



# Edmund Hardy and the Science of Religion

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Published on 28/09/2023

## Abstract

Edmund Hardy (1852–1904) was a Catholic priest, Indologist, and religious scholar who lived and worked during the period of the *Kulturkampf* struggle between the German Chancellor Bismarck and the Catholic church as well as early German colonialism. The lecture he gave under the title “Einleitung in die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft” (“Introduction to Comparative Religion”) at the German University of Freiburg in 1890 and his appointment as professor for “Vergleichende Religionswissenschaft und altindische Literatur” (“Comparative Religion and Ancient Indian Literature”) in 1894 at the Swiss University of Fribourg were key steps in establishing the discipline of *Religionswissenschaft* (Science of Religion) in the German-speaking world. The essay he wrote in 1898 entitles “Was ist Religionswissenschaft?” (“What is the Science of Religion?”) was perhaps his key statement of the nature of this discipline, which he defines as a strictly empirical *Geisteswissenschaft* and *Kulturwissenschaft* (Arts and Humanities). This essay was the first article to appear in the new journal *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, edited by the secondary school teacher Thomas Achelis (1850–1909). Hardy’s approach was methodologically based on historicism and on the early understanding of psychology according to Wilhelm Dilthey and Wilhelm Wundt. However, as similarly befell Joachim Wach’s empirical approach, Hardy’s methodological work was barely noticed during the long reign of the phenomenology of religion. This observation raises fundamental questions of how the history of our discipline has been constructed and, in particular, of what are considered “classics” in the study of religion.

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## 1. Introduction

When we set about designing the journal *ARGOS*, one of the goals we decided upon was to publish English, German, French, and Italian translations of significant contributions – both recent and historical – to our discipline. As the first key historical text, the decision fell upon Edmund Hardy’s seminal essay “Was ist Religionswissenschaft?” (“What is the Science of Religion?”). Exactly 125 years ago, this article inaugurated the original German-language journal in the Study of Religion, the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*. Over the last year, the initial idea of publishing a translation of the text into English, together with a simple introduction grew into the present special issue with a total of seven contributions. First, it became apparent that existing bibliographies of Hardy’s works were incomplete and partly incorrect and that the reception of

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To quote this article: Krüger, Oliver / Ulrich Vollmer. 2023. “Edmund Hardy and the Science of Religion.” *ARGOS* 2 (2) Special Issue *Hardy* 125, 2–36. DOI: 10.26034/fr.argos.2023.4420.



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Hardy's work had barely been researched, so we compiled a new and annotated bibliography (Krüger 2023a).

Obituaries from the time of Hardy's death contained evidence of the existence of a "Hardy-Foundation", which we then investigated. In an article whose short length belies the amount of labour that it represents, Katharina Wilkens and Oliver Krüger reconstruct the history of this foundation, which was administered by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities from 1905 to 1962, for the promotion of Indological research (Krüger/Wilkens 2023). In two articles written in German, Ulrich Vollmer (2023) first sheds light on Hardy's biography and the early history of the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, while Oliver Krüger (2023b) analyses Hardy's key text itself and its historical and ideological context. For the English editorial of this volume, we have prepared this condensed version of the combined contributions of Vollmer and Krüger, as some details are probably only of interest in the specifically German context.

The translation of Hardy's groundbreaking essay was undertaken by Graeme Currie and Oliver Krüger. Hardy's style proved to be a particular challenge: in the original German text, very clear statements alternate with complicated sentences, some of which are almost incomprehensible. We have translated the German term *Religionswissenschaft* as *Science of Religion*, since Hardy both draws heavily on the work of Max Müller and also advocates a scientific notion of empiricism. In order to avoid confusing the reader, we maintain the term *Science of Religion* throughout the article (instead of modern alternatives such as Religious Studies, Study of Religion(s) etc.).

We have also republished the original German text for students and interested scholars of religion.

## 2. The *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not only were the first chairs in the history of religion established at various European universities, but the earliest journals appeared in the German-speaking world bearing the term *Religionswissenschaft* (Science of Religion) in their titles. In this context, one might spontaneously think of the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, founded by Adolf Harnack and Emil Schürer and first published in 1876. However, it has only borne the sonorous subtitle *Monatsschrift für das gesamte Gebiet der Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* since its April 1939 issue (Vollmer 2021: 419–449). The situation is different with regard to the *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft*. This journal – published by the Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein – first appeared in 1886 and, as the double title suggests, was primarily devoted to practical aspects of religious mission. The contributions under the category of *Religionswissenschaft* originate, at least in the early years, from ambitious missionaries, the topics correspond to the area of operation of the Mission Society, that is, specifically: the new colonies of the German Empire. These contributions are primarily addressed to practising missionaries themselves and, secondarily, to the interested Protestant laypersons who supported these missions.

Against this background, it is certainly not surprising that, in the autumn of 1897, the Bremen grammar school teacher Thomas Achelis approached the publisher Paul Siebeck from Freiburg im Breisgau and suggested that he publish a journal with the title *Internationales Centralblatt für Mythologie und allgemeine Religionswissenschaft* (Hammann 2021: 110).

Thomas Achelis, who was born into a pastor's family in Bremen in 1850, had studied philosophy and classical philology in Göttingen. Earning a doctorate in philosophy in 1873, he entered the teaching profession in 1874 after passing his senior teacher's examination and began to teach at the Altes Gymnasium in Bremen (Schröder 1957: 187–188). In addition to his school activities, he had already published a colourful variety of essays and books. These included an almost 500-page study of *Moderne Völkerkunde (Modern Ethnology)* (1896). This was later to be followed by an introductory work entitled *Sociologie* (1899) and a comparative account of ecstasy in cultural history (1902), as well as a small *Abriß der vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft (Synopsis of Comparative Religion)* (1904) and another volume entitled *Die Religionen der Naturvölker (The Religions of Primitive Peoples)* (1909) (Prüser 1953: 30).

The publisher Paul Siebeck did not seem averse to the project of a journal for the Science of Religion, having already edited a book series dedicated to Theology and the Science of Religion from 1896 (Rühle 1926: 70). However, he had reservations about the proposed title and insisted on avoiding the term mythology and instead emphasising the term for the new discipline. It was thus agreed that the new publication would be called the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*.

On the title pages of the earliest editions, Thomas Achelis is named as the main editor. As a teacher at a Gymnasium, he was, from 1899, allowed to use the title of professor. Under his name – again with their titles and places of activity – we encounter an only slightly changing list of about a dozen names of scholars listed as co-editors (“In Verbindung mit ... herausgegeben”). Arranged alphabetically, the impressive list ranges from the theologians Wilhelm Bousset (New Testament) and Hermann Gunkel (Old Testament), who later belonged to the “History of Religions School”, via the Indologists Edmund Hardy and Alfred Hillebrandt, to the classical philologist Wilhelm Roscher, the German scholar Karl Weinhold, the Egyptologist Alfred Wiedemann and the ancient orientalist Heinrich Zimmern – to name only the most well-known. The documents that have survived, however, do not reveal the concrete form in which this cooperation unfolded. Achelis wrote to the Indo-Germanist Wilhelm Streitberg on 26 March 1899 that Hardy, in particular, was “very deeply interested” in the *Archiv*.<sup>1</sup> Hardy's obvious interest is reflected in the fact that he contributed to each of the early editions. He also made other efforts to assist Achelis, for instance, by establishing contacts to further scholars.<sup>2</sup>

Achelis's plan was to develop a combined approach to the Science of Religion. This was to be primarily based on the study of languages, then on ethnology and folklore, and finally on

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<sup>1</sup> Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Nachlass Wilhelm Streitberg, NL 245/A/Ac/4.

<sup>2</sup> Letter by Thomas Achelis to Wilhelm Streitberg, 26 March 1899. Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Nachlass Wilhelm Streitberg, NL 245/A/Ac/4.

psychology, whereby each individual branch would ultimately lead to a philosophical perspective. For the theoretical foundation of the journal, Achelis referred “to Professor Hardy’s excellent remarks”, which followed his introduction (Achelis 1898: 3).

Although Achelis, as editor of the *Archiv*, still claimed in early 1898 to have a staff of over 300 gentlemen at his disposal,<sup>3</sup> the number of subscribers, who were crucial for its economic success, looked quite different. It had declined from 204 in 1899 to 182 in mid-1902 (Hammann 2021: 110). As a consequence, the publisher Paul Siebeck terminated the contract with Thomas Achelis, but did not claim any further rights relating to the journal. The editor thus had free rein, looked for a new publisher and finally found one in the publishing house B. G. Teubner in Leipzig.

The classical philologist Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908), who taught first in Gießen and then in Heidelberg, was associated with the Teubner publishing house through a series of book projects. His interest in the history of religions is beyond doubt, and, together with his colleague Richard Wünsch, he published the book series “Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten” (*Preliminary Works in the History of Religions*) via the Gießen-based Alfred Töpelmann publishing house. Apparently, the publisher Teubner approached Dieterich and urged him to take over the editorship of the *Archiv*, as can be seen from a letter Dieterich wrote to the classical philologist Georg Wissowa on 2 August 1903.<sup>4</sup>

The title page of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition shows that numerous scholars previously associated with the *Archiv* have been dismissed, including Edmund Hardy. They have been replaced by a group of co-editors, the list of whose names begins with Hermann Usener, a classical philologist from Bonn, who was not only Dieterich’s academic mentor but also his father-in-law. The next name in the list belongs to the Indologist Hermann Oldenberg, who was still teaching in Kiel at the time, and he was followed by the ancient orientalist Carl Bezold from Heidelberg. Konrad Theodor Preuss, then working at the Berlin Museum of Ethnology, completes the group of co-editors. Like Achelis before him, Dieterich also pleads for the cooperation of all disciplines in the Science of Religion (Dieterich 1904: 2–3).

