

Multiple Religious Belonging

Open Access

Ursula Baatz*

Territory, Relationship or Path: A Brief Survey in Metaphors of “Double Religious Belonging”

DOI 10.1515/opth-2017-0011

Received December 14, 2016; accepted December 30, 2016

Abstract: The discussion about “double” or “multiple belonging” does not take into account that there is no mandatory definition of religion. This paper explores some of the metaphors involved. “Belonging to a religion” implies a passive attitude and can signify “belonging to a mental or physical territory”; or it can signify “belonging to a group or person”, i.e. it signifies a relationship. “Religion” is a Western concept, which cannot be translated e.g. into Sanskrit. One of the important Indian metaphors used is “path” or “way”, which transports instead of a passive “belonging” the active notion of “owning it”. “Belonging” could be seen in a context of identity politics, whereas “way” or “path” refers to the human need of spiritual transformation.

Keywords: religion, spirituality, Buddhism, Christianity, Zen Buddhism, interreligious dialogue, intra-religious dialogue, identity politics, transformation, territory, relationship

1 Introduction

The notion of “double religious belonging” is a rather recent phenomenon. Its first occurrence as a topic of practical relevance and scholarly research was at the conference of “Voies de l’Orient” in 1999 in Brussels,¹ and since then it has received attention mainly in academic theology. Despite the fact that in the following spring of 2000 the Vatican document “Dominus Jesus” attempted to thwart any such undertakings, it has continued to be a topic of much discussion.

The Indian Jesuit Michael Amaladoss, who presented these thoughts as keynote lecture at the conference in Brussels 1999, clearly differentiates “double belonging” from situations in which one claims “to use the symbols of different religious traditions, freely moving from one to the other” or where people turn to ritualists or places of worship for healing... and rituals and symbols are used insofar as they ‘work’.” Amaladoss insists that “double belonging” is not a choice but a call. It occurs “when people really feel called to be loyal to two religious traditions.”²

The arguments surrounding “double religious belonging” are controversial: e.g. Catherine Cornille³ and James L. Frederick⁴ doubt the validity of double belonging, Peter Phan observes “postmodern syncretism”⁵

¹ Gira and Scheuer, *Vivre de plusieurs religions*.

² Amaladoss, “Double Religious Belonging and Liminality”, 307.

³ Cornille, “Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging”.

⁴ Fredericks, “Review: Many Mansions?”

⁵ Phan, “Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church”, 497.

*Corresponding author: Ursula Baatz, University of Vienna, Austria; E-mail: ursula.baatz@univie.ac.at

while others⁶ decide in favor of double belonging. A prominent example is Paul Knitter, who decided to take refuge with a Tibetan Buddhist master and yet to remain a Catholic Christian.⁷ In addition, the changes in the religious situation in Europe suggest “religious flexibility”⁸ as a new trait in Western societies, but common in Asian societies. Some argue, that religions are different perspectives at the same ultimate reality,⁹ others say that they are different and complementary aspects of the same ultimate reality,¹⁰ and so on.

However, it seems that so far the theological and sociological discussion of “belonging to more than one religion” seems to suffer from a fundamental shortcoming, namely that there is no mandatory definition of religion, i.e. a definition of religion accepted at least by all those involved in the academic study of religions. Already in 1912 there were more than fifty definitions of religion, and today there are even more.¹¹ Thus the meaning of “double belonging” remains changing according to each author’s implicit definition of religion.

In most cases “belonging to a religion” means to share a physical, conceptual, metaphorical and emotional realm with others. The physical realm may be the place of worship, but also the specific territory with which the religion is connected, such as “the West,” “Japan,” “the land of the ancestors” or even mythological places like the Tibetan Buddhist “Kingdom of Shambhala”. Since culture is always connected to territory, religions may also be categorized culturally: the Islam of Southeast Asia, North American Christianity, etc.

Thus, worship and dogmatic views in a Greek Orthodox Church differ from those of a British Quaker Community, different forms of Tibetan Buddhism differ from each other, and all of these together differ from Japanese Zen Buddhism etc. These are just a few examples to demonstrate that the idea of “double religious belonging” needs to take into consideration a vast range of differentiations – conceptual, metaphorical, emotional etc.

Supposedly it is much easier for a North American Christian to “double belong” to any form of Buddhism than for a member of the Greek Orthodox Church to “double belong” to the Russian Orthodox Church, and so on. It seems that in most discussions about “double belonging” this complexity remains unspoken, which is a pity.

The following reflections try to sort out some metaphorical tendencies of the current debate. In the first two paragraphs I use Ninian Smart’s definition of religion, which includes conceptual, experiential and material dimensions,¹² but does not employ “transcendence”. In these paragraphs I attempt to carve out at least two meanings of “belonging”: it could refer e.g. to “belonging to an entity” or “belonging to a territory” – which could be also a mental, i.e. metaphorical territory.¹³ This I call “religion (a)”. Yet one can also belong to a family, a culture, etc. and in these cases “belonging” is defined more in terms of being socially and/or emotionally connected to a person or a group of people. I call this “religion (b)”. Since “belonging” itself is a metaphor, in a third paragraph at the end I shall turn to another metaphor for religion, the “path” – this is called “religion (c)” – and question whether the notion of “path” – which is more in line with the so-called Eastern traditions – is perhaps more suited to describe the situation of people loyal to two religious traditions than the metaphors of religion (a) and (b).¹⁴

6 Schmidt-Leukel (ed.), *Multiple religiöse Identität*.

7 Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could not be a Christian*.

