

Interreligious Learning: Shaping of interreligious identity in pluralistic Europe.

Empirical research on Christian-Buddhist and Muslim-Christian relations
and theological implications.

Dr. Martin Rötting

This paper¹ will discuss the theological, methodical and empirical questions on research of interreligious learning processes based on the ongoing study of OCCURSO on interreligious learning in Muslim-Christian relations and a study on Buddhist-Christian relations (Rötting 2007). Process religiosity and reference religiosity are two key terms to describe the theological implications challenged in interreligious processes. What does that mean for religious identities shaped by dialogue? How can implications for theological frameworks be described? This paper takes on the dynamic of different dialogues (Buddhist-Christian, Muslim-Christian) and argues for a new focus on different theological implications. Current terms of exclusivistic, inclusivistic and pluralistic categories shift towards a process and reference orientated description leading to an "interreligious spirituality": Theology needs to reflect, to give guidance and to support the learning process. This support needs to be based on reflection of empirical studies and dogmatic thought.

I. Shaping Identity - Towards new religious identities in Europe?

Religion matters in Europe again. After the decadence and irrelevance of religion was prognosed for more than a decade, it reemerge in many unforeseen ways. Spiritual search, papal media events, a new upcoming Muslim pride mixed with anxious feelings of fear and uncertainty turning in to radicalism or new urge towards integration and dialogue. How do individuals cope in this new dynamic? What kind of identity forming processes can be found? Does this lead to new religious identities in Europe? This paper refers to results of research of interreligious learning processes based on the ongoing study of OCCURSO² Muslim-Christian Buddhist-Christian relations.³ The

¹ This paper was given at The European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies , Second Conference , Salzburg, April 15-17, 2009 , Interreligious Hermeneutics in pluralistic Europe. I want to thank the participants of the conference for their comments and Maggie Casey-Neumayer for her help with the English.

² OCCURSO Institute of interreligious und intercultural encounter, www.occURSO.de.

³ Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007.

findings allow formulation of a hypothesis on the dynamics in dialogue.

After looking into theological and methodological questions of research, a sample of interreligious learning in Muslim-Christian and Christian-Buddhist relations will be examined. The suggested key-terms “process religiosity” and “reference religiosity” will provide a framework for concluding theological remarks on possible impacts for the theology of religions.

II. Theological, methodological and empirical questions of research

Theology of religion often remains a theology of salvation. Religious identity in consequence becomes closely linked to the question of salvation. Identity is often seen and sometimes reduced to identification with a given way to salvation. But is this perspective on religious identity sufficient? Is salvation really the only central point to mark religious identity? How about other identity markers given in points of contact to other religions like history, culture or personal friendships or spiritual search? A look into interreligious processes of learning can help to broaden knowledge on how religious identity is shaped and why certain forms of identity are developed. This leads to an important theological question: are there other categorical ways of describing theological and therefore spiritual identifications than the classical threefold exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist model?

Interreligious learning is not a process which is already highly reflected by the learning person. In order to enable someone to talk about her or his experience, the right questions have to be asked and theory based sets of questions are necessary. Qualitative research is therefore based on a theory of interreligious learning processes (Rötting 2007). The basic movement in any encounter with a different cultural and religious other can be seen as a circle movement: *passing over* and *coming back*. Both movements can be spelled out in stages that encompass the process of interreligious learning⁴ starting by entering the world of the other: 1. Rooting in one`s own tradition, 2. Awareness of the other religion, 3. A question developing out of this, 4. Opening for deeper exchange, 5. Interreligious dialogue, 6. Finding a *linking point of contact*, a point which can serve as a link between two religious traditions (Anknüpfungspunkt). Coming back into one`s own tradition, the given point of contact will help to 7. double-network the *linking point of contact*, a link by relating this point to ones own and the others religious world. This will lead to a 8. Transformation, which needs 9. Evaluation before being ready to relate this new perspective to ones own world, the 10.

⁴ Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007. For the genesis of this theory see p. 161-228. A introduction into the different phases is given on p. 229-238.