The circumstances surrounding the departure of Achelis – from the 8<sup>th</sup> edition onwards, the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* will be edited solely by Dieterich until his death – are hard to determine in much detail. As early as 19 January 1903, Dieterich had informed his father-in-law, Usener, that he was planning to assume the editorship and make major changes, announcing: “Achelis, with touching naivety, has agreed to all the provisions that allow us to fire him at the slightest dissent.”<sup>5</sup> The above-mentioned letter to Georg Wissowa of 2 August 1903 makes a similar point: “Achelis is all bound by the contract and will – between you and me – have to leave soon.” This was followed by a request to Wissowa to help save the enterprise from theological,

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<sup>3</sup> Postcard by Thomas Achelis to the German scholar Eugen Mogk (Leipzig), 19 January 1898, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Nachlass Eugen Mogk, NL 246/2/1/4/2/A/1.

<sup>4</sup> Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle, Nachlass Georg Wissowa, Yi 20 ID 950.

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Oliver Krüger, as are all subsequent citations from German-language sources. Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, Nachlass H. Usener, S 2102.

philosophical, and ethnological “swamps”.<sup>6</sup> The fact that well-established professors were considered for the co-editorship – with the exception of Preuss – is not surprising, nor is the fact that Hermann Oldenberg was preferred to Edmund Hardy, who was already in poor health by this period.

In the following years, under the editors Richard Wünsch (1908–1915) und Otto Weinreich (1916–1938), the *Archiv* evolved primarily into a forum for studies in the history of religion. From 1923 to 1935, the Stockholm Society for the Study of Religions supported the journal financially and the renowned Greek scholar Martin P. Nilsson served as co-editor alongside Weinreich. The 1930s were marked by an increasing orientation towards a Germanic racial ideology, which finally culminated in the takeover of the journal by the SS organisation *Deutsches Ahnenerbe* and its director, the Indo-Germanist Walther Wüst. The 37<sup>th</sup> edition, the last to appear, was published in 1941. Attempts to revive this ideologically compromised journal – by Kurt Rudolph in the 1950s and Walter Beltz in the 1990s – were not successful (Dürkop 2013: 255).

### 3. Edmund Hardy: a biographical outline

Edmund Hardy was born in Mainz on 9 July 1852. His close ties to his uncle Christoph Moufang, a theologian and later rector of the priests’ seminary of Mainz was probably one of the reasons why he chose a clerical career and was ordained priest in 1875 (Vollmer 2020: 870–875). During his training, he won a prize in 1874 with a paper on the Platonic concept of God. From 1875 to 1883 he worked as chaplain in Heppenheim (Hessia). Here he intensified his philosophical studies, earning a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Heidelberg in 1879. In addition to his philosophical studies, Hardy also acquainted himself with Sanskrit and Pāli at this time and joined the Pali Text Society of London immediately after it was founded. Hardy spent the winter semester of 1883/84 and the summer semester of 1884 at the University of Berlin. His philosophical interests most likely led him to Eduard Zeller, the distinguished expert on the history of Greek philosophy. But he may also have pursued Indology: Albrecht Weber was teaching in Berlin at the time as a full professor and Hermann Oldenberg as an associate professor. Paul Deussen – a *Privatdozent* in Berlin at the time – also offered his classes in Indology within the framework of philosophy.

After returning from Berlin, Hardy undertook his post-doctorate university teaching qualification (*Habilitation*) at the theological faculty of the German University of Freiburg in 1886; his area of expertise was defined as philosophical-historical disciplines of propaedeutic Theology, especially the philosophy of religion and the history of religions. The following year, Hardy was appointed associate professor in Freiburg. Alongside the propaedeutic-philosophical courses, Hardy offered classes on “important questions from the field of general comparative religion” (“allgemeine vergleichende Religionswissenschaft”) from 1887 onwards, lectured on indological topics and established a recurring course entitled “Introduction to Comparative Science of Religion”

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<sup>6</sup> Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle, Nachlass G. Wissowa, Yi 20 ID 950.

(*Einleitung in die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft*) in 1890 (Gottlob 1909/10: 50–52; Vollmer 2014: 675–679).

Political and pedagogical disputes finally led him to resign his professorship in September 1893 and to retire for a short time to the Benedictine monastery of Beuron. After fruitful negotiations, he was then appointed full professor of “Comparative Religion and Ancient Indian Literature” (“Vergleichende Religionswissenschaft und altindische Literatur”) at the young University of Fribourg in Switzerland in the summer semester of 1894. Along with Sanskrit and Pāli, he also taught the general history of religion and special classes on the history of Indian religion and literature. He also lectured on comparative topics such as the concepts of the afterlife and sacrifice.

Hardy’s tenure in Fribourg ended in the spring of 1898 with a scandal that attracted international attention, partly due to the *Kulturkampf* in Switzerland (see below). Hardy then settled in Würzburg in the hope of obtaining a professorship at the university there, but this failed due to the resistance of the Indologist Julius Jolly. In autumn 1902, the possibility of an honorary professorship at the University of Munich opened up. The negotiations had progressed so far that both the subject (Oriental History of Religion and Indian Philology) and the topic of the inaugural lecture (The Pāli Commentaries and their Value for the Knowledge of Indian Antiquity) had been decided; but in the end Hardy turned down the offer.

Isolated and with growing ill health – “My friends are my books.”<sup>7</sup> he wrote to Wilhelm Streitberg – Hardy moved to Bonn in 1903. The change of location did not relieve his health problems as he had hoped. Edmund Hardy died at St. Johannes-Hospital in Bonn on 10 October 1904. In his will, he provided that his fortune be used to establish the Hardy-Foundation, which supported Indological research from 1905 to 1936 (Krüger/Wilkens 2023).

Hardy produced an academic oeuvre of some 30 essays on Indological, philosophical, and theoretical questions, mostly in the German language, but with some written in English. In addition to several general popular titles, he published five monographs in the fields of Indological research on early Buddhism (1890), Vedic Brahmanism (1893), Indian history of religion (1898), Ashoka (1902), and Buddha (1903). The more than 60 reviews of these books indicate that his work found broad resonance, while Hardy was also a busy reviewer himself, publishing some 80 reviews of books in seven languages. All but one of his Indological books went into a second or even third edition (bibliography by Krüger 2023a).

As mentioned above, Hardy was closely associated with the Pali Text Society from its inception, and through it with Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922). The first text-critical edition Hardy produced within this network was Dhammapāla’s commentary on the Peta-Vatthu of the Khuddaka-Nikāya, published in 1894; it was succeeded by the commentary on the Vimāna-Vatthu in 1901. After Richard Morris, the previous editor of the Aṅguttara-Nikāya, died in 1894, Hardy

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from Edmund Hardy to Wilhelm Streitberg, 19 August 1900, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Nachlass Wilhelm Streitberg, NL 245/Ha/Hardy/89.

took his place and edited the remaining parts of the Aṅguttara-Nikāya, which were published in 1896, 1899, and 1900. The Netti-Pakaraṇa and excerpts from Dhammapāla's commentary followed in 1902. Max Walleser then built on Hardy's extensive work and edited Buddhagosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara-Nikāya in five volumes from 1924 onwards. In the last years of his life, Hardy, in close consultation with Rhys Davids, devoted himself primarily to the production of a Pāli dictionary to replace Robert Charles Childers', which had first appeared in 1875. The extensive preliminary work found in his estate was passed on to Rhys Davids (Pischel 1905). It was not until after the First World War that the new dictionary was available as *The Pali Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary* (Rhys Davids/Stede 1921–1925).

#### 4. Between *Kulturkampf* and Colonialism

When Edmund Hardy inaugurated the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 125 years ago with his essay "What is the Science of Religion?" he was at the end of his long and eventful academic career. The development of his theoretical positions can certainly be interpreted as a gradual emancipation from Catholic Theology and the philosophy of religion. The *Kulturkampf* between the Roman Catholic Church and state actors, on the one hand, and the emerging colonialism of the German Empire, on the other, constitute the two major socio-political developments in which Edmund Hardy's academic life is embedded. The rigorous demarcation from Theology in his later work as well as the turn towards orientalist research must be considered in these contexts.

The main focus of the following analysis is the essay "What is the Science of Religion?" itself and its theoretical and historical contexts. The article concludes by considering the reception of Hardy's work and some general remarks on the historiography of the Science of Religion.

##### *Kulturkampf*

The term *Kulturkampf* (culture war) primarily refers to political disputes between the state and the Catholic Church in the German Empire and its predecessor states, in Switzerland and in Italy in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Key features included the formation of nation states, asserting the primacy of civil legislation, and the curtailment of ecclesiastical privileges, possessions and – with regard to the Italian Papal States – territories.

