legends that describe divinities? If we ask this question the believers they give answers, according to them either god himself told the story or wrote the book about the story or humans observed life and deeds of god and wrote them down or told about them. The believers regard myths and legends as true reports. The fully religious man always takes myths as true descriptions about realities. The orthodox Muslim takes every single word written in Koran as written by Allah; the same is true with regard to the understanding of the Bible among traditional Christians. Not humans but god himself is the source of the holy books. Thus, every word written down there is right. Every occurrence told in the books really happened once upon a time and is by no means a fantasy product to entertain bored people.

Pre-modern people have the same literal understanding of myths only told in oral traditions. Ethnography researched a lot about the native understanding of religious myths and legends. The myths are believed to contain more reality than any other forms of narratives. The people take the myths not as modern people use to interpret them. They rather understand myths as true reports about real occurrences that really happened. This fact implies that pre-modern people have a totally different understanding of myths as modern people have. People living in modern societies clearly distinguish between reports and myths, facts and fantasy, true description and fairy tale. Thus, modern people automatically deny that myths describing the life of Zeus, Vishnu or Osiris are to interpret in terms of descriptions of realities. Modern people inevitably take these myths as fantasy products, as inventions, and as poetic imaginations. Modern people cannot avoid understanding religious myths as literary fiction, comparable to novels and poetry. However, pre-modern populations regard myths otherwise, namely as the holiest and therefore truest descriptions of the most real occurrences ever happened in history (Malinowski, 1996: 177-193; Wundt, 1914; Eliade, 1961).

Wilhelm Wundt encompassingly researched into the nature of myths and legends (he understood the latter ones as quantitative extensions of the former ones). He determined religious myths are synonym with animal myths, that is, myths, which describe the life and metamorphosis of animals into humans and gods. Moreover, he clearly concluded that there are no differences between myths for children and religious myths. They have not only the same origins but also the same nature. Only today we can distinguish these two forms of myths but the original forms of myths do not entail differences between these two forms. Myriads of mythologists such as Joseph Campbell (1960), Franz Riklin (1995), or Friedrich von der Leyen (1995: 10) supported this idea of the childlike nature of religious myths.

This identification gets more obvious when we listen to typical religious myths. For example, a myth tells how a high god comes down from a cloud to hear the words of an Indian nobleman named Buddha in order to experience the superior knowledge of that nobleman in comparison to that of all gods, who then are all ashamed by their deficiency. Myths, spread around the world, tell how the world originated by hatching out an egg or by magical words or by metamorphosis of killed persons. Zeus turns to a bull to seduce a woman in form of a cow. A Bible myth tells how Jahwe destroyed some cities with all inhabitants because he was angry. All myths around the world, narrating the existence of gods, share this style and these patterns (Oesterdiekhoff, 2015; Wundt, 1914).

Religions across all cultures and civilizations base on myths of this strange character. Pre-modern people do not take these stories as some form of entertainment, as modern people do, but as holy and true description. The stories are deeply childlike to every respect. People, who take these stories as holy and as important knowledge, are also childlike. Thus, the kernel of full religion is indeed childlike. Content of stories, sense of reality, and reasoning abilities that are manifest in

these myths and carry them are altogether deeply childlike. What modern people take as nonsense, pre-modern people interpret as holy.

Child psychologists found out that children, reared in industrial societies, between their forth and eight years, are keen on myths. Children like to listen to myths and are deeply involved in them. They form their essential mental nutrition. After their eight years of life they lose more and more their interest in them and turn to adventure stories and later on to novels. The more mature reasoning capacities and grown senses for reality disable children to find myths and legends any more attractive (Bühler, 1930; Riklin, 1995; Bettelheim, 1997; Piaget, 1951; Döhlemann, 1985; Stern, 1928; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2011: 158).