Intra-religious dialogue prepares for 11. a new rooting in one's own tradition.

This process model of interreligious learning offers a grid, which shows the structure and shape of individual learning processes. But even if learning processes can be compared, one has to take into account that there are general ways of dealing with experience. This also will have a strong impact on how we deal with the other, be it in religious or cultural matters. In addition to the above structure a learning-by-experience-test by David A. Kolb provides additional information on how the experience of the other is dealt with by interviewed individuals.⁵

Two empirical research projects, one on Christian-Buddhist relations (2002-2006) and the other on Muslim-Christian (2007-ca. 2012) relations and implicated processes of learning provide data for some concluding thoughts. The Christian-Buddhist project was based on 60 Interviews in Germany and South Korea. The Muslim-Christian project is ongoing and provides current data from 15 interviews with Muslims and Christians in Germany. The analysis of this empirical data together with other sources of information enables formulation of a hypothesis on how interreligious identity is shaped. Future projects on this ongoing study envisage to extend empirical research to Christian Jewish, Jewish-Muslim, Buddhist Muslim and other interreligious learning relations and situations.

Due to limited space, two samples, one in Muslim Christian relations, the other on Christian Buddhist relations, give a glimpse into the empirical findings up to now.

III. Sample of interreligious learning in Christian-Buddhist Relations

Maria S.⁶ (69) is a former catholic nun who states that she grew up in a Christian rooted surrounding. She describes her image of God as the most important aspect of her religious and interreligious spiritual search. Maria S. started with an image of God as a clear opposite. A God she faced and prayed to as a person. During her interreligious learning process this changed to an image of "God within myself". The reason for her entering the convent was the contemplative tradition and the long periods of silence in front of the Blessed Sacrament. During an intensive personal crisis she left the order and started working as a nurse. The teachings and doctrines of the church

⁵ In this study the LSI 3.1 is used (Hay Group Direct Inc.). For the development of this test and a introduction in a theory of experiential learning see: David a. Kolb, *Experiential learning. Experience as a source of learning and development*, New Jersey, 1984.

⁶ For an extended analyse see: Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007, S. 320-322.

could not provide sufficient support in this situation, so Maria S. turned to Zen-Buddhism. She never, however, felt pulled away from Christianity and the deep personal calling for God remained:

“I think the root is to be found in my religious life in the order. I decided myself to go a certain way, and I wanted to continue this way. After I left the convent, I could not find any guidance for this way. And in Zen there are very clear signposts to show the way.”⁷

After she started practicing Zen, Maria S. also joined a group which worked on the ten ox-herder-pictures. This ancient series of ten pictures are wide spread in Zen Buddhism. They show an ox herder who lost his ox. His searching, catching, fighting and taming the ox illustrate the process of meditation. The reflections on and even chanting of the traditional poems which complement this series of pictures helped her to discover her “grammar” of silence. She learns to understand how silence helps her to let go and rediscovers what had attracted her to silence in the convent. Understanding and relating the Zen-Story to her own experience changed her image of God. God became a source of strength to continue her way and to help her to learn to “let go”. A God of reference turned into a God of process.

The analyse of 15 interviews with Christians who are in dialogue with Buddhism or Buddhist thoughts show, that most learn to develop what can be termed process-religiosity.⁸ They learn that truth and the experience of it are not static but a dynamic process. The image of God might be transformed from a static observer to a ‘loving and being with us on the way’ image of God.

VI. Sample of interreligious learning in Muslim-Christian Relations

Mehmed C. (27) is a son of a Turkish immigrant and a student of economics. The request of Germans groups for guided tours into Munich’s mosques led him to participate in dialog movements. Mehmed C. describes his upbringing as traditional Islamic but open towards others. He grew up in a neighbourhood with a catholic kindergarden. His image of the nuns working there was one of “ever smiling and really friendly”. These kind of positive contacts helped him to dialogue

⁷ ”Ich denke, die Wurzel ist schon im Ordensleben. Ich habe mich da für einen Weg entschieden und ich wollte diesen Weg auch weitergehen. Nachdem ich den Orden verlassen hab, hatte ich in meiner Kirche keine Anleitung für diesen Weg. Und im Zen, da gibt es ganz klare Wegweiser.“ Cit. in Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007, p. 320. Translation MR.