This was a period in which Catholicism needed to find answers to many urgent problems: Under the influence of the communist workers' movement, the emerging urban proletariat threatened to overthrow religious bonds; bourgeois liberalism advocated demands for democratic rights, freedom of religion and conscience, and the abolition of aristocratic and ecclesiastical privileges; eventually, with the historical-critical method and Darwin's theory of evolution, the biblical foundation as an unquestionable guideline of faith began to waver (Schmidt-Volkmar 1959: 11–23).

Catholicism's response to these challenges had two principal manifestations: On one side, Pope Pius IX proved to be a determined fighter against "modernism" in his 31-year pontificate. In 1864 he published the *Syllabus of Errors*, which contains 80 "modern errors": largely the critical



foundations of liberalism, communism, and socialism, as well as any questioning of the truth of Holy Scripture (Pius IX 1864). At the First Vatican Council in 1870, the infallibility of the Pope in all dogmatic decisions was adopted, consolidating this anti-modernist orientation, which was to remain dominant during the pontificate of Pius X (1903–1914). Moreover, the Pope explicitly called for the church to be defended against these modern aberrations. These “ultramontane” supporters of the Pope were opposed on the other side by numerous progressive clerics and laity who advocated an opening of the church and theology (Strötz 2005: 171–210).

The governments of the German states and, after 1871, of the German Reich under Bismarck’s leadership reacted sharply to this “declaration of war” from Rome. Ecclesiastical orders were largely banned, members of these orders were expelled, seminaries were closed or placed under state supervision, church property was confiscated, state benefits were cut off, the clergy were forbidden to make political statements in the pulpit, the appointment of clergy had to be confirmed by the government and only civil marriage was legally recognised. At the peak of the conflict in the mid-1870s, over 1800 priests, bishops and religious were imprisoned in the Reich; hundreds of parishes were vacant; and Bismarck narrowly escaped a Catholic-motivated assassination attempt (Schmidt-Volkmar 1959, 60–146; Strötz 2005: 211–341).

In his early years, Hardy found himself in the eye of this cultural-political hurricane: The Bishop of Mainz, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, openly opposed the laws enacted by Bismarck and was even sentenced to two years’ imprisonment in 1873. His designated successor, Hardy’s uncle Christoph Moufang, was considered one of the leading figures of the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum), which he co-founded and was to represent in the Reichstag for almost 20 years. In 1848, Moufang was also one of the founders of the first German Pius Society in Mainz and the German lay conventions, the *Katholikentag*. He also served as editor of the journal *Der Katholik*, the voice of the ultramontane movement, for many decades. The government of Hesse prevented Moufang’s appointment as a bishop because of his closeness to the Vatican, as he acted as papal advisor in the preparation of the First Vatican Council in 1868 (Brück 1983).

The first half of Edmund Hardy’s life was undoubtedly shaped by his uncle’s ultramontane milieu: His earliest essays – including one on Max Müller’s Science of Religion (Hardy 1882a) – were published in *Der Katholik*. After his appointment as associate professor at the Theological Faculty of the German University of Freiburg in 1887, he increasingly began to make appearances as a public speaker at political gatherings. His sharp attacks on the sovereign Grand Duke of Baden, on progressive Catholicism, and on the Theological Faculty finally lead to his dismissal at his own request in 1893 (Streitberg 1905: 339–341; Raab 1989: 645–646; Vollmer 2014: 677–679).

His second professorship, which he held from 1894 to 1898 at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Swiss University of Fribourg, was also overshadowed by religious-political disputes. Even his appointment to this first proper professorship in *Religionswissenschaft* in the German-speaking world was not without controversy and apparently only became feasible because Hardy, due to his private fortune, could afford to work for only one-sixth of the usual salary (Raab 1989: 650).



As a deeply committed member of the Faculty of Philosophy, Hardy now found himself in opposition to the ultramontane forces. We have to understand here that from the conservative restoration in the 1850s until the mid of 20th century, the unusual Swiss canton of Fribourg considered itself a “Christian republic” with a Catholic education and social system. The founding of the university in 1889 with the strong involvement of the Dominican Order was a consequence of this religious alignment of the entire state (Stadler 1984, 103–107, 614–616; Altermatt 2007). Hardy – now as a member of the Faculty of Philosophy – belonged to a faction of mainly German professors who advocated a strong autonomy of the faculties such as they were used to in German universities. Continuous conflicts with the university’s authoritarian Director of Education and the Dominican professors culminated in 1898 in the resignation of a total of 11 professors (a third of the teaching staff of the young university). Two memoranda by those who resigned fueled the heated debate in the liberal Swiss press and the German media, as the conflict was seen as clear evidence of the continuing presence of ultramontane forces (Raab 1989: 647–655; Altermatt 2009: 167–172; Vollmer 2014: 680–682).



Fig. 1 The eight German professors who initially resigned in 1898: (from left to right) Joseph Sturm, Wilhelm Streitberg, Franz Jostes, Edmund Hardy, Wilhelm Effmann, Josef Loerkens, Leo von Savigny, Adolf Gottlob.

It was in the period of the Fribourg crisis that Hardy began to collaborate with Thomas Achelis to found the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* and to publish his seminal essay “What is the Science of Religion?” (1898). In terms of its historical context, the treatise should therefore be seen as a testimony to the institutional emancipation of the Science of Religion from Theology, which became a necessity for Hardy and his comrades-in-arms in the microcosm of the Swiss University of Fribourg in precisely these years. In this specific context, the defence against ultramontane claims played a significant role.

If we survey Hardy's scholarly work as a whole, then apart from the early, hagiographic work on the French social reformer Frédéric Ozanam (Hardy 1878) and a published festive speech in honour of Pope Leo XIII (Hardy 1888), there are practically no theological treatises among his publications. The exception is the last chapter of his monograph *Der Buddhismus, nach älteren Pāli-Werken dargestellt* (1890), which contains a very nuanced historical comparison of Christianity with Buddhist doctrine, which – as expected – comes out apologetically in favour of the former, as was immediately noted critically in the reviews of the work.

There are no more theological reflections in his later Indological studies. The observation that only three of his more than 80 book reviews are devoted to theological works also suggests that Hardy clearly defined himself as a researcher in the history of religion and of philosophy. In fact, only three years after his ordination to the priesthood by Bishop Ketteler in 1875, Hardy pursued the goal of an academic career not in Theology but within the humanities, completing his philosophical doctorate under the Neo-Kantian philosopher Kuno Fischer from Heidelberg. The choice of Fischer as supervisor is remarkable in itself, since Kant's works were on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* and his ideas were among the errors of modernity declared by Pius IX in the *Syllabus of Errors*. In the heated atmosphere of the *Kulturkampf*, however, Hardy's plans to become professor as part of a philosophical faculty as a Catholic priest were shattered.

By this roundabout means, he ultimately achieved a theological *Habilitation* at the German University of Freiburg (after hastily completing an additional theological doctoral thesis on Gregory of Nyssa that was necessary for this, which was never published). As we saw above, he immediately filled his lectures as an associate professor in Theology there with historical content and introductions to the Science of Religion. At the same time, Hardy was a dedicated Catholic priest and enjoyed both popularity and success during this period in Freiburg, whether in pastoral care, as a confessor, as a preacher, a guest in Catholic educational associations, or as a popular speaker in front of thousands of listeners during political election campaigns or at Catholic conventions. His friend and biographer Adolf Gottlob (1909/10: 56) attributes Hardy's ability to distinguish so fundamentally between his two roles – the one as Catholic priest in search for truth and the other as a scholar relying on the "pure facts" of history – to his scholastic training. Though it should be noted that this sharp division was certainly also the result of Hardy's steady personal development, which was not completed until the 1890s.

Yet it would be a misjudgement to conclude from Hardy's political restraint and scholarly orientation in the last decade of his life that he had turned into a liberal Catholic – even in late letters to one of his closest friends, Wilhelm Streitberg, he is very critical of the latter's marriage to a Protestant woman.<sup>8</sup> We must therefore conclude that the strong demarcation from theological interests in Hardy's *scholarly* work is evidently so clear not in spite of, but precisely because of his second mission in life as a passionate Catholic priest. The crisis of 1893 at the

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<sup>8</sup> Letters to Wilhelm Streitberg, 24 December 1901 and 23 January 1902 (Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Nachlass Wilhelm Streitberg, NL 245/Ha/Hardy/105 and 112).

German University of Freiburg must nevertheless have made him realise that his public role as a professor and his desire to participate in the political debates of his time were incompatible.

## Colonialism

Alongside the *Kulturkampf*, a second historical aspect of the German Empire is important for Hardy's academic orientation – even if this does not surface in such a pronounced form in his work. It is obvious that Hardy's edition of the 15 volume series of books on the history of non-Christian religions produced by the Aschendorff publishing house was inspired by Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, which he greatly admired – Müller had thus created a “monument” to himself “*aere perennius*” (Hardy 1882a: 244–249, 384).<sup>9</sup> In both cases, academic interest reflected – alongside the inevitable curiosity about the unknown – the colonial practice of compiling extensive ethnological collections about colonised peoples and generating popular and scholarly publications about them. This was yet one area where the German Empire was what Helmuth Plessner (1958) called a “belated nation”, striving with an enormous economic, military, and scientific expansionism to surpass its European rivals France, Britain, and Russia. If Hardy's interest in India was certainly in the tradition of German Romanticism and idealism from Schlegel to Schopenhauer and Müller, his elaborations on “primitive peoples” (*Naturvölker*) vs. “cultured peoples” (*Kulturvölker*) and on evolutionist models of development are undoubtedly also indebted to the perception of Germany's recently acquired colonies (Hardy 1898: 18, 32–34).