According to ethnographic descriptions, primitive peoples around the world never lose their interest into myths and legends as school children of modern cultures do. They spend their days telling and listening to myths during their whole life-time. In primitive cultures, children and adults share their passion for myths to the same rate. In villages and cities of pre-modern cultures, story-tellers are everywhere to entertain people by such myths, which capture the attentiveness of people of all ages. Pre-modern people believe in their gods because they have never lost the ability to believe in seriousness and truth of their myths and legends. Thus, their religiosity is rooted in childlike reasoning abilities and in a magical understanding of the world including metamorphosis, speaking objects, trees, and animals (Dieckmann, 1995: 453; Wundt, 1914: 110; Riklin, 1995; Malinowski, 1996: 177-193). Children and "primitives" have the capacity to invent fictions and to dream fantasies they take nonetheless immediately as real occurrences. This childlike peculiarity originates myths and religions. Humans on higher anthropological stages have surpassed this particularity.

Magic is one of the most important characteristics of myths and legends. The hero or the god, the animal or the tree exert their power on nature by magical spells or rites. The god reanimates the dead, runs over the sea, liquidates whole armies by his words, flies across the sky, or turns to be an animal or a star. Thus, religious myths unfold a childlike and fairy tale understanding of the world. However, children and "primitives" have this magical understanding of the world not only when they listen to myths but also in their everyday life, also with regard to their every day understanding of reality and nature. They always have a religious, magical, and animistic understanding of the world. This implies the notion that the understanding of the myths resembles the understanding of reality. Magic and animism shape myths and understanding of reality as well. And this fact is the reason why children and "primitives" have no doubt in seriousness and reliability of myths. They take the stories for granted because they express the same realities, which are believed to exist in physics, nature, everyday life, and real world, too, as already Wilhelm Wundt emphasized in this context (Wundt, 1914: 110). Children and "primitives" take the myths for real because they cannot avoid interpreting reality and world according to mystical and magical schemes.

The evolution of formal-operational thinking, of mature understanding of the world, and of empirical causality eradicates magic, animism, and a fairy tale understanding of reality. The rise of anthropological stages eliminates among modern adolescents the adherence to myths and legends, magic and metamorphosis, magicians and divinities. They attain a sober understanding of reality, nature, and physics. The increase of modern agnosticism and atheism has originated in this rise of anthropological summits, including evolution of formal operations, mature understanding of the world, and grown reasoning abilities. The disbelief in myths has killed the true basis of religion. Without myths we know nothing about the gods; they dying of myths include the death of gods and religious beliefs. The disappearance of the childlike anthropological summit includes the end of myths, of gods, and full religion altogether.

The nature of divinities

Pre-modern populations venerate rivers, trees, rocks, mountains, stars, snakes, cows, lions, trees, humans, and imaginary entities as gods. Thus, objects, plants, animals, humans, and immaterial phenomena are common objects of veneration. More exactly, the whole world is or can be divine in nature. The examination of veneration of nature shows that "primitives" believe in metamorphosis, that is, in mutual transformation of persons and objects. The myths about the creation of world tell them that the first gods turned to stars, rivers, mountains, landscapes, plants, and animals. Thus, nature and cosmos are nothing else than transformed divinities. Additionally, there does not exist any substantial difference between nature and man, cosmos and person, physics and god. Wherever we may look we only see persons, entities that have taken the external

form of plants, animals, rocks, rivers, stars, or mountains. Anthropomorphism is the name for this non-differentiation between world and person, cosmos and human being, physics and god (Eliade, 1974; Frazer, 1994, CW, 17; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2007).

We can explain this kind of understanding the world as an expression of a childlike egocentrism. Originally, only persons (humans or gods) do exist. They transform themselves into all the objects the cosmos consist of. Thus, the whole cosmos is only a manifestation and emanation of persons (humans or gods). Modern sciences regard humans as a part of nature only; childlike egocentrism, conversely, sees the cosmos only as a body part of human being.

Animism and magic are involved phenomena into this belief complex. When all phenomena are only transformed persons, then they can think and act like humans. Stones, rivers, stars, plants, and trees are indeed thinking and acting persons. They know what humans are doing and react to their existence and deeds (Lévy-Bruhl, 1971). The objects act and influence mediated by magic; they control humans or communicate with them by sending magical signals and causing occurrences. Thus, there exists a deep interrelationship between animism, magic, and metamorphosis (the idea, nature may be nothing else than a mass of transformed persons).

