

A SHORT PORTRAIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'POLITICAL SCIENCE OF RELIGION' IN THE GERMAN- SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The Political Science of Religion is a very young subdiscipline of Political Science in German-speaking countries. It is not even currently fully institutionally established, although a remarkable acceleration of the development in this direction is noticeable. The following pages should give a brief overview of the development of the 'Political Science of Religion' in German-speaking countries.

The German term "Religionspolitologie" (Political Science of Religion) was first coined in 1994 in a paper¹ by Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch. In 1996, he founded the "Institut für Religionspolitologie" (Institute for Political Science of Religion) in Duisburg, Germany. The institute focuses on the following research fields: religion and political order, political religions and theologies (e.g. National Socialism), religion and violence (e.g. xenophobia, racism, anti-semitism), the history of ideas and the mentality of the Political Science of Religion, as well as an interculturally comparative Political Science of Religion. The guiding principle of the Institute for Political Science of Religion is "Wer Religion verkennt, erkennt Politik nicht" (Who misunderstands religion does not understand politics).² The institute offers regularly courses to students on the Campus Duisburg since the summer semester 2004.³ Claus-E. Bärsch shaped the aims and contents of "Religionspolitologie" in a paper in 2005.⁴ He had one more lectureship at

¹ Bärsch, Claus-E.: Volk und Nation. Das Problem kollektiver Identität unter der Perspektive der Religionspolitologie. In: Gebhardt, Jürgen (ed.): Demokratie, Verfassung und Nation: Die politische Integration moderner Gesellschaften. Baden-Baden 1994, p. 52-71.

² Institut für Religionspolitologie: Forschung, <http://www.religionspolitologie.de> (accessed April 16, 2008).

³ Institut für Religionspolitologie: Lehre, <http://www.religionspolitologie.de> (accessed April 28, 2008).

⁴ Bärsch, Claus-E.: Zweck und Inhalte der Religionspolitologie. In: Bärsch, Claus-E. / Berghoff, Peter / Sonnenschmidt, Reinhard (eds.): „Wer Religion verkennt, erkennt Politik nicht“ Perspektiven der Religionspolitologie. Würzburg 2005, p. 10-50.

the University of Innsbruck in the winter semester 2006/2007⁵ after his retirement in the winter semester 2005/2006.

“Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte”, an appendix to the weekly “Das Parlament”, dedicated the issue of October 21st 2002 to the topic „Religion and politics“.⁶ The Special Number 33 (2003) of the “Politische Vierteljahresschrift” was dedicated to political scientific research in the field of ‘Politics and Religion’. Different papers thematise over 616 pages the role of religious political parties, political-religious conflicts, the influence of religion on public policy, religion as a factor in global politics etc.⁷ In the framework of a “Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung”-founded project with the aim of contributing to the debate about Germany in international relations, Thomas Meyer wrote a paper about ‘Religion and Politics’ in 2007. Significantly, it starts with the sentence: ‘Religions have returned worldwide into politics’.⁸

The German Association for Political Science (DVPW) maintains a research group ‘Politics and Religion’. It emerged in 2002 from an ad hoc group with the same name founded in 2000. Speakers of the group are Mathias Hildebrandt from the Political Science Department at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Antonius Liedhegener from the Political Science Department at the University of Jena and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner from the Political Science Department at the Free University Berlin.⁹ The research group defines itself as a political scientific, but also inter-disciplinary dialogue forum which aims to lead the question of the relation between religion and politics to a fundamental appointment and to establish this topic stronger in the political scientific research. Main research fields of the group are: secularisation in modern western societies, religion and politics in intercultural comparison, political-religious conflicts in national and international politics.¹⁰ With the summer semester 2005, the ‘Program on Religion and Politics’ was established at the head of Rolf Schieder and Nils Ole Oermannat at the Humboldt University in Berlin. The program is host of the “Berliner Reden zur Religionspolitik” and it concentrates on the following main areas of research: ‘Religion, Politics and Education’ and ‘Religious dimensions of modern politics’ (e.g. Research

⁵ Universität Innsbruck: Lehrveranstaltungen Wintersemester 2006/2007, http://orawww.uibk.ac.at/public_prod/owa/ifuonline_lv.details?sem_id_in=06W&lvnr_id_in=402221 (accessed April 9, 2008).

⁶ Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte B 42-43/2002, <http://www.bpb.de/files/8YK9SM.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2008).

⁷ Minkenberg, Michael / Willems, Ulrich (eds.): Politik und Religion. Wiesbaden 2003.