In 1884, when Hardy began his studies of Indian languages in Berlin under Paul Deussen and others, the German Empire attained its much-vaunted “place in the sun” in the form of its first colonies and “protectorates” in Western Africa. East Africa, German New Guinea, numerous island chains in the South Seas (Samoa, Marianas, Caroline Islands, etc.) followed from 1885, as well as three (enforced) lease and concession territories in China from 1895 onwards (Pogge von Strandmann 2009). Accordingly, Wilhelm Schneider's work on the religions of the African peoples and Rudolf Dvořák's study of Chinese religions appear in Hardy's book series in 1891, 1895, and 1903. Even the establishment of the Hardy-Foundation for the promotion of Indological research, as stipulated in his will, is a practice of colonial knowledge production in the tradition of this Romantic fascination with the “wisdom of the East” (Krüger/Wilkens 2023).

As Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1994) points out in his studies on “social imperialism”, the *Kulturkampf*, the persecution of socialists, and colonialism are historically interrelated: After the unification of the German Empire in 1871 and the autocratic consolidation of political power under Bismarck, the colonisation of African peoples that began in the 1880s acted as an outlet to defuse the serious social and political tensions within the Empire. Racist nationalism was the ideological basis of the new state for a broad segment of the German society: externally towards the “primitive peoples” of the colonies, internally towards the legally emancipated Jews and Slavic migrants.

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<sup>9</sup> Borrowed from Horace's phrase *exegi monumentum aere perennius* (“I have erected a monument to myself, more permanent than ore”, Odes III, 30).

It is within this historical framework that we must situate Hardy and the early Science of Religion in Germany as well as the “Völkerkunde” of this era. In this endeavour, the academic question of the nature and origin of religion is always entangled with civilisational and racist theories of development in a colonial constellation of power that favoured the exploitation, missionising, and – as in the case of the Herero and Nama – the annihilation of the new subjects. It is suggested that Hardy’s move towards Orientalist research, after his phase of personal involvement in the culture war, should be interpreted as a reflection of these broader social developments. Of greater interest for our purposes, though, are his stances within the historical debate on the evolution of religion, one of the important themes of his essay to be discussed.

## 5. What is the Science of Religion? (1898)

Many valuable contributions to Edmund Hardy’s position in the history of science can be credited to Ulrich Vollmer’s previous works (2009; 2014; 2020). But a focused discussion of the essay “Was ist Religionswissenschaft?”, newly edited and translated here, is not yet available. The only work on this essay is a brief introduction and summary by Udo Tworuschka (2011: 51–54; 2015: 77). In the section that follows, we will look at the specific themes and problems of Hardy’s treatise and relate them to the theoretical constellations of his time.

### The essay in the context of Hardy’s works

Hardy discovered the Science of Religion in the late 1870s in the works of Max Müller, which he apparently became acquainted with while studying philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. Besides an early discussion on the relationship of psychology to philosophy (1879), two extended treatises on the history of the discipline (1882a; 1901) and two writings that outline the aims and methods of the study of religion (1887a; 1898) are relevant in this context.

The 27-year-old Hardy published his first academic treatise “Psychologie ohne Metaphysik?” (“Psychology without Metaphysics?”) as early as 1879 in *Der Katholik*. Here, he adopts the predictable positions of a young priest in the *Kulturkampf* when he calls for the subordination of the sciences to the “superior supernatural science” that “will show the right way” and rejects the primacy of empirical methods (Hardy 1879: 460–477).

In his most extensive contribution to the Science of Religion, a text some 117 pages in length, which also appeared in *The Katholik* in 1882 under the title “Max Müller und die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft” (“Max Müller and the Comparative Science of Religion”), a significant shift in Hardy’s notion of empiricism can already be detected – but the relation to theology remains ambivalent. He calls for a profound study of languages in order to avoid prejudice, misinterpretation, and bias while exploring other religions (1882a: 254, 358–361, 387–390): “The comparative Science of Religion [...] is concerned exclusively

with the historical phenomena of religion and achieves its goal when it collects, critically examines, orders or classifies the facts relating to them.”<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Hardy links this fact-based research with a Christian claim to absoluteness, because the “irrefutable facts” prove that only Christianity is rooted “in a divine origin” (1882a: 252). He further declares that a devout Catholic can not only be impartial to the same extent as other researchers (1882a: 583), but that a Christian theologian is even best qualified for the Science of Religion – as long as he acknowledges the historical findings (1882a: 582–585). For – and here he anticipates Rudolf Otto’s famous dictum – understanding and experiencing one’s own religion is the most important condition for understanding others: “In our own religion we learn what religion is; and no more than man could understand what longing, pity, love, anger, desire are, if he had not already experienced these affects in himself, could he understand what prayer, sacrifice, faith are [...].”<sup>11</sup>

Five years later, in his inaugural lecture as an associate professor at the German University of Freiburg, published in 1887, the situation was reversed. It is no longer the scholar of religion who (also) has to be a theologian or practising Christian, but:

“ The theologian of modern times [...] must [...] have become accustomed to thinking not only religiously and with piety, but also scientifically in matters of religion, and if I am not mistaken, one is most compatible with the other: enthusiastic devotion with sober, objective examination.”<sup>12</sup>

In this passage it is clear that Hardy no longer intends to place the Science of Religion as a pillar of Theology – quite the opposite: Despite the delicate situation of a theological *Habilitation* lecture, he performs a “solemn declaration of independence of the young Science of Religion” (1887a: 8):

“ In my view, the Science of Religion as such is not intended to provide ammunition for defence or attack. It should neither engage in apologetics nor polemics [...]. It is only concerned with the historical relationship of the religions that has emerged, according to which each of them has its own right.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft [...] beschäftigt sich ausschließlich mit den historischen Erscheinungen der Religion und erfüllt ihren Zweck, wenn sie darauf bezügliche Thatsachen sammelt, kritisch prüft, ordnet oder classificirt.” (1882a: 271).

<sup>11</sup> “In der eigenen Religion lernen wir, was Religion ist; und ebenso wenig, als der Mensch verstehen könnte, was Sehnsucht, Mitleid, Liebe, Zorn, Begierde ist, wenn er diese Affecte nicht schon an sich selber erfahren, könnte er verstehen, was Gebet, Opfer, Glaube ist [...].” (1882a:584).

<sup>12</sup> “Der Theologe der Neuzeit [...] muss [...] sich daran gewöhnt haben, in Sachen der Religion nicht bloss religiös und pietätvoll, sondern auch wissenschaftlich zu denken, und täusche ich mich nicht, so verträgt sich eines mit dem anderen aufs beste: begeisterte Verehrung mit nüchterner, sachlicher Prüfung.” (1887a: 37-38).

<sup>13</sup> “In meinen Augen hat die Religionswissenschaft als solche nicht die Bestimmung, Munition zur Vertheidigung oder zum Angriff zu liefern. Sie soll weder Apologetik noch Polemik treiben [...]. Sie bekümmert sich nur um das in die Erscheinung tretende geschichtliche Verhältnis der Religionen, demzufolge eine jede derselben ihre Berechtigung hat.” (Hardy 1887a: 34).

We can only assume that this change of mind is connected with his stay at the University of Berlin in 1884, where he chose the Indian history of religion as his true field of research. This process of re-orientation took place during Hardy's failed attempt to achieve his *Habilitation* at a philosophical faculty and his acknowledgement that he would have to achieve this qualification *nolens volens* in Catholic Theology.

Two decades after his first theoretical work, Hardy published "What is the Science of Religion?" a "Contribution to the Methodology of the History of Religions" – as the subtitle specifies (1898). Theology and its relationship to the Science of Religion are no longer a topic at all – theology is not even mentioned. This essay marks Hardy's departure from theological questions, which was caused in part by his passionate defence against theological influence at the Swiss University of Fribourg.

Hardy's final major contribution to the young discipline made him its first historiographer: In 1901 he published "Zur Geschichte der vergleichenden Religionsforschung" ("On the History of Comparative Research in Religion"), again in the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*. In roughly 100 pages, he draws on Greek antiquity to establish a chronology of the study of "alien" religions (Hardy 1901: 45). It is notable that Hardy not only considers relevant Christian theologians such as Augustine, Alain de Lille, and Thomas Aquinas, but also mentions Arab, Chinese, and Indian authors (1901: 58–60). In the second section of this essay, Hardy deals with the philological exploration of the historical sources and compiles a very detailed bibliographical overview of current research and standard works – from the Hittites, to ancient America, to the Finns (1901: 97–135). He clearly rejects normative questions in the Science of Religion and also cites the dangers of a contempt for other religions driven by "national arrogance and zeal for faith", which "not rarely in history resulted in the conversion or extermination of the other adherents" (Hardy 1901: 45–48).