Among pre-modern cultures, there are especially two kinds of persons that transformed to cosmos and nature. One big god alone turned to the entire cosmos, as many myths of origin suggest, or the first humans on earth experienced this metamorphosis. Both forms of belief usually exist in the same culture at the same time; they share a parallel existence in cults and rites. Especially the Australian aborigines are famous for their rites, which reproduce annually the creation acts of their ancestors, the first humans on earth. They really believe that the first humans on earth, their first tribesmen, created the cosmos by metamorphosis in illo tempore. The cosmos can only persist its existence when the respect contemporaries in their annual rites reproduce the original rites, which created the cosmos. Thus, the ancestors are the true creators of cosmos and remain its true rulers and maintainers across the times, including the respect present. This form of ancestor worship or totemism is to find in every primitive culture. It is the main basis of cults and rites across primitive cultures. It expresses the assumption that the cosmos is only an emanation of man and that persons alone rule the world (Durkheim, 1965; Eliade, 1974; Frazer, 1994; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2012b, 2007).

This implies that there is no big difference in the divine status of gods and humans. Primitive cultures know high gods such as godfather and olympic gods on the one side and ancestors as gods on the other side. They do not distinguish much between the status of high gods (such as Artemis or Apollo) and ancestor gods. Both primitive cultures and pre-modern civilizations know the distinction between the one god, godfather or god in heaven, and the many olympic or domain gods. Beliefs in the god of sky or heaven, the godfather, such as Zeus or Jahwe, are omnipresent not only in the higher civilizations but also in tribal societies such as those of the Australian aborigines, North American Indians, or Black Africans. All cultures around the world contribute to godfather more or less the same characteristics, those characteristics that also the Christians contribute him, such as omniscience, omnipresence, boundless power, and creation of the cosmos (DeGroot, 1910; Jensen, 1992; Malek, 2003; Müller, 1999; Mbiti, 1970; Oyibo, 2004; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015).

The difference between especially Islam and Christianity on the one side and the religions of the Chinese, Indians, Romans, and tribal societies lies in the role people attribute godfather in their cults. In Islam and Christianity godfather plays a higher role in cults than in most other religions. In most other cultures and religions godfather has to share his role with the olympic gods and with ancestor gods. In fact, in most cultures, including pre-modern China and India, ancestor gods play a more important role than godfather and olympic gods. Especially the tribal societies in Africa or Australia prefer to adore the ancestor gods in their daily activities. Whenever they fail in their support, people remember to address godfather or olympic gods (Middleton, 1999; Müller, 1999; Evans-Pritchard, 1956).

Pre-modern peoples regard especially their dead parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, among the group of their deceased relatives, as ancestor gods. Usually they understand only three to seven dead generations as the decisive group to address. Only specific subgroups use to cultivate longer pedigrees of persons to venerate. The common people think of their dead parents, grandparents, and uncles when they pray to their ancestors. The pre-modern peoples around the world sacrifice and pray to their ancestors in order to receive food, health, protection, good harvests, childbirth, etc., the same things Christians expect from godfather to

receive. The pre-modern peoples imagine that their dead relatives are able to watch and control all the things that happen on earth, that their magic is capable to make every occurrence such as storms, wars, epidemics, births, and deaths. The dead relatives have the same power as godfather has such as omnipresence, omniscience, and creation power. Godfather seems to be a generalization of deceased fathers; in fact, the resemblances between them are apparent. Tribal societies really believe that their ancestors created the entire cosmos and not only their family pedigree. They did not think about the fact that there are many clans and tribes on earth, which could contend to have done the same.

Thus, ancestor worship implies the adoration of humans, deceased humans. The conclusion is compulsory that pre-modern religion mainly not concerns olympic gods, god-father, or imaginary persons, but real persons, namely deceased humans. Religion was predominantly a family or clan religion, where the gods of the family were venerated by its members. Fictional was the belief in their eternal afterlife and in their boundless power in afterworld but the addressed persons were real because they once had stayed on earth as living persons. The deceased ancestors receive their prayers and regular sacrifices according to similar patterns as all other gods, only with the difference that the ancestors receive their veneration and their sacrifices more frequent, often daily and in or around the house of family.