8 Kalsky, “Religiöse Flexibilität. Eine Antwort auf kulturelle und religiöse Vielfalt”.

9 Hick and Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*; Schmidt-Leukel, *Gott ohne Grenzen*.

10 Dupuis, *Towards a Christian theology of religious pluralism*.

11 Kippenberg and von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, 38.

12 Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred*. He distinguishes seven dimensions of religion: a ritual, a narrative and mythic, an experiential and emotional, a social and institutional, an ethical and legal, a doctrinal and philosophical, and a material dimension.

13 For the influence of metaphors on cognitive processes see: Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphors we live by”.

14 After finishing the paper I found that the sociologist Linda Woodhead distinguishes in a somewhat similar way between five different types of religion, i.e. religion as culture, as identity, as relationship, as practice and as power. Woodhead, “Five types of religion”.

2 “To belong to a (quasi-) territorial entity”

Religious affiliation appears to be connected to the metaphor of territory and spatial differentiation, which in turn is connected to the identity of state and government.

It begins with the very notion of “religion”, which is first found¹⁵ in Livius as “*prava religio*,” i.e. “rotten religion,” referring to the scandals in 186 B.C. around a Bacchanalic cult seen by the authorities of the Roman Republic as dangerous to the state. “*Religio*” is a juridical term and defines a cult in conformity with the requirements of state.¹⁶ Three hundred years later the Christian Lactantius connected “*religio*” to “*ligare, re-ligare*,” “binding back” to the divine source of life, thus impinging upon the word an experiential and personal hue. Thus “religion” from the very beginning implicates boundaries to that which is “right” and “wrong” in reference to a governmental entity.

The metaphorical power of the image is reinforced by the apocalyptic scenario of the Apocalypse of John. The “chosen ones” with the seal of the Kingdom on their forehead inhabit the “new heaven and earth” of the eschatological new world. The others, followers of the “beast” and the Antichrist, as well as death and the underworld are placed into the “sea of flames”. The history of European art is full of elaborations on these eschatological topoi and thus translates them into mundane environments. Jehovah’s Witnesses but also Evangelical Christians emphasize and naturalize the metaphor of territory. One of the most recent examples was the evangelical sequel “Left Behind”¹⁷, which in which the faithful were subjects to “the rapture” and taken away from earth into a heavenly space, from the territory of “the wicked” to the territory of “the pure.”

The reference to religion, i.e. the Christian Church, as a metaphoric and territorial entity is strongly connected to the Augustinian notions of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* and their different interpretations. The origin of these *civitates* is located “beyond time,” since for Augustine the two *civitates* began as two angelic nations following the fall of Lucifer and his companions, which relates to the eschatological scenario of the Apocalypse.

The narrative of the two “states” found different transpositions into history. From a “theocratic” view, the “Abendland” and the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” appeared to be a mundane realization of the *civitas Dei*,¹⁸ opposed to the pagan nations belonging to the *civitas terrena*. The opposing “idealistic” definition located the *civitas Dei* either in the (Catholic) Church as a historical entity or in the *communio sanctorum* as an eschatological entity. The juridical implications of an identification of the *civitas Dei* with the empirical church was considerable. In fact only recently Benedict XVI gave orders to extradite Catholic priests reported as abusers for legal persecution by the government, an order which to this day is not followed by all church institutions. Obviously priests were seen as citizens belonging to the *civitas* of the church and not to their respective states.

Other territorial and religious demarcation lines of belonging emerged after 1492 when the Catholic Kings required Jews (and Moslems in 1502) to either convert or leave Spain and with the Inquisition tacitly fostering an identification of belonging to the Catholic Church and being Spanish.¹⁹ With the Reformation and Counterreformation catechism and hymnbook became markers of different theological perspectives between Protestants and Catholics, as after 1555 the theological difference had already resulted in a territorial difference as well. The “Augsburger Reichs- und Religionsfrieden” had secured a peaceful coexistence of Protestant and Catholic territories and the religious belonging of a territory’s population depended on the religious affiliation of the respective sovereign. A religious affiliation of the sovereign different to that of the population could impose existential problems on the people, as they were forced either to adopt his denomination or make use of their right to emigrate, which in most cases implied the loss of goods and chattel.

¹⁵ Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, 39, 8-20.

¹⁶ Kippenberg and von Stuckrad, *Einführung*, 103-104.

¹⁷ The sequel is based on the best-selling book-series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, “Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche”.

¹⁹ Wenzel, “Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Spanien im Jahr 1492”.

In respect to the *civitas Dei/civitas terrena* distinction, the question of belonging was literally thought to be settled “at the end of the day,” as it was an eschatological question. However the distinction between Catholic and Protestant truth claims was not only an eschatological but also a very practical distinction, concerning everyday life and well-being too. One thing was to expect to end up in hell because of the wrong creed, but the other was to lose home and belongings already in this life due to theological concepts.