### Structure and subjects

Hardy's essay is divided into three sections of equal size. The first describes the tasks of the Science of Religion in relation to other disciplines (2023: 37–43; 1898: 9–21); the second then presents the general methodological foundations (2023: 43–48; 1898: 21–31) and the third addresses the particular problems belonging to the history of religion and comparative studies of religion (2023: 48–54; 1898: 31–42). Reading the essay is made difficult by the fact that the author never makes this structure explicit, while all the aspects mentioned in each chapter occasionally appear again in the others. The most important topics Hardy deals with, alongside many minor problems in the history of religion, are the determination of the Science of Religion in its relation to the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*), to the study of culture (*Kulturwissenschaften*), and to Psychology, as well as the methodological understanding of historiography and comparison.

## The Science of Religion as Psychology and *Geisteswissenschaft*

What catches the eye of today's readers is the apparently very progressive designation of the Science of Religion as Study of Culture, which is usually only associated with the changes in the discipline from the 1980s onwards and in the German context in particular with the work of Burkhard Gladigow (2005). For Hardy's contemporaries, his positioning of the discipline within the *Geisteswissenschaften* (*humanities*) was certainly more meaningful, as this term had already been established for some years. In German, the term is composed of *Geist* for mind and *Wissenschaft* for science.

In principle, Hardy understands all sciences that deal with "mental processes as such" as well as the "products of the mind" to comprise the *Geisteswissenschaften* (literally the *sciences of the mind*). For him, Psychology is a general *Geisteswissenschaft*, which examines all "mental processes" irrespective of a particular subject, while the Science of Religion belongs to the special *Geisteswissenschaften* (2023: 42–43; 1898: 19–21): "It is one of the empirical humanities and may be counted among the historical disciplines." (2023: 42; 1898: 19) In his essay on Müller from 1882, he even refers to it as the "crown of all humanities" (1882a: 270).

What seems irritating here are the frequent references to Psychology, whose goals and methods are nowhere elaborated on (2023: 42, 53; 1898: 17–20, 35, 42). For Hardy, in any case, it is certain, that the Science of Religion "[...] whether it proceeds purely historically or concerns itself with the contrary side, the observation of characteristics and states of affairs, whether it moves along historical or ethnological paths, is dependent on the services of Psychology [...]" (2023: 42; 1898: 18–19).

Despite the laudatory mention of Müller as the originator of the Science of Religion (2023: 37 FN 1; 1898: 9 FN 1), it is not the Oxford philologist who serves as Hardy's methodological reference. This is not surprising, since Hardy's lavish tributes to Müller – "none of those now living can compare with him" (1891: 313) – usually refer to Müller as a linguist and initiator of the *Sacred Books of the East* series. In terms of methodology, Hardy later even states laconically that Müller only left behind "general phrases" and the methodological canon "as a desideratum, not as a fact" (1901: 201).

So where does Hardy's clear classification of the Science of Religion as one of the *Geisteswissenschaften* originate? Under the impact of great technological and scientific progress at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which went hand in hand with the institutionalisation of academic disciplines, the question arose for the other fields of research as well. What is the common methodological basis and subject of – what we are used to calling – *humanities*, in our time? In the German-speaking world, this period was shaped above all by the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and the two Neo-Kantian philosophers Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). All three were also linked through their academic biographies: Dilthey and Windelband studied under Kuno Fischer in Heidelberg, as did Hardy, and it was Fischer that enabled Hardy to obtain a philosophical doctorate. Windelband succeeded Fischer



in Heidelberg in 1903 and Rickert followed his teacher Windelband to the same philosophical chair in turn in 1915.

The first step towards providing an epistemological foundation for all social and historical sciences was achieved by Dilthey in his extensive *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (1883) / *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1988). According to Dilthey, these are based on a common empirical understanding of methods and an evolving, historical-critical epistemology. The difference to the natural sciences consists in the separation of the human mind from nature, which it perceives as the outside world only indirectly through its senses. According to Dilthey, the mental world of human consciousness – thinking, feeling, and willing – is directly comprehensible to the human being “from within”. These mental realities of the individual merge together in social interaction to form a history that is more easily accessible to the “*Geisteswissenschaft*” than is the world of nature (1883: XV–XIX, 1–49; 1988: 71–150).

In his early work, it is psychology that he considers should empirically grasp this totality, thus also overcoming the persistent antagonism between matter and spirit (1883: 6–10; 1988: 77–88). Ultimately, Dilthey failed in his attempt to establish a “total psychology”. However, this failure gave rise, in his later work, to the hermeneutic method of understanding as the foundation of the humanities, which was particularly significant for Weberian sociology (Groethuysen 1965: V–VIII; Gephart 1998: 71–78).

It is clear that Dilthey’s early ideas were the inspiration for Hardy’s methodological approach to the Science of Religion. Not only does this help to explain the anchoring in a very particular understanding of psychology, but also Hardy’s strong plea for an inclusion of “the physical” or “nature” in the Science of Religion: “Only in this way can we understand how a smaller or larger number of individuals can influence each other and agree in their actions, intentions and ideas.” (Hardy 2023: 48; 1898: 30)

### The history of religion as the empirical study of culture

Without even touching on the problems of theology and the philosophy of religion, Hardy emphatically defines the methodological approach of the Science of Religion:

“ Now, first of all, as far as the foundations are concerned, on which the construction of our science rises, its empirical character should absolutely be determined. Everything that is not an empirical fact, and as such is not either handed down or deduced from facts, does not exist for us and consequently cannot provide any colour for the painting that we have to draw of religious life in general and in particular. (Hardy 2023: 38; 1898: 11)

Like a methodological mantra, this focus on empirical “facts” recurs more than 50 times through Hardy’s seminal essay. Although he had already mentioned their importance for the history of religion in earlier publications (Hardy 1882a: 271; Hardy 1887a: 9, 24, 27), it was not until 1898 that he placed such a clear emphasis on the empirical facts. According to Hardy,

a general theory of religion could be generated only by induction based on empirical findings; here he refers to John Stuart Mill (1898: 29, 40). No trace is left of the quasi-mystical idea of understanding described above (1882a: 584). From his explicit reference to “empirical psychology” as a means of exploring the “real factors of the history of religion” (1887a: 24) and the fervent reverence Hardy had for Wilhelm Wundt, as we are informed by Streitberg (1904/05: 439), it is evident that this strong focus on “empirical facts” is probably due to the influence of this eminent psychologist and philosopher.

From 1875, Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) taught mainly medical psychology and *Völkerpsychologie* (“psychology of peoples”, a kind of ethnopsychology) at the University of Leipzig within the disciplinary framework of philosophy. Thanks to his introduction of exact measurements and experimental procedures, he is regarded as the founder of experimental psychology. Similar to Dilthey – he was also concerned with the interdependencies between physis and psyche, between the “natural world” (*Naturwelt*) and the “mental world” (*Geisteswelt*). Psychology is, according to Wundt, not a natural science, but the most general *Geisteswissenschaft* to be based on empirical facts and, moreover, is the indispensable basis for every other *Geisteswissenschaft* (Wundt 1893: 20).

While Wundt was one of the most productive and widely acclaimed thinkers in the German-speaking world up to the turn of the century, the zenith of his popularity had already passed by the time he published his *Völkerpsychologie* between 1900 and 1920. In this context, he acknowledged Hardy’s studies in Buddhism (Wundt 1909: 464, 487) and recommended him in 1907 (!) alongside Wilhelm Streitberg and other “philosophers” for a chair in Königsberg.<sup>14</sup> By adopting this understanding of “religion as the expression of a class of empirical facts” (2023: 42; 1898: 18–19), Hardy also rejects any attempt to simply determine “the essence” of religion:

“ Nothing, therefore, would be more harmful to our understanding than to establish a preliminary abstraction by means of a definition justified by no more than a cursory glance at the historical religions and one or two psychological commonplaces. (Hardy 2023: 42; 1898: 20)

For Hardy, the Science of Religion is not only an empirical *Geisteswissenschaft*, but also a form of Study of Culture (*Kulturwissenschaft*) that contributes to the general history of culture (2023: 41; 1898: 17), without, however, elaborating on these terms.<sup>15</sup> It is reasonable to assume that Hardy was influenced by Heinrich Rickert on this point. The latter had inaugurated the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft* (Society for the Study of Culture) in German Freiburg, on 3 November 1898 with his crucial lecture “Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft” (“The

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from Wilhelm Wundt to Ernst Meumann, 29 January 1907 (Universitätsarchiv Leipzig, Nachlass Wilhelm Wundt, Signatur NA Wundt/III/701-800/732a/211-214).

<sup>15</sup> We have chosen to translate the German term *Kulturwissenschaft* as Study of Culture in order to avoid confusion with Cultural Studies as it has developed in the English-speaking world following Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall.

Study of Culture and the Natural Sciences”). With this work, he left a deep mark on the concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* in the German academic discourse. Although the paper was published not earlier than in 1899 and Hardy is not listed as member of this society, a personal contact between the two scholars is conceivable.<sup>16</sup> Both lived in Freiburg from 1889 to 1893, Hardy always had a great interest in philosophy, and both belonged to the circle of students of Kuno Fischer and Wilhelm Windelband.