We find these forms of ancestor worship among the Aborigines in Australia, among the Blacks in Africa, and the natives of South America by today. They formed the kernel of the religion of Chinese, Japanese, and Indians till the twentieth century, there in traditional regions partly by today. Ancestor worship was common in Eastern Europe till some generations ago and usual in the whole Greek-Roman antiquity. Even in Christian Europe, we find a today forgotten cult of the dead by the time of enlightenment, however, to a much lower rate than in any other pre-modern civilization. Ancestor worship was thus either the centre or an important part of religion in all pre-modern societies (DeGroot, 1910; Frazer, 1911/1922/1924; Fustel de Coulanges, 1956; Jensen, 1992; Malek, 2003; Müller, 1999; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2011: 147-161, 2009: 261-277; Oyibo, 2004; Evans-Pritchard, 1956; Tylor, 1871; Middleton, 1999).

Sociology of religion or researchers of religious studies never developed a serious theory about that phenomenon. How is it possible that more or less the whole pre-modern humankind believed that their deceased relatives were almighty and omnipresent divinities? Why do the living humans believe that they dead master their life and the entire cosmos? Why do they love their dead and fear them?

To my opinion, developmental psychology respectively my structure-genetic theory programme is the only approach in the history of sciences, which is able to explain the whole phenomenon. First of all, the precondition to the veneration of dead parents and grandparents is their adoration as long as they still stayed on earth alive. Only when younger persons love and fear their still living family members, they are able to love and fear them after their death. Only when thirty-years-old people love and fear their sixty-years-old parents or grandparents, they can adore them as mighty ghosts or divinities after their death.

Ethnography showed this different kind of social relationships within pre-modern societies abundantly. Among the Black Australians, for example, the elder men control the younger ones by magic and authority. The younger men (and women) fear the elderly a lot, especially their superior magical power. Similar relations between succeeding generations are reported about the pre-revolutionary China, the Greek-Roman antiquity, India, and recent Black African tribes (DeGroot, 1910; Fustel de Coulanges, 1956; Staewen, 1990; Durkheim, 1889; Tylor, 1871).

I contend that my structure-genetic theory programme is the first approach, which has delivered a full explanation to the existence of ancestor worship. Only developmental psychology can disclose the roots of this peculiar phenomenon. Pierre Bovet (1951) and Jean Piaget (1975) observed that small children regard their parents as gods, fit by omniscience, magical power, and divine capabilities. Small children see especially their parents, but also other adults, as the masters of the world. Originally, they think they master rain and sunshine, create landscapes and rivers, etc. Bovet identified love and fear as the main feelings of children towards their parents. These feelings are religious in nature, the usual feelings of believers towards their gods. Parents and gods rule and control their children & believers, but also protect them and care for them.

According to Bovet, children around their sixth year of life gain the intellectual maturity to understand some shortcomings of parents and adults. They discover some of their mistakes, errors,

and deficiencies. Thus, they stepwise disenchant their role in world and nature and do not believe any more in their magical power and religious status. The children start to transfer their religious feelings from their parents (and humans) to the god or the gods of the official culture, in Western cultures to the imaginary god of the Bible. Not parents and humans are any more almighty and omniscient but only the invisible godfather. Intellectual growth is the reason for the transfer of adoration from real humans to invisible gods. Not humans but imaginary entities created the world and rule it by magical power. Ten-years-old children in industrial societies have no idea that they had seen their parents as gods only five years before.

Bovet and Piaget emphasized that children are very religious due to their intellectual characteristics such as magic, animism, and artificialism. Children cannot avoid believing in magical influences, which govern the world, in a vivid and responsive nature, in persons, ghosts, and gods, who control children, humans, and all other beings and objects. Children cannot avoid feeling their existence dependent on mighty and omniscient beings, who punish and reward them. The religion of children does not stem from socialisation and culture but from their anthropological stage respectively from their psycho-cognitive structures. Many child psychologists supported the idea that children are religious due to their anthropological stage, and that the religion of the "primitives", the "full religion", is identical with children´s religion. Thus, child psychology delivers the basis to a true understanding of religion (Campbell, 1960; Fetz, 2001; Thun, 1959; Zeininger, 1929; Heiler, 1969).