To amplify these perspectives, examples from other religious traditions are abound and can only very briefly be mentioned. E.g., one should of course consider the biblical notion of “the Promised Land,” which today is often seen as the justification for a sovereign state of Israel. The topic is highly contested and complex.²⁰

A spatial metaphor can also be encountered in contemporary discourses about Islam. The distinction between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*²¹ is frequently mentioned, but is not found in the Quran, as it was coined about one hundred years after the prophet. By *dar al-Islam* Abu Hanifa (699–767 AD / 80–150 AH) referred to those territories where Muslims could live in peace under a Muslim ruler and neighboring other Muslim countries, whereas *dar al-Harb* is a territory which had not been conquered and therefore was not ruled by Muslims. Paradise is called *dar al-Salaam*, the “house of peace,”²² corresponding to the eschatological view of the Quran.

In Buddhism, seemingly territorial metaphors do not play an important role. A distinct example is found in the “Kalachakratantra”, supposedly dating from the 10th century, which combines Buddhist philosophies and practices with the mythological territory of “Shambhala” and the fight against the barbarians (*mleccha*).

In contemporary discussions about double religious belonging, the questions of proper creeds, claims for absolute truth, superiority and normative traditions make up an important part of the discussion.

“Religious belonging” seems to be very often metaphorically conceptualized as a kind of mental territory, separated from other religions through a kind of border which one can cross and thus venture into the “other” territory, and reference to this territorial metaphor is made e.g. in John Dunne’s famous notion of “passing over”.²³

Having examined the metaphorical realm of “religion (a)” we now turn to “religion (b)”.

3 “Belonging to a person or a group”

The doctrinal part of religion, which could be labeled “belief-system” seems to be mainly responsible for providing the dividing lines of “belonging to a (quasi-)territorial entity.” The social dimension of religion, which is of course essential, is about shared beliefs that are expressed through rituals and practices and which refer to the doctrinal sphere for meaning. Religious affiliation is thus not only about concepts, dogmas, and theories, but also about constellations of power and about personal relationships, as religion certainly requires community. This is to a larger part “religion” according to the definition of Durkheim, who suggests that religion has the function of integrating society through rules and rituals.

Religion is about relations, and first of all about parental relations. Research suggests that the source of religious feelings and a sense of belonging is not only found in the paternal relationship, as Freud had pointed out, but maybe even more essentially in the very early bonding between the child and the mother²⁴ or other relevant persons.²⁵

This dimension is deeply rooted in one’s biography and could be labeled “faith”. It comprises not only psychosocial attitudes and processes, but overall cultural patterns of family life and society as well. A negative example of this would be that even those who attempt to avoid Christmas by going on vacation

²⁰ Just two collections of essays out of a multitude: Schoeps (ed.), *Zionismus. Vierunddreißig Aufsätze*; Salzborn (ed.), *Zionismus. Theorien des jüdischen Staates*.

²¹ Abdel-Haleem, *Understanding the Qur’ān*, 68.

²² Quran, Sura 10.25 and 6.127.

²³ Dunne, *The Way of All The Earth*.

²⁴ Moser, *Von der Gottesvergiftung zu einem erträglichen Gott*.

²⁵ Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*.

somewhere in the global South have vivid memories of Christmas in their childhood, connected to family life, the place where they grew up etc.

Participation in rituals and its listening to stories recounted by relevant persons reveals to the child a religious world-view which functions as a horizon of meaning and organizes his or her emotional life. Feelings of “religious belonging” and personal identity are nurtured by these experiences. It is “an intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to internal or external (shared) reality.”²⁶ These early transitional experiences might turn into dreadful memories for which one later requires psychotherapeutic help²⁷, but they might also be supportive in the persons ability to adapt to new experiences and new conceptual frameworks.

Another frequent metaphor of “double belonging” makes use of the image of a romantic relationship: e.g. students of Paul Knitter, one of the prominent “double believers,” challenged him by suggesting that his engagement with Buddhism was a kind of “spiritual promiscuity,”²⁸ while he himself referred to his being Christian and Buddhist in terms of matrimony. Referencing a similar image, Henri Le Saux, the Benedictine monk who became Abhishiktananda, wrote: “It is indeed the experience of having two loves and knowing that the love for both takes away from the full experience of the love for each one, and yet, ultimately being unable to choose ...or let go.”²⁹

This metaphor describes the emotionally charged situation which is the background for attempts to reconcile two different religious traditions.

A pioneer of loyalty to two traditions, Henri Le Saux/Abhishiktananda – the Benedictine who became a sannyasin, had difficulty integrating new religious practices and concepts into his “emotional and mental outfit.” The same applies to Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, the Jesuit who was the pioneer of Zen practice for Christians and the first Christian to become a Zen teacher. Since he understood himself not as a Buddhist, although he practiced Zen in a Buddhist way, he was not a “double believer.” Both found “bridge-concepts” and “welcome-structures” not in the rigorous rationality of the neo-thomistic theology in which they had been trained, but in patristic tradition and Christian mysticism.³⁰ This hints at the fact that religious traditions in and of themselves are not coherent.