⁸ Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007, p. 365.390-393.

with Christians later. Mehmed C.'s main linking point of contact is the character of God. He was driven by the question of the Bismillah "*Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim*": How is Allah most gracious and most compassionate?

*"The rahim and rahman aspect of God had a race [competition] in myself. In Koran or better in the preachings of the imams the aspect of righteousness seem to be in favour. God is right and strict. But Christians seem to focus on the love of god. That changed my focus."*⁹

His troubled point of reference in question of how the attributes of God relate to each other reconciled. The image of a race turned into an image of a God who is compassionate, right and strict in order to be loving and gracious. God is loving means that He also has to be right by giving each person his or her own right. In dialogue with Christians Mehmed C. also got the impression that sometimes Christians paint an image of an only kind and loving God who is nothing but "everyone's darling". Islam's focus on the distance and transcendence of God might help Christians too, states Mehmed C. This sample shows, that in interreligious learning not only a dogmatic question but how the learner relates towards and experiences it, and where a linking point of contact is found, is relevant.

*Markus S.*¹⁰ is a practising catholic and active in a ecumenical group in a Munich parish. After 9/11 his group became active in dialogue with a neighbouring mosque and set up regular dialogue meetings and interreligious scripture reading. Markus was impressed by the Muslim courage to interrupt a meeting and stop for prayer. He was also impressed by the clearness of how the Muslim dialogue partners refer to God as the one who knows what is best; for example in accepting the rule to abstain from pork even thou there is not much medical need for this rule today as in the times of Mohammed. Another hint to this acceptance of God's rule for Markus S. was the given reason for holding the fasting rule of ramadan. Fasting, according to his Muslim friends, is not only about loosing weight or becoming a better person, but to surrender to God's will for Muslims to do so. It was merely the simplicity of how Muslims agree to render into the will of God which impressed him.

The results of the projects up to now allow looking at the analysis of 14 interviews on Muslim-

⁹ Interview DM4, 2008: "*Der rahim und rahman aspekt von Gott waren bei mir im Wettlauf. Im Korean oder besser in den Predigten in den Moscheen scheint es meist um den gerechtigkeits-Aspekt bei Gott zu gehen. Gott ist gerecht und streng. Aber im Christentum begegnet mit die Liebe, das hat meinen Fokus verändert.*" unpublished transcript.

¹⁰ Interview DChr10, 2009.

Christian learning processes. Together with other related sources and in field studies¹¹ they show, that many Muslims became aware of their religion especially after 9/11. Their own perspective of being e.g a Turkish immigrant who works and lives in Germany turned into being seen as a *Muslim* Turkish immigrant. A feeling of the need to defend Islam against Islam-phobic fears and radical shapes of Islam urged many Muslims to discover and in many ways rediscover their own religion. Some of them started to engage in dialogue and integration-projects with church communities in their neighbourhoods. Christians in dialogue with Muslims seem to envisage themselves often as a balance to a growing anti Muslim perspective.

Christians often indicate that they have trouble with some passages of the Quran which state the need to convert or suppress non-Muslim forms of faith and society. The image of a strict God in Islam, who drives his followers to radicalism is balanced by the impression and experience of open minded Muslims, who engage in dialogue and focus on other passages in the Quran, stating that Allah divided the human race into different tribes in order that they would learn from each other (sura 49:13). Sometimes Christians state that they respect the seriousness of how Muslims try to follow their religion and develop their faith. Christians seem to be attracted to how the linking points of contact (e.g. God, Qur'an, regular prayer) give meaning and direction to everyday life of Muslims.

Muslims seem to be challenged by the openness of some Christians toward other religious views. They discover that Christians seem to practice a great freedom to interpret the Bible. Muslims find Christians sometimes too lax in their religious standing but feel attracted by images of loving kindness God shows to its people. Even though they do not accept Jesus as son of God, Muslims state in the interviews that they get a better understanding of who Jesus was by talking to Christians.