In many passages in his major essay, Hardy emphasises that the historical facts must not be considered in isolation, but always in the original social and historical contexts of their time (2023: 38–42, 43–45, 53; 1898: 12, 15, 24–25, 32, 38–39): “First and foremost, religion is never found in isolation. It is connected, above all, with the entire culture of its people.” (2023: 40; 1898: 15) If the historical relationships of the individual facts to each other are neglected, there is a danger of slipping into a purely “descriptive hierography” of the kind proposed by Eugène Goblet d’Alviella (1887), especially if religion is derived in a simplified way from the “character of a people” (2023: 38–40, 52; Hardy 1898: 12–16, 39).

This also helps to explain Hardy’s clear rejection of all nomological theories of history, which assume an evolution of human society and religion determined by social laws: In contrast to the realm of nature, similarities and correspondences of individual phenomena cannot be traced back to deterministic laws, but can only describe certain probabilities: “Where mental forces are at work, however, we can only indicate the direction in which they should act according to the motives known to us, but not that they must act in this particular direction, if they act at all.” (2023: 50; 1898: 34) Hardy thus dismisses many popular ideas of his time that sought to derive the specific and super-historical character of a religion or a people from the climate, soil conditions, or presumed peculiarities of a people, since history shows that the development of a religion and the contact with other religions is subject to constant change. Simple correlations and definitions of the essence of religion would therefore be impossible: “The form of a religion changes.” (2023: 50; 1898: 34–35)

In this context, he also rejects evolutionist constructions of the “empty and nebulous image” of a primordial religion that, according to the general doctrine of progress, continues to perfect itself over various stages of development (2023: 45–47; 1898: 25–29). It follows from this that, apart from the problem of written sources, there is no reason for a general separation of “civilized peoples” (*Kulturvölker*) from “primitive peoples” (*Naturvölker*), and both equally deserve the attention of the Science of Religion (2023: 41; 1898: 18). In his early (1882) essay on Müller, it is clear whom Hardy was specifically opposing. Eduard von Hartmann’s work *Das religiöse Bewusstsein der Menschheit im Stufengang seiner Entwicklung* (*The Religious Consciousness of Mankind in the Stages of Its Development*) (1882) was much discussed at the time (Hardy 1882a: 578–582). But Hardy – just like Dilthey –

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<sup>16</sup> Protocols of the meetings of the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft* 1898-1900 (Universitätsarchiv der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i.Br., Bestand C41, Kulturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, Signatur C0041-1).

repudiates both this kind of poorly defined stage model as well as simple theories of the origins of religion, such as the assumption of an age of fetishism as advocated by the French philosopher Auguste Comte in his law of three stages (Hardy 1882a: 475–478; Hardy 1879: 457, 471–474).

All of his crucial positions reflect Hardy's proximity to key debates of historical scholarship that were being carried out at the time: The rejection of universal, nomological theories of development and especially of the idea of progress, the aversion to unchangeable determinations of the "character" of a religion or a people, the emphasis on the particularity of historical constellations in their contemporary historical context, as well as the search for the objective facts while dismissing all normative claims of historiography – all these are the basic elements of historicism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In contrast to the natural sciences and the political theories of progress of Marxism and the French Enlightenment, according to Dilthey (1883/1988; 1910), Windelband (1894), and Rickert (1899), the *Geisteswissenschaften* or *Kulturwissenschaften* focus on the "uniqueness" of the historical situation. Instead of the nation, the importance of the individual as a historical subject in particular constellations is now emphasised (Dilthey 1883: 35; Hoeschen/Schneider 2002: 61–65; Gephart 1998: 71–90).

In view of this theoretical framework, it is consistent that Hardy identifies two groups of "historical facts" for the Science of Religion derived through historical-critical studies of texts (2023: 43–44; 1898: 22–24): on the one hand, the "religious life and its manifestations", consisting of rituals, customs, dogmas, and ideas, and, on the other hand, "creative figures, their teachings and works" (2023: 48; 1898: 30–31). Hardy's theoretical orientation towards historicism corresponds to his lifelong personal interests: his entire oeuvre is interspersed with biographical studies of individuals marked by tragedy, genius, and religious devotion, beginning with Frédéric Ozanam (1878), continuing via Hamlet (1881), Max Müller (1882a), Heinrich Schliemann (1882b), Pope Leo XIII (1888), and Ashoka (1902), and concluding with Buddha (1903).

In addition to these general considerations, it is important to bear in mind that Hardy, as a deeply religious Catholic, had to find a position on the question of evolution that was appropriate to factual history, but did not contradict Catholic doctrine. The Enlightenment idea that truth and reason (Christian as well as human) would only unfold in a long historical process is one of the errors defined by Pope Pius IX in 1864 in the *Syllabus of Errors*. Books by Catholic theologians who welcomed Darwin's theory of evolution were placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Raffaello Caverni in 1878 and John Auguste Zahm in 1896). Hardy resolves this tension between fact and doctrine by conceiving of religion as something that is already complete from the beginning – like "an organic germ" that then only has to unfold in history (Hardy 1882a: 580).

## Order and comparison

For Hardy, the history of religion begins with the temporal and spatial order of all historical evidence (2023: 48; 1898: 31). The method of comparison and the psychological analysis surpass the limits of historiography, so that it is legitimate to introduce the Science of Religion for this purpose – as the totality of all studies “on religions and on religion” (2023: 41; 1898: 17, 21).

On three levels, the broad method of comparison is useful for the young discipline: On the smallest scale the comparison of different historical phenomena, practices and ideas in a limited regional area serves to clarify their temporal interdependence or to assign them to various persons and social groups. This is connected with the explanations of causal relationships between individual phenomena and ideas (2023: 46–49; 1898: 26–33).

The second level of comparison, according to Hardy’s design, focuses on the historical relations of different peoples and religions, whether this is a mutual influence over long periods of time or a common origin of certain ideas or practices. However, Hardy urges caution in making far-reaching speculations, for example, about a primordial religion on the basis of scanty evidence. In any case, all historians should be aware of the constructive character of their work, since historical abstraction can never be identical with reality in the lives of individuals (2023: 44–47; 1898: 25–29).

The third case in which Hardy considers the method of comparison to be applicable concerns religions that have no historical connection to each other. Parallels in the objects of faiths and cults, and in the ideas and customs of unrelated religions could prove helpful in understanding the nature of religion (2023: 40–41, 50–51, 49–50; 1898: 16–17, 27–28, 33–34). Moreover, the historical-comparative method is superior to its “twin sister”, comparative anthropology. And because the latter has to rely to a much greater extent on interpretations (due to the lack of texts), it is also more prone to error. Hardy therefore passes harsh judgement on proposed anthropological laws of development, in particular: “Comparative anthropology provides us with striking proof of the principle that the wish is the father of the thought, in its often starkly contradictory ways of understanding religious facts.” (2023: 53; 1898: 40–41)

At the end of his methodological treatise, Hardy reaffirms that both the Science of Religion and the Anthropology of Religion can only be completed by unbiased psychological interpretation (2023: 53; 1898: 41–42). In the final passage, Hardy refers to two metaphors from Aristotle to illustrate once again the relationship between philology and psychology: Whilst the former is the “tool of all tools” (ὄργανον ὀργάνων), thus enabling the use of all tools in the first place, psychology acts like light, so that colours that are merely virtual (τὰ δυνάμει ὄντα χρώματα) become real colours (ἐνεργεῖα χρώματα).

## 6. Reception

After reviewing numerous introductory works on the Science of Religion, encyclopaedias, and treatises on the history of our discipline, we can draw no other conclusion than that Edmund Hardy and his work are largely forgotten today. With the exception of two early editions of the encyclopaedia *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, biographical entries on Hardy's life and work are found only in Catholic reference works (Krüger 2023a: 70–71). This lacuna is particularly striking given that the seminal *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* lists over 40 representatives of the early Science of Religion – from Johann Jakob Bachofen to the Grimm brothers to Wilhelm Wundt (Kohl et al. 1988).

Hardy is rarely mentioned in contributions to the history of the discipline (Krech 2002: 104, 121; Kohl 1988: 251; Hjelde 1994: 138), and even less attention is paid to his specific methodological contribution (Rudolph 1992: 12–13; Waardenburg 1974: 97–98; Uehlinger 2010: 7). The articles on “Religionsgeschichte” by Martin Rade (1913) and Gerardus van der Leeuw (1930) still list his important essays (Hardy 1898; 1901), but his methodological intervention is not discussed anywhere. This also applies to the compendium *Comparative Religion* by Louis H. Jordan (1905: 454–455), and even Henri Pinard de la Boullaye's extensive survey of methodology, *L'étude comparée des religions*, contains only one, critical mention (1925: 42). Alongside the introductions and studies by Tworuschka and Vollmer mentioned above, there remain five essays that illuminate Hardy's eventful biography in the context of Catholic Theology (Krüger 2023a: 71–72).

