What is at stake for me in defining "religion"—as I've put it—strictly "functionally," instead of "substantively" (cf., e.g., *Is There Only One True Religion*: 9 f., 22 f.)?

What is at stake—and I believe all that is at stake—is that I'm interested in defining "religion" entirely in terms of the *question* it asks and answers, together, of course, with whatever its question necessarily presupposes or implies, as distinct from defining it in terms of any of the possible *answers* to the question given by different specific religions. In other words, there is no more than a verbal difference between my distinguishing between "functional" and "substantive" definitions of "religion," on the one hand, and my distinguishing, on the other hand, between what religions are "formally" and what they are "materially."

Of course, my distinction between "axial" and "preaxial" religions is itself more than a merely "formal," and, insofar forth, a "material," distinction. It is "material" because the *questions* the axial religions typically ask and answer are themselves materially different from the type of questions asked and answered by the preaxial religions. Whereas questions of the second type are occasioned by so-called metaphysical evils, or by the "boundary situations" typical of fragmentary existence that understands, questions of the first type are occasioned by the unique factual evil of self-*mis*understanding, or by the unique factual situation commonly called "the human predicament"—the predicament of freely and responsibly choosing to misunderstand oneself in one's ultimate setting as a fragmentary being who *can* understand, and therefore also *must* understand (or misunderstand) itself and everything else. But the inference to be drawn from this, surely, is that the distinction between "formal" and "material," although, in one sense, absolute, is also, in another sense, or at another level, relative. Concepts/terms that function in one sense, or at one level, to *answer* the religious question may function, in yet another sense, or at another level, to *ask* it, thereby creating the need for still other concepts/terms wherewith to answer it as thus asked.

In any case, I feel no need to continue to talk about defining "religion" strictly "functionally," in addition to saying that, for various reasons, "religion" can and should be defined purely "formally" by analyzing its distinctive question and what that question necessarily presupposes and implies. Assuming , as one surely must, that, whatever else "religion" is, it is a more or less distinguishable form of human culture, or "cultural system" (Clifford Geertz), one may define it purely formally, or generically, as I define it: as the primary form of culture through which the religious question, or, more formally still, the existential question, is explicitly asked and answered. Any particular religion, then, is to be defined purely formally, and yet specifically, as the primary form of culture constituted by this, that, or the other explicit answer to the religious, or existential, question.

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