V. Two sides of one Identity-coin? Process religiosity and reference religiosity

The two examples of interreligious learning show what might be a tendency in dialogue encounters. The question which matters to people in dialogue is: How does the other approach God or the truth? The former Christian nun found a “grammar of the way”, a structure of an inner spiritual process, expressed in the ox-herd pictures of Zen-Buddhism challenging. The Muslim student was moved by how God in Christianity is an absolute being and loving, so he could discover and bring new

¹¹ All given results report a work in process. Resources include participation in the field of dialog-meetings and personal encounters between 1999-2009.

emphasis to a loving God in Islam. These examples show two different and yet related religious questions: (1) How to understand the spiritual process in oneself and (2) how to relate to the absolute.

Religious people seem to be drawn either more to the one or to the other. The reason for these tendencies might be found in history, culture and biographical stories. These questions of process religiosity and reference religiosity do not remain untouched in interreligious learning processes. Interview analysis on different dialogue situations indicate that the confrontation with the other is often a catalyst, bringing the question of how to relate to the truth right into the heart of dialogue. In many different ways and shapes two archetypes emerge: the *wandering pilgrim* and the *obedient servant*. These forms can be derived by tracing six ways of motives occurring in interreligious learning: way, experience, essence, concretization, action and reconciliation. The two last motives identify learning in a cultural hermeneutic perspective as incultural or transcultural. The first four indicate in a religious hermeneutic perspective a reference or process religiosity.¹²

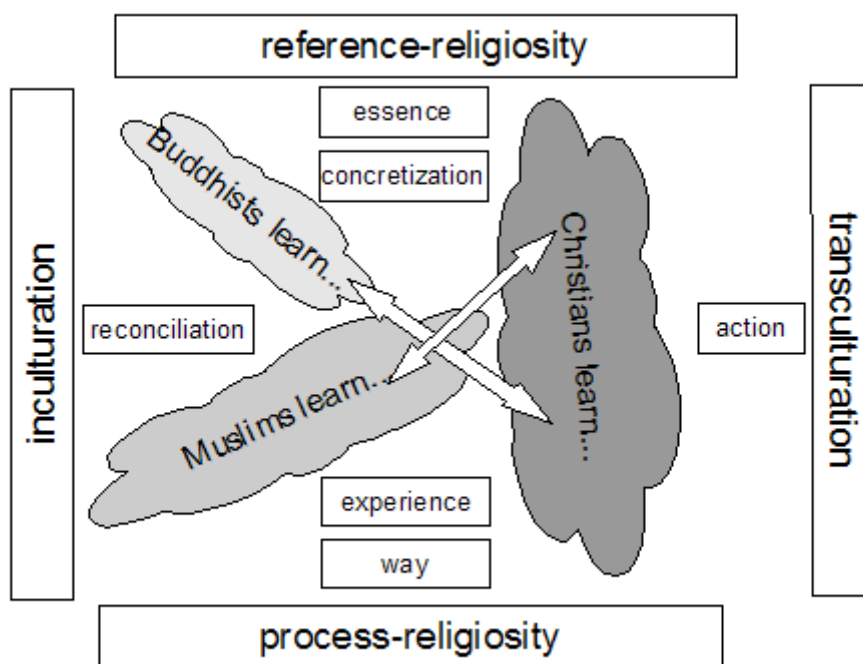


Fig. 1 Interreligious learning and identity shaping in Europe

A hypothesis of Identity shaping interreligious dynamics in pluralistic Europe:

1. Muslims learn process religiosity in dialogue with Christians (i.e. Christian interest in Sufism, religion as a personal, individual spiritual way).

¹² Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007, p. 385-393.

2. Buddhists learn reference religiosity in dialogue with Christians (i.e. metta/love has to be concrete, caritas, social action).
3. Christians learn reference religiosity in dialogue with Muslims (i.e. respect for prayer in reference to God, bowing, religious life in public).
4. Christians learn process religiosity in dialogue with Buddhists (i.e. religion as a way to spiritual growth, God within, transformation of own soul/psyche).
5. New religious forms in central Europe (Buddhism and Islam) seek inculturation.
6. Old religious form in central Europe (Christianity) seeks transculturation.