The condensed German-language accounts of our disciplinary history that deal with the period of its establishment in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries generally leap in time from Müller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion* of 1873, considered as the academic founding event, to Rudolf Otto (1924) and Joachim Wach (1924). This occlusion of a half century of theoretical and methodological advances in the Science of Religion proper is remarkable given the sprawling “prehistory” some of these articles contain (e.g. Klimkeit 1998). Even among the more nuanced historical surveys, it is only Tworuschka (2015: 77) who acknowledges Hardy's methodological contribution from 1898. But equally, other central authors of this period, such as the Dutch historians of religion Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1899) and Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1905), are rarely mentioned. It is not without a certain irony of fate that it was Hardy who shaped this very narrative with his first detailed history of the Science of Religion (1901). The long ancestral gallery, which Hardy starts in Greek antiquity and continues through medieval theology and the age of (philological) discoveries, culminates in the figure of Max Müller as the godfather of the emerging discipline. It is also this essay that has had the greatest resonance among Hardy's works (e.g. Pinard de la Boullaye 1922: XV; Kohl 1988: 219; Kippenberg 1997: 308; Rudolph 2004: 403).

## Searching for traces in the dark

There is no question that Hardy's methodological contribution to the Science of Religion, especially his advocacy of its establishment on an empirical basis, was an original and essential contribution to the development of the discipline. In order to understand the mechanisms that led to the widespread marginalisation of his work in today's accounts, it is necessary to take a closer look at the early reception of his ideas.

Alas, wherever one looks, the same sober findings emerge: Apart from one exception, which we will discuss later, there is no consideration of Hardy's methodological approach in the period up to 1945. The fact that almost no one in the remaining history of the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* refers to Hardy's methodological approach may be due to the fact that the journal ceased to publish theoretical papers in the following decades (focussing instead purely on historical case studies). It took until 1936 that authors such as Friedrich Pfister, Herbert Grabert, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, and Walther Wüst wrote editorials defining the goal of a then racist Science of Religion. In this context, the *SS-Oberführer* and last editor of the *Archiv*, Wüst – who was also twice the recipient of grants from the Hardy-Foundation – explicitly distinguishes his work from Hardy's positions (Krüger/Wilkens 2023: 125–127, 138–139).

Even the first editor of the journal, Thomas Achelis, avoids any reference to Hardy in his 1904 *Abriss der vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft (Outline of Comparative Religion)*. Nor is he acknowledged in any of the German authoritative introductions and textbooks of the Science of Religion by Cornelis Petrus Tiele, Pierre Chantepie de la Saussaye, Georg Wobbermin, Heinrich Frick, Gustav Mensching, or Karl Beth. Hardy does not appear either in major works on the phenomenology of religion or in those of the History of Religions School, which would be appropriate in view of his positions.

The one exception to the rule (of ignoring him entirely) is Joachim Wach (1898–1955) in his 1924 *Habilitationschrift* entitled *Religionswissenschaft. Prolegomena zu ihrer wissenschaftstheoretischen Grundlegung*, which he completed at the faculty of Philosophy of the University of Leipzig. From 1929, he was employed there as an associate professor, before completing a theological doctorate on the core question of hermeneutics, *Das Verstehen (Understanding)*, at the university of Heidelberg in 1930. He emigrated to the United States in 1935 after being expelled from the university of Leipzig due to the antisemitic laws installed by the National Socialist regime. Here he taught first at Brown University and from 1945 as a full professor at the influential Chicago Divinity School. After his sudden death in 1955, Mircea Eliade succeeded him as professor (Krüger 2003).

Wach's *Habilitationschrift* seeks to provide an overview of all previous methodological approaches to the Science of Religion. Hardy, with his two theoretical works (1887a; 1898) and his history of the discipline (1901), is one of the most frequent methodological references, along with Dilthey, Hegel, the sociologist of religion Ernst Troeltsch, and



(critically) the philosopher Heinrich Scholz. In Wach's treatise, Hardy's works represent the most important original source in the Science of Religion in the strict sense. In all essential questions, Wach refers explicitly and often affirmatively or approvingly to Hardy. He thus counts the Science of Religion without question among the empirical "*Geisteswissenschaften*", whose methodological foundations it shares (Wach 1924: 21–22; Wach 1988: 19). He agrees with Dilthey that the next essential stage is to elaborate a systematic methodology in each individual discipline (Wach 1924: IV, 2–4, 15–19; 1988: 4, 7–18).

What Wach avoids, in contrast to Hardy, is any association with the Study of Culture (*Kulturwissenschaft*). At first glance, this may seem surprising, as Wach also studied with Rickert in Heidelberg, whose establishment of the *Kulturwissenschaften* (1899) was already widely acclaimed at the time. Rickert, however, had meanwhile come to oppose Dilthey's philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*) and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, so Wach declared Rickert's approach a general failure (Wach 1924: 3 FN 1, 126).

Much like Hardy, Wach emphasises the "empirical character" of the discipline throughout his text, even explicitly adopting Hardy's wording in this regard (Wach 1924: IV, 69, 77, 129, **176**; Wach 1988: 4, 55, 82, **130**; Hardy 2023: 38; Hardy 1898: 11). Like Hardy in his early writing (1887a: 34) Wach also feels compelled to clearly distinguish the Science of Religion from theological appropriation and philosophical speculation, but rejects the question of the essence of religion as an obstacle to the strictly empirical study of religions (Wach 1924: 1–22, 130; 1988: 7–22, 95).

“ To summarize: the task of the history of religions is to study and to describe the empirical religions. It is a descriptive and interpretive discipline, not a normative one. When it has studied concrete religious phenomena historically and systematically, it has fulfilled its task. (Wach 1988: 49; 1924: 68)

What Hardy still subsumed *in globo* under the concept of comparison on three levels, Wach now consistently divides into the two branches of historical and systematic Science of Religion. He voices similar caution to Hardy with regard to the comparison of religions and urges that the phenomena be understood according to their "specific meaning" in an "objective interpretation" (*objektive Deutungsanalyse*) (1924: 179–183).

“ It does so in two ways: "lengthwise in time" (diachronically) and in "cross-sections" (synchronically), that is, according to their development (*Entwicklung*) and according to their being (*Sein*). Thus, the task of the general history of religions divides into a historical and a systematic investigation of religions. (Wach 1988: 19; 1924: 21)

In place of Hardy's mere ordering and comparing, Wach considers Dilthey's hermeneutics of "understanding" individual phenomena as the goal and task of the Science of Religion (1924: 3–30, 70–75; 1988: 3–25; 50–52).

A final parallel between the two thinkers can be detected in their engagement with psychology, to which Wach also attributes a significant role in the Science of Religion. He dedicates a separate chapter to “psychologism in the Science of Religion”, dealing with the topic in great detail and highly critically. He bemoans the narrow focus of this current, represented above all by William James, who emphasises only the subjective experience of the individual. Instead, the “religious life and experience of the individual soul” must be considered in connection with its objectification in society and the objective forms of religion (1924: 192–205; 1988: 141–146).

The fact that Wach’s noble ideal of an empirical Science of Religion did not have a future was due to his rapid theoretical shift towards the phenomenology of religion. Already in the major article on *Religionswissenschaft* he wrote for the encyclopaedia *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1930), the empirical approach is now joined by the claim, inspired by Otto, to “[...] truly understand alien religious forms through a vital contemplation. A testimony of a religious character wants to be understood as such. A certain sense of religious feeling and thinking will have to be required in those who deal with these testimonies.”<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, here and in all of Wach’s later works, Hardy’s contribution to methodology is no longer mentioned.

Contrary to the views of Rudolph (2007: 645) and Flasche (1997: 292–293), Wach’s phenomenological turn took place long before his emigration and is by no means to be seen as a consequence of his exile. Wach himself appears not to have attached much importance to his earlier appeal for a strictly empirical Science of Religion: It was not until 1988 that the English translation of his *Habilitationsschrift* was published by his student Joseph M. Kitagawa (Rudolph 1992, 365; Flasche 1997: 298–302). Today, the “phenomenological Wach”, who accentuated religious experience even more in his later work, is considered in the same breath as William James and Mircea Eliade as a formative figure in the American Science of Religion tradition.

The strictly empirical path that Hardy and the early Wach initially pursued thus turned out to be a dead end. The phenomenology of religion, which dominated for the next 80 years, rejected this “single-minded empirical Science of Religion”, which was perceived as positivist, since it would – in the words of Tiele – “[...] only determine and order the facts, while it is incapable of explaining them” (Tiele 1899: 16; see also Chantepie de la Saussaye 1905: 4–5).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Die “[...] fremden religiösen Formen wirklich zu verstehen [...]. Ein Zeugnis religiöser Natur will als solches verstanden werden. Ein gewisser Sinn für rel. Fühlen und Denken wird bei dem voraussetzen sein, der sich mit diesen Zeugnissen beschäftigt.” (Wach 1930: 1956).

<sup>18</sup> The dislike was mutual, as Hardy’s review of *Tieles Kompendium der Religionsgeschichte* (Hardy 1887b) and his comments on Chantepie de la Saussaye and Tiele in his survey of the history of the discipline indicate (Hardy 1901: 223).

## 7. Farewell to the classics

From the 1880s onwards, Edmund Hardy drew up a methodological basis for a comparative Science of Religion in the framework of *Kulturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*, one that was strongly aligned with the theoretical positions of historicism and an integrative understanding of early psychology according to Dilthey and Wundt. In his rejection of normative claims of theology and philosophy of religion, Hardy argued for a history of religion that always considers the facts in their historical context. From this perspective, religion is always subject to historical change.