An essential feature of the social aspect of “double religious belonging” is the question of authority and legitimacy, as each religious community has its excluding and including principles in that respect. Usually it is required that one has to confess to a specific orthodoxy, since the conceptual and the social aspects of “double religious belonging” coincide insofar as authority is concerned. Orthodoxy in terms of faith as a conceptual issue as well as social coherence are important aspects of bestowing legitimacy of religious leadership to a person. Thus religious leadership does not usually grant much space to a religiously inclusive identity or double belonging, e.g. as the legitimacy of a Christian who becomes a Zen-teacher would not be accepted by all Zen or Christian teachers.³¹ Another example would be an Episcopal pastor who sees herself as entirely Christian and Muslim and was because of this, defrocked.³²

In these cases of “religion (a)” and “religion (b)” the metaphor of “religious belonging” functions as an “identity marker” in the sense of Olivier Roy’s³³ description of the function of religion function after 9/11 as a means of establishing boundaries. Setting boundaries with concepts of religion which focus on community building and bonding are also part of the background of fundamentalist arguments, as fundamentalists with a need for strong identities can refer to these metaphors and concepts, which are of course not fundamentalist in and of themselves.

²⁶ Winnicott, “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena”.

²⁷ Moser, *Gottesvergiftung*.

²⁸ Frykholm, “Double Belonging - one person, two faiths”, 20.

²⁹ Quoted in: Cornille, *Double belonging*, 49.

³⁰ Baatz, “Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle: Zen-Enlightenment and Christianity”; Baatz, *Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, Ein Leben zwischen den Welten*; Skudlarek (ed.), *God’s Harp String*.

³¹ E.g. the Japanese Hakuun Yasutani Roshi or the Chinese Sheng Yen Shifu maintained that one has to be Buddhist to practice Zen, which implies that a Christian cannot even practice Zen, not to speak of becoming a legitimate Zen teacher. Others, e.g. Yamada Koun Roshi or Bernie Glassman Roshi took a different stance appointing Christians as Zen teachers.

³² Frykholm, “Double Belonging - one person, two faiths”, 22.

³³ Roy, *Holy Ignorance*.

The discussion about “double religious belonging” focuses mostly on how to reconcile the different metaphors of identity offered by the respective religions. Of course there may also be pressing questions about identity, connected not only to cognitive and dogmatic problems but also to emotional imprint. Potentially explosive questions are ethical concerns, of which one prominent example is ritual purity³⁴. Questions concerning ritual purity, a necessity in some religious traditions, e.g. Hinduism though refused in others, e.g. Buddhism and Christianity, can determine daily life and everyday interactions between different people of the same religion, as well as of different religions. Such a situation is highly contested.

4 Religion as “way” or “path” (“religion (c)”) and as a “language” (“religion (d)”)

The term “religion,” as it has been used in this paper so far, has its roots in Roman laws, governmental prerogatives and emotional processes, and it is deeply rooted in Western history and culture. As the term itself is rather ambiguous, it might be no surprise that in other traditions, i.e. Judaism, Islam, Hindu Traditions and Buddhism there is no exact equivalent. Although there are also people who see themselves as Christian and Jewish or Muslim, the debate about “double belonging” refers mostly to examples of Christians who are practicing in Hindu or Buddhist traditions, therefore I shall examine these situations only.

As Raimon Panikkar states for Hindu and Buddhist traditions, in neither of them is an equivalent for “religion”: “We can for example translate “religion” by *dharma* without necessarily translating *dharma* by “religion.” *Dharma* equally means duty, ethics, element, observance, energy, order, virtue, law, justice, and has been even translated by reality. But the word “religion” can also mean *sampradāya*, *karma*, *jāti*, *bhakti*, *marga*, *pūja*, *daivakarma*, *niyamaparam*, *punyasila* ...”³⁵ – that is: tradition, law of cause-and-effect, communal group, devotion and worship, way, ritual obligations to the gods, way of duties, way of merits.

The abundance of possible translations of the term “religion” in the Indian language of Sanskrit points to distinctions which are not in the focus of “Western” deliberation of the phenomenon.

Dharma e.g. is in Hindu traditions part of the fourfold *puruṣārtha*, the four goals in life according to Hindu concepts. *Dharma* here should be translated with righteousness or moral conduct and refers to someone who fulfils religious and ritual duties and follows the laws, i.e. lives in accordance with *ṛta*, the universal life-giving order. This could be seen as an equivalent to “religion (a)” and “religion (b)”. But the ultimate goal in life according to Hindu traditions is not *dharma*, but *mokṣa* which can be translated as freedom or liberation – e.g. from the cycle of life and death - or as a state of peace and bliss or as being one with the absolute, as awakening, etc.

Mokṣa according to Hindu traditions is reached through a thorough process of *sādhana* or spiritual practices which focus on the development of virtues to attain peace of mind and spiritual freedom. The principal ways of salvation are “classified into *karmamarga* (way of works), *bhaktimarga* (way of devotion) and *jñānamarga* (way of knowledge). The division does not imply exclusiveness but emphasis: often we find the three margas or some of their elements combined in a particular *sādhana*.”³⁶ There is a huge variety of practices, depending in which of the many different theological frameworks a practice is located; as well as the description what the achievement of *mokṣa* is about differs from school to school. It is a liberating experience, but can be described as theistic and personal, as non-theistic and nondualistic, and as theistic and nondualistic.

The Buddhist notion of *mārga* seems to be more clearly defined: the Noble Eightfold Path (*āryaṣṭāṅgamārga*) comprises *śīla* (moral), *prajñā* (Wisdom or discernment) and *samādhi* (“meditative absorption”). But throughout the history of Buddhism, a vast array of Buddhist spiritual practices fostered

³⁴ Bley, Jaspert, and Köck (eds.), *Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective (300-1600)*.