European Christians in Dialog with Buddhism, either in personal relation to Buddhists or by means of studying Buddhist teaching or practising Buddhist forms of meditation like Zen, show a clear orientation towards process religiosity. In their childhood many Christians have been taught an image of God as a strict and almighty observer. In dialogue with Buddhism, Christians discover the God within. They focus on seeing themselves as wandering pilgrims.

Christians in Dialogue with Muslims focus on the great deal of reference towards the absoluteness of God in Islam. They are challenged by the strict absence of pictures, the Arabic language of the Koran, the body language of prayer or the direction towards Mecca. Christians reflect on aspects of process and reference in Islam and their own tradition. They often find a great deal of reference to the absolute in Islam both frightening and challenging.

Muslims in Europe often focus on the topic of inculturation. One way is the creation of points of references like mosques. Those Muslims who are in Dialogue with Christianity and interested in religious questions too, are tackling the often greater emphasis of process in Christian spirituality. They might not agree with the Christian view of Jesus as son of God or the trinity, but are willing to accept that Christians feel that God wanted to be as close as possible to humans in Jesus. But this point of reference creates a dynamic in the absolute God who is part of the human way to salvation. In Christian theology this dynamic is expressed in the teaching of God as trinity. The spirit is viewed as a moving power, generating and sustaining process. God is not only an observer, but becomes a pilgrim, walking together with his people. And his absolute power becomes part of the pilgrim way, God might be able to urge people to be loving. Muslims struggling with an image of God who moves toward or is moved by creation, but God's wish to guide towards truth is accepted and enables to find and rediscover way of process theology in Islam, as they can be found in Sufism. But even the five pillars of Islam become not only a rule to follow but a motivation for

faithful Muslims to act out their faith, to bring their faith into a process, a pilgrimage to God.

Analysing interreligious learning processes point to the hypothesis that Religious Identity in Europe seems to be seeking a balance between the *wandering pilgrim* and the *obedient servant*. Most Muslims religious identity seems to be shaped very strongly by the image of an *obedient servant*. There is, however, process orientation in Islam too. The pilgrimage to Mecca and the other pillars of Islam foster a spiritual process toward surrender to God. In dialogue with Christianity the aspect of being also a *wandering pilgrim* becomes the challenging question. Christians in dialogue with Muslims are often challenged by the strength of reference, thus dialogue with Islam is pointing to the *obedient servant*. In dialogue with Buddhism, Christians discover the *wandering pilgrim*, the God within.

These hypothetic statements cannot reflect the complex and multifaceted reality of interreligious learning in Europe. Their aim is, however, to point to the fact the empirical samples of dialogue indicate, that the most important topic of dialogue in Europe is to balance process and reference religiosity within each single tradition and within society as a whole. So far, the results only allow formulating a hypothesis. More empirical material has to be generated, and analysed results have to be related to historical, cultural and individual biographies. But findings so far allow viewing religious identity shaped by process and reference religiosity. Some traditional points of reference do not work in a multiple religious society. Inner process orientated ways and forms of spirituality are in search for a new language to communicate their meaning to a new pluralistic audience. They too need points of reference to be understood. The research of interreligious learning processes suggest, that the main question seems to be, how the *obedient observer* and the *wandering pilgrim* can be seen as aspects of religious identity. Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and other forms of faith each have their different shape and quest, but they do relate to each other.

VI. Salvific end or process orientated theology of religions?

How does Christian theology relate to these empirical findings in processes of interreligious learning? Do the categories of exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist serve as hermeneutic tools to understand and relate to what matters in dialogue? These categories helped to develop what today is called theology of religions and it certainly shaped our understanding of salvation and salvific ends in religious dialogue. Over the decades, most official positions of religious organisations find

themselves branded as being inclusivist. Many traditional or fundamental views are banned into the exclusivist-box of theology and theologians who argue for the pluralistic point of view struggle with their religious authorities and find it difficult to remain outside the inclusivist point of view when being asked for categories of how a religion can be called a fully developed way to the truth.