Magic, animism, and artificialism are unavoidable parts of children´s psychology. Simultaneously, they form the basis of all religions. Thus, children´s anthropological stage is inevitably the foundation of all religion. The anthropological stage of children under six originates the primitive religion with ancestor worship in its centre. The older children, who do not believe any more in the holy status of their parents, deliver the key for the understanding of those forms of religion, which have surpassed ancestor worship as their crucial part.

Pierre Bovet (1951) discovered a second sceptical crisis among younger people living in industrial societies. Adolescents aged 13 or older surmount the picture of god as a concrete person, to whom it is possible to entertain a deep personal communication, and who governs all the incidents happening in the world. God starts to become a distant person, who only rarely influences earthly occurrences. Additionally, a growing part of adolescents disbelieve in religious traditions and doctrines, in god´s nature and existence, and in mystical phenomena altogether. At present, roughly half of the Europeans are agnostic or atheistic. Thus, the surpassing of the strength of religiousness and the growth of agnosticism and atheism belong to the second sceptical crisis Bovet could describe already in 1919 and later on. Subsequent developmental psychologists supported these facts (Thun, 1959; Fetz, 2001).

It is obvious that we have to refer the origination of the second sceptical crisis to the rise of formal operations. This stage is characterized by elimination of magic, animism, and artificialism, the core concepts of religion at all. As PCCP found out, according to the above-mentioned empirical results, pre-modern populations do not develop formal operations, whereas the rise of formal operations has taken place among educated milieus in modernizing nations only. Thus, the rise of the second sceptical crisis belongs to the history of modern populations and modern civilizations. It does not appear among pre-modern populations. The lack of the second sceptical crisis gives the cause to the absence of atheism and agnosticism in pre-modern societies, a fact I detailed above. The prevalence of ancestor worship across all pre-modern societies evidences even the lack of the first sceptical crisis. It is obvious that populations, who do not run through the first sceptical crisis, have no chance to reach the second one. That is the reason why religion in pre-modern cultures is always strong and lively, without any form of atheism and related doubts.

The biggest part even of adult pre-modern populations never surmounts those childlike emotions and attitudes that children by their sixth year of age in modern societies have with regard to their parents. Younger children of industrial societies regard their parents and adults as gods, who master the world; adults of pre-modern societies never surpass this attitude towards their deceased parents and grandparents all their life.

Thus, ancestor worship is a reliable instrument to measure the anthropological stages people have attained. Blooming ancestor worship is only possible when populations are on pre-operational stages, on the childlike anthropological stage. Even the weaker forms of ancestor worship cannot match to anthropological stages of children above their tenth year of life. The stronger the

adoration of dead family members the lower the anthropological level of population. "If we knew about pre-modern populations nothing else than the worship of ancestors, this would be sufficient to prove of their childlike anthropological summit beyond any possible doubt" (Oesterdiekhoff, 2011: 154).

The dying of ancestor worship in the modern world throws a shadow on the dying out of religion at all. When the belief in millions of ancestors has died out, the partly persisting belief in godfather has a dubious future, too. When some main parts of religion have been extinguished, then the rest may also vanish. The adoration of real fathers as true gods among pre-modern societies indicates that also the veneration of the imaginary godfather in his heaven, surrounded by his holy family, is by no means intellectually very flamboyant, but very earthly and childlike. However, this idea of godfather forms the centre of Islam and Christianity. Thus, the veneration of godfather, present in all pre-modern cultures, throws a light on the origins of all kinds of religion in childlike anthropological stages.

Mystical versus empirical-causal understanding of reality

Pre-modern peoples have a divergent understanding of nature and reality, a religious understanding, rooted in animism, magic, and artificialism. This religious understanding of reality is childlike in nature. Physical regularities and occurrences are forms of the appearance of the gods. The daily course of sunlight, moonlight and stars is seen as appearance of gods. The people perceive the change of seasons as appearance of visiting or leaving gods (Frazer, 1994; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2007; Middleton, 1999; Müller, 1999).