³⁵ Panikkar, *Religion, Philosophie*. The spelling mistake “nimaya” in the original text is corrected to “niyama”. Thanks to Thomas Kintaert for advice.

³⁶ Klostermayer, *Mokṣa*, 296.

by the development of Buddhist scholasticism has been developed.³⁷ Even the meaning of “liberation” differs - Theravadins emphasize *nirodha*, “the stopping of craving”, whereas Mahayanins focus on the realization of the identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The criteria for liberation also differ from school to school, although the Buddha is the benchmark of liberation for all schools.

In contrast to the widespread idea that there is “one path and one goal” of liberation, which results in the image of a peak to be reached, the reality of Hindu and Buddhist traditions shows that there is a multitude of different ways and concepts of the liberating goal of the path, *mārga*. Thus a metaphor more fitting than the “peak” would be to use the image of a “tableland” or “high plateau”, as it is the altitude that provides the striking difference to the low lands, in other words the experience of liberation, to which manifold paths can lead.

There is only one basic prerequisite for all the paths leading to the “plateau”: to let go of the ego-identification. In that respect *mokṣa* corresponds to the Christian *unio mystica* or *visio beatifica* or the rather modern “mystical experience”.³⁸

The metaphor of a “way” or a journey is used in all traditions: in the Indian traditions it is *mārga*; in Christianity the trias of *via purgativa*, *via illuminativa*, *via unitiva*; “journey” in the Sufi traditions is a frequently used metaphor;³⁹ also metaphors of ascent and descent in Jewish mysticism use the image of a “way” or a “journey”, and *dào* in the Chinese traditions.

The requirement of egolessness is a common feature for all mystical traditions or “ways”. An equally common feature is the ineffability of the goal – which is nevertheless expressed in a variety of images and philosophical approximations, which emphasize the quality of “not-knowing” according to the respective tradition and ontology. Therefore the metaphor of a “plateau” seems to correspond better than the metaphor of a “peak”. A plateau can have a differentiated surface, but all differentiations are in the same range of altitude. Similarly mystical traditions share the same dimension, but according to their respective traditions use different descriptions and ontologies, therefore the metaphor of a plateau seems to be useful.

Essential for all these “ways” is the endeavour to silence egoism as well as the craving for identity. This runs contrary to the notion of “religion (a) and (b)” and the connected term of “religious belonging”. “Belonging” signifies a relation defined by two terms: “A belongs to B”, which tends to be a static relation. In contrast, to “follow a way” is an activity and a process. The relation between the walker and the way implies constant change, as with each step the perspective is changing. It is a process of constant orientation – and most likely the walker needs a map. As there are different scales – large or small – as well as maps with different informations – e.g. topological maps or climate maps – the wayfarer needs an appropriate map and the ability to read the map, so as to translate its abstractions into a concrete situation. Walking up to a plateau, there are different marked trails, which sometimes coincide and sometimes differ and sometimes merge etc. It is a matter of orientation, to find out which way is the appropriate one “right now” – given the starting point of the hiker, the weather conditions, available time, the condition and preferences of the hiker.

The maps for a “way” or “path” (*mārga*, *via* etc.) are provided by the recorded religious traditions; religion understood as “religion (a)” or “religion (b)”. “Maps” mainly refers not to holy scriptures, but to manuals, reflections and other advices from the wisdom of the “community of walkers” of the past. As there is not only one way within a given tradition, but a variety of sometimes very different ways, the walker must always decide which specific way to follow, even though it might be just a variety from within one tradition, though of course one could use also “roadmaps” of different traditions. Some could refer to a Jesuit Christian path and at the same time to a Hindu path of *jñāna-bhakti-karma*.⁴⁰

The aim of the walker is to reach the plateau, and for that she or he will make use of appropriate ways or search for a new way off the beaten track. He or she might walk on one’s own or join a group or follow a “tour guide”, a spiritual teacher. Whatever is the choice, it does not exonerate the wayfarer from the responsibility for himself – each step is and has to be one’s own step, which is true in the mountains as well

37 See the contributions in: Buswell Jr and Gimello (eds.), *Paths to Liberation*.

38 Sharf, “The Rhetoric of Experience and the Study of Religion”.

39 Schimmel, *Das Thema des Weges und der Reise im Islam*.

40 Painadath, *Ashrams-A Movement of Spiritual Integration*, 42-43.

as on a spiritual way. Of course, there are traditions that suggest one has to follow the teacher come what may, in which case it can be a tightrope walk bordering on spiritual abuse, especially in one of these cross-cultural endeavors which today are more the rule than the exception.

To follow a “way” or a “path” is a very personal and intimate enterprise, and therefore so much more important than any “outer master” is the “inner master”,⁴¹ who makes for the orientation, being perhaps a relative of Socrates’ *daimonion*.

Given today’s common tendency to juxtapose religion and spirituality, it is obvious that the “way” is what people nowadays understand to be spirituality – *a practice and belief one “owns”, contrary to a belief one “belongs” to*.