Schmidt-Leukel argues, that the threefold model is the only logical framework.¹³ Others, like Paul Knitter add a fourth category: the acceptance model¹⁴. The acceptance model takes up challenges by Mark Heim and others, that there are simply truly different religions and therefore also different religious ends. But how to choose one model to follow, without falling, again, into an at least practical inclusivism? Comparative theology tries to accept the paradox and focuses on comparing different areas in the religious traditions. But is it really possible to not try to make sense out of what is compared? Many have argued that the theology of religions seems to be in an argumentative dead end. I am not tempted to argue for a total solution, but hopefully to provide a different perspective: people learning in dialogue seems to hint to the fact that truth is not only something to point to, truth is also a process. Comparative theology could then be seen as an attempt to fetch linking points of contact. The main logical paradox between the different models is the following: If the truth is one, how do different religious ways relate to it? But: if the truth is many, which one follows? Interreligious learning processes in dialogue show different motives for learning. People learn to reconcile, to act, to find the essence, to solidify, to experience or to understand their way in relation to what they hope is truth. Human beings seem to find truth in pointing towards it as a point of reference, but also to be moved by it into a process. Theology of religion seems to have focused, mainly, on the question of how different religions can point to truth. But if truth is also seen as a process, then points of reference become signposts hinting towards a process of truth. Some theologians have started to develop toward this direction: Mark S. Heim, after first claiming for truth being many, therefore also different salvations, tries to formulate a trinitarian theology of religious ends.¹⁵ Paul Knitter points to the communion as an integrative aspect to the acceptance model.¹⁶ In which ever way discourses in the theology of religions will lead us, empirical research suggests that in dialogue religion is experienced as reference and as process.

¹³ Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Gott ohne Grenzen, Eine christliche und pluralistische Theologie der Religionen*, Gütersloh, 2005, p. 66-71.

¹⁴ Knitter, Paul, *Introducing Theology of Religion*, Maryknoll, 2002, 192-237.

¹⁵ Heim, S. Mark, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*, Cambridge, 2001.

¹⁶ Knitter, Paul, *Introducing Theology of Religion*, Maryknoll, 2002, p.192-237.

	<i>exclusivist</i>	<i>inclusivist</i>	<i>pluralist</i>	<i>(acceptance)</i>	comment
<i>reference orientation</i>	truth is N.N truth is one	our truth is fully truth.	the one real manifests in many	salvations truths perspectives	focus on salvation as goal Q: what/who saves me?
<i>process orientation</i>	---	others truths and we will come to our truth	all ways end up at one point	Dialoguing truth is process	focus on religious process Q: how to be/go there?
<i>balanced</i>	--- <i>Problem:</i> cannot accept other points of reference	--- <i>Problem:</i> cannot accept other way of truth in their own right	--- <i>Problem:</i> contradiction in religious ends neglected; can not provide categories for ways reaching the real	dance together, communion, many religious ways can go together; truth is process & reference; learning needs acceptance of differences and similarities <i>Problem:</i> motivation for dialogue has to be found in the process	integration of different perspectives (truths) in the ongoing process of searching accepting no Gods eye's view Q: How can we all go save(ed) together?

Tab. 1: *Theology of Religion classification and forms of religiosity*

1. **Interreligious learning** works by networking points of contact **in order to balance reference and process** orientation.
2. **Balance** will never be reached fully, but is a motivation to **continue the process of dialogue**.
3. **Truth**, seen not as a point but also **as a process**, can cope with unity and difference.
4. **Interreligious Spirituality** listens to religion's ways and points of reference in order to enable to **continue and learn from each other**.
5. **Theology of religion** needs to focus not only on religious ends but on the dialogue process itself. **Process and reference-religiosity** and a strive for balance can serve as an alternative category.