⁸ Meyer, Thomas: Religion und Politik. Ein neu belebtes Spannungsfeld. Berlin 2007, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/04446.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2008), p. 2.

⁹ Deutsche Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft: Arbeitskreis „Politik und Religion“, <http://www.dvpw.de/48.html> (accessed April 16, 2008).

¹⁰ Hildebrandt, Mathias / Brocker, Manfred (eds.): Unfriedliche Religionen? Das politische Gewalt- und Konfliktpotenzial von Religionen. Wiesbaden 2005, p. 7. Further major publications of the research group are: Hildebrandt, Mathias / Brocker, Manfred / Behr, Hartmut (eds.): Säkularisierung und Resakralisierung in westlichen Gesellschaften. Ideengeschichtliche und theoretische Perspektiven. Wiesbaden 2001 and Brocker, Manfred / Behr, Hartmut / Hildebrandt, Mathias (eds.): Religion - Staat - Politik: zur Rolle der Religion in der nationalen und internationalen Politik. Wiesbaden 2003.

on Fundamentalism; Religion, State and Nation; Transatlantic Paradoxes in Religion and Politics).¹¹ In 2007, the Department of Political Science at Münster University established 'Politics and Religion' as a core theme in the framework of the cluster of excellence 'Religion and Politics in Pre-Modern and Modern Cultures'.¹² Since then, Ulrich Willems holds a substitute professorship in this field there.¹³

On September 25th 2007, the National Research Programme 58 'Religions in Switzerland: Religions, the State, and Society' started. The Department of Political Science of Bern University is involved in module 6 of the programme entitled 'Religion, media and politics'.¹⁴

The Political Science of Religion became more and more present in Austrian Universities, too. In the following, only a few examples should be listed. Herbert Gottweis from the Department of Political Science of Vienna University in the Winter semester 2003/2004 offered a research seminar with the title 'Ethics, religion and politics'.¹⁵ In the winter semester 2006/07, Ulrike Davis-Sulikowski held a lecture entitled 'Politics, religion and conceptions of power and violence' at the Department of Social- and Cultural Anthropology of Vienna University. In the winter semester 2007/2008, a seminar with the title 'Religion and Politics: an intercultural dialogue?' was led by Barbara Wolf-Wicha (Department of Political Science and Sociology) and Dietmar Winkler (Department of Bible and Church History) at the University of Salzburg. During the seminar, value was attached to the question of the axis between politics and religion.¹⁶ Sieglinde Rosenberger heads a seminar about 'Religion and politics in Europe' in the summer semester 2008 at the Department of Political Science of Vienna University.¹⁷

The re-emergence of religion on the political scene challenged the widely spread secularisation theoretical presumption of the decline of religion in Germany, too. Political Scientists in the German-speaking countries began to consecrate themselves to 'the return of religion into politics' in the 1990ies. Research groups and programs

¹¹ Program on Religion and Politics, <http://www.religion-and-politics.de> (accessed April 17, 2008).

¹² WWU Münster: Religion and Politics in Pre-Modern and Modern Cultures, http://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/wwu/exini/extracts_religion_and_politics_final.pdf (accessed April 19, 2008)

¹³ Institut für Politikwissenschaft der WWU Münster: Politik und Religion, <http://www.ifpol.de/pore> (accessed April 9, 2008).

¹⁴ Portrait of the National Research Programme NRP 58, <http://www.pnr58.ch/files/downloads/ACF5317.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2008), p. 80 and 86.

¹⁵ Lehrveranstaltungs-Homepage von Univ. Prof. Dr. Herbert Gottweis: Ethik, Religion und Politik, http://www.univie.ac.at/politikwissenschaft/herbert.gottweis/WiSe2003_ethik/ethik_ws03.htm (accessed April 9, 2008).

¹⁶ Universität Salzburg: Lehrveranstaltung – Detailansicht, https://online.uni-salzburg.at/plus_online/lv.detail?clvnr=175924 (accessed April 9, 2008).

¹⁷ Universität Wien: Vorlesungsverzeichnis Sommersemester 2008, http://online.univie.ac.at/vlvz?lvnr=210161&semester=S2008&include=kurzkommentar,voraussetzung,literatur,methoden&exclude=inf_link (accessed April 9, 2008).

were established and one could observe an increase of scientific publications on 'Religion and Politics' in German. The research area 'Religion and Politics' grew in the departments of Political Science in the German-speaking countries, the subdiscipline 'Political Science of Religion' however has still some way to go to its complete institutionalisation.

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