A recent study in Germany concluded that there is a new type of religious personality: “die spirituellen Wanderer”,⁴² “spiritual wanderers”, people who emphasize that they walk “their way”, and are often in search of healing within traditional religious communities or outside in other groups. Most likely not every “spiritual wanderer” is a hiker, who wants to climb high up to a mountainous plateau, i.e. undertake a quest for the ultimate. There are the promenaders and flaneurs, who maybe are just relaxing or exploring for some time what is interesting for them etc. These people should not be criticized, and the type of the “spiritual flaneur” would need further consideration.⁴³

But this paper’s focus is on “spiritual hikers”, people who are hooked to find a way to the lofty realms of “not-knowing”.

Michael Amaldoss notes⁴⁴ that the endeavor to embrace two religious traditions is not an intellectual enterprise but a “call” from within. This “call” is a call of faith, and responds to an “inner need” or a quest, a search not only for meaning but for change and liberation.

It occurs when people find something they need for their “way”, something “nourishing” in another religious tradition than their own. This can be seen in the interviews Rose Drew presents in her study “Buddhist and Christian?”⁴⁵ She observes about the interviewees: “...rather than inhibiting their spiritual progress, dual belonging seemed to have increased their understanding of each tradition, of themselves, and of the nature of the spiritual task, and to have deepened, enhanced and enlivened their practice of each tradition.”⁴⁶

In other words, so called “double belongers” are persons who are engaging in a spiritual path of personal exploration and change, who find that the “ways” of other religious traditions can contribute to the process itself and to the reflection and understanding of the process.

The metaphor of the “way” refers to “spirituality” as “a way of life with an ethical orientation and a teleological perspective”.⁴⁷ Spirituality is about transformation: humans have the possibility as well as the necessity to mold and shape themselves according to whatever transcendent goal they set for themselves and their lives. Transformation is not about “belonging”, but about searching, monitoring and adjusting to a change of oneself, which can be gradual or sudden, about “finding a way”, about expectations and hindrances, and finally about an existential fulfillment which is transcendent and ultimately ineffable, as all religious traditions agree.⁴⁸

Thus for the aspect of personal transformation, the metaphor of “path” or “way” seems to be much better suited as “religion” or even “ethics”. A path brings certain fruits (*phala* in Sanskrit), as Hindu and Buddhist traditions say. A similar phrase can be found e.g. in the New Testament: “by their fruits you will recognize them” (Mt 7, 16), and of course the Quran shares the idea of “fruits” of righteousness and sincerity as well.

⁴¹ Schlüter Rodés, *El verdadero vacío - la maravilla de las cosas*, 190.

⁴² Bochsinger, Engelbrecht and Gebhardt, *Die unsichtbare Religion in der sichtbaren Religion*.

⁴³ About the “flaneur” see: Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*.

⁴⁴ See footnote 2.

⁴⁵ Drew, *Buddhist and Christian?*

⁴⁶ Ibid., 209.

⁴⁷ Balthasar, “Herrlichkeit, Eine theologische Ästhetik”, 715.

⁴⁸ At this point it might be helpful to remind the reader that in all religious traditions transcendence is described as beyond the capacity of language and the rational mind – although of course all traditions have their specific descriptions of the “ultimate”.

It seems that religious/spiritual traditions generally conform when it comes to the “fruits” of spiritual transformation,⁴⁹ as with wisdom, bliss, and love, although their “road-maps” seem to differ. I would suggest that a “spiritual way” is not an entity or a relation, but consists of and results in a bundle of capabilities and existential agencies,⁵⁰ which religious/spiritual traditions call “fruits of the way”.

As Drew’s interviews show, people who follow two traditions - Christian and Buddhist - bridge and reconcile the highly different “road maps” of two very different religious traditions with a metaphor frequently used throughout her interviews by the subjects: they denote *the different religions, to which they refer, as different languages*. The metaphor is derived from Raimon Panikkar’s concept of “homoeomorphic equivalents”. He points out that it is not possible to translate religious or metaphysical terms in another religious system, but only to give equivalents, thus pointing out the rich conceptual content of the words – as shown above in the example of “religion”.

Religious terms refer to practices and very often can be understood correctly only when one understands the practice and the symbols connected with it. At this point it seems helpful to remember Wittgenstein’s emphasis that the meaning of words cannot be separated from the actions into which they are woven. “Speaking a language is participating in a way of life”.⁵¹

If someone participates in two different religious traditions by following ways which are rooted in these traditions – e.g. a Zen-Buddhist and a Christian, maybe Roman Catholic or Methodist tradition - it is likely that the religious terms of each tradition will be perceived as a kind of description of the way, but with different focuses or in different scaling. Carrying on with the metaphor one has to emphasize that “a map is not the territory” and words are not what they signify.

It is a common and frequent fact that one person can be fluent in more than one language; not only are there countries in which there are multiple official languages, but multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the world population. Raimon Panikkar, himself fluent in a host of languages, among them such different languages as Spanish and Hindi, likened religions to languages. As each language conveys a unique world view, likewise each religion encodes a specific world view, which is preserved in the descriptions of a “way” or “path”. Of course here the dimensions of “religion (a)” and “religion (b)” might trigger questions of identity. If someone follows more than one tradition, there will be not only an “interreligious dialogue”, but more important an “intra-religious dialogue”,⁵² as Panikkar points out. Intra-religious dialogue is an existential journey, translating the different religious languages into each other as a way of personal transformation and growth.