Every rainfall and sunshine, every death and childbirth, every sickness and recovery are regarded as actions made by gods, ghosts, or other mystical powers (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Lévy-Bruhl, 1971). The pre-modern peoples do not understand reality as we do, namely as caused by empirical-causal mechanisms, then adding mystical ones as a second layer in a second step, but initially regard nature as caused by mystical forces, without any consideration of empirical-causal mechanisms. For example, the lightning is viewed as direct bodily expression of the angry god, not as a physical phenomenon, only made by god. Therefore, peoples pray to the gods and bring them sacrifices in order to receive rainfall and good harvests, health and lucky circumstances, as if these things would result from mystical forces. The peoples interpret the gods as masters of all occurrences and regularities as well.

Thus, religion is rooted in forms of animistic and magical understanding of the world. Moreover, the religious understanding of the world is the childlike interpretation of the world. Jean Piaget (1975) evidenced that children of modern societies up to their ninth year of life share this perception of the world; he named the belief into the mystical causation of all things happening in the world "artificialism". The belief in magicians, ancestors, divinities, and godfather, forming all occurrences, is identical with children´s artificialism. Modern children lose after their seventh or ninth year (at the latest) the belief into the magical power of humans on nature. The breakdown of ancestor worship, including the belief into the magical power of humans, is thus linked to the decline of artificialism.

After their ninth year, children in modern cultures conceive god as a distant person, not entangled into every single incident, neither in everyday life nor in the natural order of things. Modern adolescents deny the opinion of small children and pre-modern populations, god may shape every single rainfall and storm. Modern adolescents, when they are still religious, set god at the edge of reality, ready to intervene only in special cases and extraordinary circumstances.

Children and pre-modern populations tend to interpret convenient circumstances as divine rewards, inconvenient occurrences as divine punishments. Storms, sickness, famine, death, or war never appear by causality and chance but usually as divine punishments for the sins committed. Conversely, health, wealth, peace, and luck are divine rewards for a pious life, for enough sacrifices and prayers dedicated to the gods. People experience all their life as a sum of rewards or punishments, understand the daily incidents as withdrawal or attribution of god´s love and support. As children conceive their reality as made by their parents, pre-modern populations interpret their world as a sequence of divine decisions, as a result of the decisions of ancestors or godfather. Prayers and sacrifices are therefore prerequisites in order to receive a good life (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; Lévy-Bruhl, 1971; Mbiti, 1970; Middleton, 1999; Müller, 1999).

Pre-modern populations are therefore more religious as the most fanatic fundamentalist of today could ever be, because the latter one has already attained some forms of the empirical-causal understanding of the world.

The belief in immortality of the soul

The belief in an eternal life, in hell and paradise, belongs to the most important parts of religion. Thus, humans are rewarded or punished not only on earth, but also in the afterworld. A stay in hell is a continuation of earthly punishments; a stay in heaven expresses that the person has deserved this extraordinary reward. The belief in immortality of the soul respectively the belief into the non-liquidation of a person after his physical death is to find in every pre-modern culture, in tribal societies and civilizations as well. There is not one "primitive" man in a tribal society who ever maintained the total end of life after someone´s physical death, as ethnography abundantly evidenced. Usually, the people even do not believe in the necessity of the physical end of life but regard every death as some kind of murder. However, a killed person is by no means really dead against the ideas of these peoples because a real death does not exist at all. They often believe that the dead walk to another forest, valley, or whatever region in order to live the same life as before. Thus, they regard the death only as a walk from one place to the next. This understanding of the nature of death is some kind of a belief into immortality. Moreover, this belief expresses an understanding of the afterworld as a mere copy of the known physical world. These people have neither the capacity to understand the possibility of a total annihilation of a person nor the capacity to conceive the afterworld as another form as the already known world of the living. Possibly, these widespread beliefs in tribal cultures are the most simplest ideas about the death to find (Leuba, 1916; Lévy-Bruhl, 1971).