Therefore, I argue that a shift towards reference and process orientated theology of religion might be a way out of the above problems and be able to lead the discourse to fresh new ground. A reference and process oriented theology of religions looks upon how religious identity is shaped as a hint to how the truth incarnates. Interreligious learning between Islam, Christianity and Buddhism in Europe indicates that *reference religiosity* and *process religiosity* might be key terms which relate to both: spiritual and theological questions within religious traditions and in relation to other traditions. The question of right and wrong ways to the truth does not seem to be at the center, but forms of relatedness to the question of truth, be it as mainly an *obedient servant* or a *wandering pilgrim*, or, most likely, a mixture of both in search for a new balance.

A theology of religions, which takes the experience of dialogue seriously, will try to develop theological grounds helping to understand the dynamic of dialogue as a hint toward a dynamic truth. For Christians in Europe this dynamic is often experienced as being pulled in two opposite directions: In dialogue with Buddhism the process aspect of religiosity is challenged and fostered,

where as in dialogue with Islam the reference aspect of religiosity is in line with previous thinking. Theology of religion will provide help in understanding this dynamic and help to integrate both aspects into a Christian identity which not only can accept the pluralistic opinions in the society but also relate to the spiritual dynamic which emerges once different traditions meet.

The arguments which lead to the acceptance model take up different perspectives. But they too need to take into account how different forms of religiosity make sense. A theology of religion needs to be balanced, able to integrate difference and show and describe meeting points where religions view truth and relate to it.

VII. Pluralistic Europe learns and struggles with Interreligious Spirituality

A look into ongoing studies of interreligious learning showed that pluralistic Europe learns and struggles with what can be called Interreligious Spirituality.¹⁷ Interreligious learning works by networking linking points of contact. It is never Islam meeting Christianity or Christianity meeting Buddhism, but aspects of religious traditions which serve as a bridge to meet. Here, comparative theology is working to broaden possible links between the religious traditions. These networking linking points of contact can be connected with positive or negative connotations. Religious identity in Europe seems to be shaped by a dynamic of two forces, found in different shapes and strengths in religions present in the Europe of today. Reference religiosity and process religiosity are part of Islam, Christian and Buddhist forms of faith. The related study will try to examine this dynamic in other faith-relations, such as Judaism, in future projects. Religious identity in Europe seems to be in search of a new form of spirituality. A way of faith, which can relate to others not only by accepting or denying their religious goals, but by understanding different ways and traditions and how to relate to these goals. The archetypes “obedient servant” and “wandering pilgrim” might be able to indicate and help to understand some of the relevant aspects on how religious identity is shaped. Empirical qualitative research of interreligious relations in Europe is just in its beginning. But the first glimpse into the treasure boxes of individual learning experience promise a wide range of new knowledge on how religious identity is generated and how to make theological sense of it.

Literature:

Heim, S. Mark, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*. By. Sacra Doctrina Series. Grand Rapids, Mich. and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans

¹⁷ Rötting, Martin, *Interreligiöse Spiritualität. Vom verantwortungsvollen Umgang der Religionen*, EOS-Verlag, München, 2008.

Publishing Company, 2001.

Kolb, David A., *Experiential learning. Experience as a source of learning and development*, New Jersey, 1984.

Knitter, Paul, *Introducing Theology of Religion*, Maryknoll, 2002.

Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Gott ohne Grenzen, Eine christliche und pluralistische Theologie der Religionen*, Gütersloh, 2005.

Rötting, Martin, Christian Process and Buddhist Reference?, Interreligious Learning in Buddhist-Christian-Dialogue, in: O'Grady John; Scherle, Peter (eds.), *Ecumenics from the rin, Explorations in honour of John D'Arcy May*, Berlin, 2007, p 279-287.

Ders., *Interreligiöse Spiritualität, Verantwortungsvoller Umgang der Religionen*, St. Ottilien 2008.

Ders., *Interreligiöses Lernen im buddhistisch-christlichen Dialog, Lerntheoretischer Zugang und qualitativ-empirische Untersuchung in Deutschland und Südkorea*, München, 2007.

Ders., *Interreligiöses Lernen im christlich-muslimischen Dialog, Interview-Transcript and Analyses*. Munich, Unpublished, 2009.