5 Conclusion

In this paper I wanted to show that an informed discussion about “double religious belonging” 1. needs to take into consideration the respective context and use of the term “religion” as well as 2. the fact that “religion” is a European concept which does not fit for all traditions customarily called “religious”. Further, when discussing “double or multiple religious belonging” one should be aware of the fact that there is no single definition of religion, which could function as umbrella for all aspects usually connected with “religion”. If the multifaceted complexity of the phenomena usually connected with “religion” is taken seriously the concept of “multiple religious belonging” could turn out to be adequate only for some aspects of “religion”, but not for all.

The discussion about “double or multiple belonging” is focused on models of religion as “identity markers” in the sense of “religion (a)” and “religion (b)”, requiring at least potentially a confession: “yes, I belong” or “no, I do not belong”. The debate about “multiple religious belonging” is situated in a contemporary climate, where religion as an “identity marker” is replacing ethnicity. The proclamation of a

⁴⁹ Positive psychology uses these coincidences for its catalogue of signature strength: see Seligman, *Authentic happiness*.

⁵⁰ For capabilities see the discussion about Martha Nussbaum’s capability approach. Nussbaum, *Women and human development*.

⁵¹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §23.

⁵² Panikkar, *The intra religious dialogue*.

“clash of civilizations”,⁵³ a geopolitical concept formatting the political climate of the last decades,⁵⁴ also plays out in religious identities, though primarily on an “either/or”-model. *Against this context* the debate about “multiple religious belonging” is truly liberating and could provide a pacifying option in current political debates, at least in European countries claiming to keep to humanistic and democratic standards.

The debate could, too, reintroduce the notion that “a religion” is not a compact and standardized package of beliefs but in itself multifaceted and diverse, close to Wittgenstein’s remark: “So you are saying that human agreement decides what is false and what is true?” -- It is what human beings say that is false and true; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.”⁵⁵

In Indian traditions e.g. there is no corresponding single term for the Western concept of “religion”, but quite a bunch of. One is the “way” (*mārga*), which has a Western equivalent in the notion of “*via*” as in “*via contemplativa*” etc. “Path” or “way” refer to a dimension, which could translate today as “spirituality”, i.e. a path of personal exploration, change and spiritual transformation. To pursue a spiritual “way” or “path” is a personal decision and activity, whereas to “belong” to a religious tradition is passive and an ascription. “Belonging to” and “in pursuit of” are distinct and not interchangeable, though at the same time interconnected, just as a spiritual “way” or “path” cannot completely be separated from the context of a religious tradition.

For those, who find themselves on a spiritual “way” the notion of “belonging” can turn out to be a hindrance in their endeavour, as “belonging” does not include and even sometimes even precludes a spiritual path of change and transformation. An example is the Jesuit Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle who in his engagement with Zen practice was confronted by institutional Christian and sometimes Buddhist barriers through almost all his life. Another example is the resistance by Thai Buddhist institutions meeting the eminent Buddhist reformer Ajahn Buddhadasa and those who put his reformation of the Theravada Buddhist spiritual way into practice.⁵⁶

The present situation of religion in the West is marked by a fundamental change: religion is no longer state religion or mandatory frame of reference in public and private affairs, but one option among many perspectives on life. The discussion about “multiple religious belonging” has to be seen in this context, where religion as a matter of identity and belonging to a group is in decline. Religion has become a matter of personal, inward commitment and devotion; the personal moment is more important and experienced as more authentic than the collective practice.⁵⁷

To be able to differentiate between religion *a/b. as a means of identity politics and c. as a path of transformation* might be helpful in a situation where almost all public debates about “religion” are politically motivated, focussing mostly on religion as “identity marker” and obscuring the human need for transformation and liberation, which searches for a way and a language.⁵⁸

References

- Abdel-Haleem, Muhammad. *Understanding the Qur’ān: Themes and Style*. I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd. 2010.
- Amaladoss, Michael. “Double Religious Belonging and Liminality. An Anthro-Theological Reflection”. *Vidyajyoti (Journal of Theological Reflection)*, January 2002.
- Baatz, Ursula. *Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, Ein Leben zwischen den Welten*. Zürich 1998.
- Baatz, Ursula. “Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle: Zen-Enlightenment and Christianity”. In: Robert Maryks (ed.), *A Companion to Jesuit Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill 2017.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von. “Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik”. Einsiedeln 1965.

⁵³ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*.

⁵⁴ For an overview see: Furlinger, *Moscheebaukonflikte in Österreich*.

⁵⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 243.

⁵⁶ Swearer, “Centre and Periphery: Buddhism and Politics in Modern Thailand”.

⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

⁵⁸ Thanks to Ana Maria Schlüter Rodés Kiun An and Ursula Richard for discussing the final draft of the paper. Of course the responsibility for errors of all kind is mine.

- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Projekt*. Rolf Tiedemann, ed., Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, trans. Cambridge, Mass./London, 1999.
- Bernhardt, Reinhold, Schmidt-Leukel, Perry (eds.). *Multiple religiöse Identität. Aus verschiedenen religiösen Traditionen schöpfen*. Zürich 2008.
- Bley, Matthias. *Discourses of Purity in Transcultural Perspective (300-1600)*. Leiden: Brill 2015.
- Bochinger, Christoph, Engelbrecht, Martin, Gebhardt, Winfried. *Die unsichtbare Religion in der sichtbaren Religion. Formen spiritueller Orientierung in der religiösen Gegenwartskultur*. Stuttgart, 2009.
- Buswell Jr, Robert E., Gimello, Robert M. (eds.). *Paths to Liberation. The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*. Honolulu, 1992.
- Cornille, Catherine. "Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging", in: Catherine Cornille (ed.) *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*. New York, 2002.
- Drew, Rose. *Buddhist and Christian? An exploration of Dual Belonging*. London, 2011.
- Dunne, John. *The Way of All the Earth*. New York, 1972.
- Dupuis, Jacques. *Towards a Christian theology of religious pluralism*. New York: Maryknoll, 2002.
- Fredericks, James L. "Review: *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* by Catherine Cornille", *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 25 (2005): 167–170.
- Frykholm, Amy. "Double Belonging – one person, two faiths", *Christian Century* January 25, 2011, 20-23, <http://www.universityucc.org/education/Double%20Belonging.pdf>
- Fürlinger, Ernst. *Moscheebaukonflikte in Oesterreich. Nationale Politik des religiösen Raums im globalen Zeitalter*. Göttingen, 2013.
- Gira, Dennis et Scheuer, Jacques (eds.). *Vivre de plusieurs religions: Promesse ou illusion?* Paris, Editions de l'Atelier (coll. Questions ouvertes), 2000.
- Hick, John, and Knitter, Paul. *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. New York, 1987.
- Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations*. Simon&Schuster: New York, 1996.
- Kalsky, Manuela. "Religiöse Flexibilität. Eine Antwort auf kulturelle und religiöse Vielfalt". In: R. Bernhardt, P. Schmidt-Leukel (ed.), *Multiple religiöse Identität. Aus verschiedenen religiösen Traditionen schöpfen*. Zürich 2008, 219-242.
- Kippenberg, Hans G., and v. Stuckrad, Kocku. *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*. München, 2003.
- Klostermayer, Klaus. *Moksa*, in: Sushil Mittal, Gene Thursby (eds.), *The Hindu World*. Oxford - New York, 2004, 288-305.
- Knitter, Paul. *Without Buddha I Could not be a Christian*. New York, 2009.
- LaHaye, Tim and Jenkins, Jerry B. "Left Behind". Carol Stream Ill.: Tyndale House Publ., 1995-2007.
- Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark. "Metaphors we live by". Chicago, rev. edition, 2003.
- Livius, Titus. *Ab urbe condita libri*, engl: *Livy: with an English translation*, in fourteen volumes. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press 1957.
- Moser, Tilmann. *Gottesvergiftung*. Frankfurt, 1976.
- Moser, Tilmann. *Von der Gottesvergiftung zu einem erträglichen Gott*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2003.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Women and human development*. Cambridge, 2000.
- Painadath, Sebastian. "Ashrams—A Movement of Spiritual Integration". In *Concilium*, 1994/4, 42-3.
- Panikkar, Raimon. "Religion, Philosophie, Kultur". In *polylog-zeitschrift für interkulturelles philosophieren* No.1, Jg.1. Wien 1998. <http://them.polylog.org/1/fpr-de.html>
- Panikkar, Raimon. *The intra religious dialogue*. New York, 1978.
- Phan, Peter C. "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church". *Theological Studies* 64 (2003), 495-519.
- Ratzinger, Josef. "Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche". München 1954 (= Münchener theologische Studien II.7)
- Rizzuto, Ana Maria. *The Birth of the Living God*. Chicago, 1979.
- Roy, Olivier. *Holy Ignorance. When Religion and Culture part Ways*. London, 2010.
- Salzborn, S. (ed.). *Zionismus. Theorien des jüdischen Staates (= Staatsverständnisse*. Bd. 76). Baden-Baden, 2015.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Das Thema des Weges und der Reise im Islam*. Opladen: Westdt. Verlag, 1994.
- Schlüter Rodés, Ana Maria. *El verdadero vacío - la maravilla de las cosas*. Fundación Zendo Betania, Brihuega 2008.
- Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. *Gott ohne Grenzen. Eine christliche und pluralistische Theologie der Religionen*. Gütersloh 2005.
- Schoeps, Julius H. (ed.). *Zionismus. Vierunddreißig Aufsätze*. München 1973.
- Seligman, Martin P. *Authentic happiness. Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York, 2002.
- Sharf, Robert H. "The Rhetoric or Experience and the Study of Religion". *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7, No. 11-12 (2000), 267-287.
- Skudlarek, William (ed.). *God's Harp String: The Life and Legacy of the Benedictine Monk Swami Abhishiktananda*. Brooklyn, 2010.
- Smart, Ninian. *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. Berkeley, CA, 1998.
- Swearer, Donald K. "Centre and Periphery: Buddhism and Politics in Modern Thailand". In: Harris, I. (ed.), *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth century Asia*. London-New York: Continuum, 194-226.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass., 2007.

Wenzel, Jürgen. *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus Spanien im Jahr 1492*. BOD – Books on Demand. Norderstedt, 2013.

Winnicott, Donald W. “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena”. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 34 (1953), 89-97

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations* the German text, with a revised English translation, transl. by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford, 2006.

Woodhead, Linda. “Five types of religion”, *International Review of Sociology*, 21 (2011), 121-143.