However, even in tribal societies of Black Australia, Africa, or South America we find the belief in hell and paradise. This belief is by no means restricted to Christianity, but to find on all continents, in all world religions, and in tribal societies and civilizations as well. Astonishingly, the ideas of hell and paradise across continents and cultures are very similar to those we know from Christianity (Frazer, 1911/1922/1924; Krauss, 2004; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2011: 159f). The hell is always seen as a dark place with burning fires, where the dead live unhappy or get tortured. The paradise guarantees a luxury life next to god, with good food and many pleasures of all kinds. The dead celebrate there a happy stay. The ideas about hell and paradise always share these concrete particularities. Even the great philosophers of the European Middle Ages describe these places only by applying these concrete pictures. They emphasize that they do not deal with metaphors, but with secure ideas how we have to imagine these places, namely as concrete places, fit by the details mentioned. The philosophers never renounce of these concrete descriptions and never prefer abstractions instead (Dinzelbacher, 1999; Gurjewitsch, 1997). The concrete, blooming, and detailed ideas about form and appearance of hell and paradise stem from those particularities of fantasy and psyche I described above with regard to the characteristics of mythical thinking. Only a childlike psyche can strongly believe that hell and paradise are concrete places with the features mentioned. Thus, both the belief in the imaginary worlds of hell and paradise and in the nature of death as a walk to another valley reflects a total lack of formal operations and related peculiarities of intellectual maturity.

Mircea Eliade (1961: 72f) clearly said that the modern industrial society is the only one in the history of humankind that ever admitted and recognized the possibility of a total annihilation of a person after death. Against any form of scientific thinking, this equation of physical death and total loss of consciousness and personality seems to be so evident that it appears strange to regard the things otherwise. However, Eliade is right in identifying the modern culture as the only one that came to this conclusion. Neither any popular idea among pre-modern cultures nor any ancient philosophy came ever to this sober understanding of the physical death as the modern sciences and mentality.

The belief in immortality of the soul may appear as belief in metamorphosis or in reincarnation or in a walk to another region or in an eternal stay in hell or heaven – in any case is the belief in immortality the usual belief in pre-modern societies. All pre-modern religions, all populations, all cultures, and all "primitive" individuals share these beliefs. They are not able even to think the theory of the physical death typical for the scientific mentality. They never share the modern idea because they cannot conceive it. They do not want to think this inconvenient idea and they are not able to concoct it. Developmental psychology found out that only persons on

operational levels can identify the physical death as a total loss of personality. Children have simply not the intellectual capacity to understand the possibility of the total loss of the stream of consciousness and of a complete annihilation of personality. They presuppose a never-ending existence of their consciousness. They cannot imagine that their thinking could ever stop. Lack of reflectivity, narrowness of mind, and egocentrism are the roots of this inability (Childers, 1971; Loomba, 1970; Oesterdiekhoff, 2015, 2009: 261-265).

The childlike anthropological stage is then the single cause to the belief of immortality. The belief to stay next to god in his heaven for all eternity, unified with one´s relatives, in happiness and peace, is the biggest promise religions contribute to their believers. It seems to me absolutely clear that only a childlike psyche is able both to create and to believe this insurmountable form of a wishful thinking. The idea is too nice to be true.

The evolution of formal operations and the rise of anthropological summit have caused the decline of the belief in immortality in the past generations. Among the currently most advanced societies roughly half of the population denies this belief, the other half adheres to it. Though, the belief in immortality (and in god) among a group of believers, who lives among doubters and atheists, must be weaker and thinner than the blooming belief of those people, who live in a population that is completely religious and has never heard about doubts and scepticism.

3. Conclusion

Sociological, psychological, or anthropological theories of religion, which emphasize the functions of religion, have not the tools available to explain the essence of religion and the main characteristics mentioned. Structure-genetic theory programme respectively developmental psychology matches these tasks completely and can explain the foundations to all these phenomena. The theory presented fit the principle of the sufficient reason because it is able to encompass all relevant features and to launch them into one coherent theoretical network. It is, according to my deep conviction, not one additional theory of religion, it is t h e theory of religion. However, it is in the heritage and strongly follows the main assumptions of Ludwig Feuerbach. The theoretical consequences of this approach regarding some disciplines within social sciences and humanities are far-reaching. Thus, I seriously recommend the careful study of the works central to the entire theory programme.

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