Introduction

When the two editors of this journal were approached by Berghahn Books to start an annual journal on religion, they felt the opportunity had arrived to fill a gap often remarked upon when anthropologists meet for a coffee or a beer; namely, the one created by the lack of any journal dealing exclusively with the ‘anthropology of religion’. Of course conversations over coffee have to be taken with a pinch of salt (or sugar). The idea of a separate ‘anthropology of religion’—not to mention the notion that there is such a thing as a separate field of human action and thought called ‘religion’—creates an enduring problematic in itself. But even so, scholars claiming to do something of the sort have been active since at least the days of Frazer and Tylor. Approaches often portrayed as different, even opposed (e.g., cognitive, phenomenological, structuralist) have been developing their own dynamics, debates, conferences and publications, sometimes in isolation from one another, and sometimes with little or no connection to nonanthropological disciplines also concerned with the study of religion, such as theology, sociology, or religious studies.

Anthropology provides the predominant intellectual foundation of this journal, but we have to clarify a somewhat paradoxical position here. In its inception *Religion and Society* is not limited to anthropology; we are agreed on that point, both between ourselves and with our editors at Berghahn Books. Yet it was also agreed that we did not want to create an interdisciplinary journal as such (that type of publication is well represented by, for instance, *Culture and Religion* and the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*). As the philosopher Ian Hacking has recently stated—elaborating on the example of Mary Douglas’s work—what other people might call ‘interdisciplinarity’ often exists because scholars approach fields beyond their own discipline with methods and preoccupations taken from the latter. Mary Douglas, as Hacking recalls, was always reading as an anthropologist, whether she was examining Lele material culture or the Book of Leviticus.¹ Following Ian Hacking (and, of course, Mary Douglas) we take a similar discipline-reaching-beyond-its-frontiers approach.

Our baseline is anthropology, but we connect with other ways of approaching the study of religion (especially, at least at this initial phase, with sociology of religion and religious studies). Not all the contributions are written by anthropologists, as can be seen from this first issue. For example, articles on religion and place and the New Age have been written by scholars (Kim Knott and Matthew Wood, respectively) who are predominantly sociologists of religion. Our editorial board members are deliberately pitched across wide fields, both geographically and institutionally, as well as in the coverage of different aspects of the study of religion. What we had in mind when picking board members was to show that a comprehensive anthropological study of religion can only be achieved through feedback received from other conversations and methodologies. Thus François Berthomé and Michael Houseman’s innovative proposal relating to the connection between ritual and emotions offered in this issue is the product not only of their thorough knowledge of anthropological theories, but also of their close proximity to scholars working in the discipline now called ‘Ritual Studies’. And then there are the connections that Maurice Bloch made with cognitive psychology in the 1970s, which are discussed in the section dedicated to the work of this scholar.

The aim of *Religion and Society* is not just to be a journal, but also to be a 'review': review here means overview, but not a lack of positionality on the part of the authors. Thus we mean to encourage reviews that are both constructively critical and engaged. The action of reviewing can be both descriptive and creative. As editors, we are depicting and therefore making a claim to constitute a sub-field, but we are not claiming to provide a holistic or definitive overview. Nor have we discussed the possibility of taking or promoting any particular theoretical or methodological stance. Rather, we hope to contribute to the ongoing trajectory of the subject through bringing together individual portraits, debates and disagreement, current news, methods of teaching, and so on. Each issue will be made up of articles that are commissioned, rather than sent in; and we will draw extensively on the editorial board members in considering the topics and authors for each issue.

A further comment on nomenclature is relevant here. The terms 'religion' and 'society' are hardly very specific, and we do not intend them to be so. Perhaps our inserting 'and' rather than 'in' or 'of' between the two terms might be construed as an attempt to make a specific claim about the location of religious institutions away from or above human society. Such is not our aim, however. We hope instead to signal our desire for authors to pitch their work in relation to a long and still very vital tradition of seeing religion as located within and contributing to human action and self-organization. The phrase also serves to locate us within the new 'Advances in Research' series that Berghahn Books have founded, as we are being published at the same time as another founding journal in this series, called *Environment and Society* (editors Dan Brokington and Paige West).