According to Hardy, the use of comparative methods serves primarily to clarify historical developments and religious diversity within a religious tradition, as well as kinship relations between different traditions. It can, with reservations, also be a useful tool in comparing unrelated religions, in order to explore general “characteristics” of religion. But the historical and theoretical conclusions must be drawn inductively, on the basis of empirical findings – a hasty definition of religion or the mere hypothetical construction of a “primordial religion” is therefore out of the question. On this issue, too, Hardy, from his historicist (and Catholic) point of view, opposes the dominant theories and laws of religious development and objects to a hierarchisation of religions measured by their progress in civilisation.

As “modern” as all these positions may sound, the diligent failure to follow the methodological principles formulated by Hardy led more or less directly to the phenomenology of religion, which gave priority to defining the universal essence of religion over historical process and contexts. Hardy’s positions are diametrically opposed to phenomenology, as is clear from the striking summary by Gerardus van der Leeuw: “Thus phenomenology knows nothing of any historical ‘development’ of religion [...]” (van der Leeuw 1963: 688; see also Pettazzoni 1954; Krüger 2022: 74–78).

The rifts in the methodological edifice of phenomenology became visible from the 1950s onwards and burst open fully at the IAHR congress in Marburg in 1960. For no more than a brief moment, Hardy’s approach was thrust into the limelight of this academic debate. In 1954, the Italian historian of religion Raffaele Pettazzoni, president of the IAHR, opened the first issue of the IAHR journal *Numen*, which he had edited and founded, with a reference to Hardy’s article of 1898. The reference is not arbitrary, for in this editorial, and even more clearly in his subsequent treatise “Il metodo comparativo” (1959), Pettazzoni voices his growing criticism of the division of the Science of Religion into history and phenomenology, and hence into an empirical and a speculative branch (1954: 3–6). He believes that there is only one way to escape from the empirical shallows of the phenomenological method: “Le seul moyen d’échapper à ces dangers consiste à s’en rapporter toujours à l’histoire.” (1954: 5)

This debate is echoed in the German anthology *Selbstverständnis und Wesen der Religionswissenschaft* (1974) edited by Günter Lanczkowski, which, in addition to

contemporary contributions, also printed Hardy's essay on methods in its entirety. But for the editor, who allies himself with phenomenology – the article only serves as a testimony to a “strictly historical-philological” epoch long since overcome (Lanczkowski 1974: VII).

Lanczkowski's collection of texts (1974) as well as Waardenburg's two-volume anthology *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion* (1973; 1974) mark a new phase in the institutional and theoretical consolidation of the Science of Religion, which now sought to establish a canon of legitimate “classic” thinkers and texts. We are used to applying Eric Hobsbawm's (2007) broad analytical concept of *invented tradition* to historical constructions of religious communities – though there is nothing to stop us from also applying his approach to the history of science: The monuments and memorials would then be the “classic” thinkers and “canonical” texts of a discipline.

Such disciplinary constructions probably follow “objective” accounts of historical facts even less than it is the case for general historiography. They are likely to rather serve a legitimising function for particular schools or theories with their selections, emphases, and evaluations: “[...] as soon as documentary evidence is distorted, ignored or allocated disproportionate importance in order to fit in better with a particular moral that serves a social function, history becomes ideological.” (Kragh 1994: 108) The history of science is thus always a normative practice of power, i.e. the exclusion and inclusion of selected approaches, which in many cases is intended to underpin precisely the academic orientation of the author (Kragh 1994: 108–119).

Viewed in this way, the extensive accounts of the discipline's origins in antiquity and the Middle Ages given by Hardy (1901) and Pinard de la Boullaye (1922) certainly aim, firstly, to place the young discipline on a broad historical foundation and, secondly, to inscribe it in a long tradition of European philosophy and metaphysics (it is no coincidence that it was two Catholic clerics who took this path). Both share an admiration for Max Müller, to whom separate chapters are devoted, and an obvious dislike for Chantepie de la Saussaye, who is mentioned briefly only once.

The persistence of this narrative in more recent works (Kippenberg 1997: 60–79; Michaels 1997) highlights the effectiveness of this founding myth, which is rooted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century's fascination with the figure of the scientific genius – like Müller (Köhne 2014). These accounts seem inappropriate if we acknowledge, for example, that it was not Müller but Chantepie de la Saussaye who was to crucially influence the subject for many decades with his *Manual of the Science of Religion*, which was published in three languages and four editions from 1887 to 1925, especially since he sketched the first contours of a “phenomenology of religions” as early as 1887.

With his popular collection of classics, Axel Michaels (1997) developed a new strategy to define the fundamentals of the Science of Religion, which has been expanding rapidly since the 1990s. For the post-phenomenological era, he presents a selection of 23 illustrious scholars, incorporating numerous “classics” beyond the Science of Religion taken strictly, such as Max

Weber, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and C.G. Jung.<sup>19</sup> The only six scholars in his selection who (probably) saw themselves as scholars of religion all belong to the circle of phenomenology (Nathan Söderblom, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Friedrich Heiler, Joachim Wach, Mircea Eliade). This finding is certainly no coincidence either, since the editor was committed to a revival of phenomenology in this period and – failing to recognise the tautological pitfalls of his approach – asks: “After all, what remains of the Science of Religions without phenomenology of religion? Were not all genuine scholars of religion phenomenologists of religion?”<sup>20</sup>

Of course, one can react to these biased selections as Udo Tworuschka did (2011) by producing an alternative anthology of “classics”. Yet as valuable as these collections are for novice students (and publishers’ sales), their insight into the historical developments, academic structures and theoretical or methodological debates of a discipline is of limited use. The shortcomings of these canonisations of “classic” figures and texts are obvious, as they tend to suggest a homogeneity within a discipline where, in fact, the most heated debates have taken place.

There have been a few, rare attempts to address these deficits by outlining not only the institutional establishment of the discipline in the form of academic chairs, but also the contemporary and broader social and scholarly contexts of the early Science of Religion (Kippenberg 1997; Tworuschka 2015). Beyond the numerous studies of individual scholars or important German universities such as Marburg, Leipzig, Bonn, and Tübingen, the lacunae and even the uneasy historical aspects of the discipline are now coming into focus, such as Catholic networks (Vollmer 2009) or fascism (Junginger 2007; Geisshuesler 2021).

The history of academic disciplines is not of marginal importance, a kind of *l'art pour l'art* suitable only for festschrift essays, but, seen as part of basic sociological questions around the power and structures of knowledge, it possesses an important epistemological dimension. Social and political factors not only determine the questions we ask, the paradigms that guide us, and the answers that emerge from them – the appointment of professors and the funding of research also depend on these factors, as our small study on the Hardy-Foundation illustrates (Krüger/Wilkens 2023). The historical construction of “classics” – canonical texts as well as exclusive lists of great “men of science” – raises questions regarding contemporary theoretical and methodological perspectives that favour one narrative of the discipline and downplay others, as we observed for the example of Axel Michael’s attempt to revive phenomenology.

*Kulturkampf*, colonialism, and the experience of the First World War were formative forces in the early decades of the Science of Religion, which in the case of Hardy led to an inductive methodology and an orientation towards historicism and psychology. The reception of his – and Wach’s – empirical approaches was thwarted by phenomenology, whose leading minds, such as

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<sup>19</sup> Waardenburg (1973) and Karl-Heinz Kohl et al. (1988) also included a large number of representatives of neighbouring disciplines, but these were still labelled as those from ethnology, sociology, etc.

<sup>20</sup> “Freilich, was bleibt von der Religionswissenschaft ohne Religionsphänomenologie? Waren nicht alle genuinen Religionswissenschaftler Religionsphänomenologen?” (Michaels 2001: 491).

Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Heiler, and Nathan Söderblom, linked academic approaches based on non-historical universalism with their political visions of Christian ecumenism and the brotherhood of humankind.

Finally, if we consider the biographies of Edmund Hardy and Joachim Wach, the somewhat strange conclusion emerges that the early “family history” of the Science of Religion was essentially shaped by two “inverse siblings”: in the case of Hardy, a fierce, ultramontane priest who turned into an advocate of strict historical empiricism; in the case of Wach, a thinker who quickly overcame his early advocacy of precisely this empiricism and evolved into a Protestant and phenomenological “theologian of religions” (Flasche 1997: 298).

They shared the fate of having their methodological contributions long neglected. It is precisely this initial lack of reception, the rediscovery, and the elevation to the status of “classic” in the case of Wach, that allows us to look at the complex relations of different schools, individual actors, and competing methodologies of the discipline in the past and present. The history of the Science of Religion thus proves once again to be as ambiguous, twisted, and inconsistent as the world of religions itself. It is not without a certain irony that we conclude this essay with a variant of a motto by Max Müller, our supposed founding hero, in favour of a multi-faceted historiography of the discipline: *Who knows one classic, knows none.*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Müller’s motto – borrowed from Goethe – referred to the diversity of religions: “He who knows one, knows none.” (Müller 1873: 13).

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## Image source

Fig. 1 Kantonal- und Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg, Cabinet des manuscrits, Dépôt Müller-Büchi.

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## Acknowledgement

For corrections and comments, we would like to thank Prof. Ansgar Jödicke (Fribourg, Switzerland).