In this first issue we have invited Maurice Bloch to write his self-portrait and four readers to comment on that portrait and on his work in general. Bloch has produced and is still producing a corpus of work that has inspired generations of anthropologists as well as scholars connected with other disciplines such as psychology—a connection that has not always been well regarded by his fellow anthropologists in British institutions. Bloch's piece in our journal is not only a vivid and characteristically trenchant introduction to his work, but also a good starting point for problematizing religion in the way we have intended for the journal.

Our 'articles' section is intended to be 'catholic' in its selections, while focusing on topics of current as well as enduring interest. Carles Salazar offers a thorough review of current literature connected with one of Bloch's preoccupations, cognition and anthropology, as well as explaining what religion might mean from a cognitivist point of view. Readers of this issue will also encounter discussions of Amerindian cosmologies, an area of extremely lively debate in contemporary anthropology, and one through which concepts such as 'animism' and 'cosmology' have been revived (Luiz Costa and Carlos Fausto). The juxtaposition of ritual and emotions (Berthome and Houseman) provides another of our selected topics because we feel that it is an area where students of religion find it difficult to keep up with the latest advances in research, in part because such advances come from a large variety of different disciplines. Although the anthropology of human rights has emerged as a fascinating and important sub-area in its own right in recent years, Kamari Clarke provides a theoretically sophisticated and ethnographically-informed take on the issue from the perspective of religion. Writing on New Age movements has been going on for a long period of time, but most works have been rather thin ethnographically. An exception to such a trend has been provided by Matthew Wood, whose earlier work has for examined New Age groupings through the frame of kinship, and in this issue he provides a review of relevant literature alongside reflections on how to define the field of the New Age. Kim Knott's piece looks at a set of issues that, for some scholars, have challenged the very basis of ethnography over the past two or three decades: changing constructions and notions of space and place. She shows how the 'spatial turn' can

be discerned in a range of disciplines, including anthropology but also theology and religious studies, sociology, and history. Finally, Leslie Sponsel, who has been working on religion and ecology for several decades, was invited to offer a review of literature pertaining to this theme. Here again is a topic that is becoming a major concern within the social sciences, and that also provides a bridge to *Environment and Society*.

In keeping with our aim to present the anthropology of religion as a shifting and contested sub-field, we also have an author meets critics section. Emma Cohen's *The Mind Possessed* is discussed by scholars with very different views on the relationship among religion, mind, and the social. The reader can decide which of the suggested approaches—if any—is the most useful, but we point out that the focus on Cohen's book links with an implicit debate in this issue over approaches to the mind and religion, as evidenced in pieces by and about Bloch, by Salazar, and by Costa and Fausto. Such threads—sometimes consciously articulated, sometimes discovered in retrospect, sometimes disputed—contribute to the shifting make-up of our sub-discipline, alongside the reviews, arguments, current debates (see Keith Hart's and Bill Maurer's pithy comments on the credit crunch), teaching techniques (Andy Buckser), conferences, list-serves, retrospectives, and prospectives that make up the content of *Religion and Society*.

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■ NOTE

1. I. Hacking, "The Complacent Disciplinarian." The text was accessed at <http://www.interdisciplines.org/interdisciplinarity/papers/7> on 29 August 2010, but because the papers from that interdisciplinary conference are now published in French, it has been removed from the site. As of 6 December 2010 Hacking's paper could be accessed at <http://66.201.40.136/interdisciplinarity/papers/7>. For the published version of the debate, see G. Origgi and F. Darbellay (eds), *Repenser l'interdisciplinarité* (Geneva, éditions Slatkine, 2010).