



Téma: *Úvod*

Given my methodological preoccupations over the past few years and the particular foci of interest for this meeting of the Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte, I am grateful to Dr. Ulrich Berner and the Planning Committee of the society for the invitation to present for discussion and debate here what I consider to be problematic in current interpretations of the nature and responsibilities of the field of Religious Studies in light of recent religio-political developments in the broader social realm.

I

The theme of this conference captures for me much of what I consider to have gone wrong with the study of religion first "established" as a scientific enterprise in a variety of academic institutional settings in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In saying this I do not mean to suggest that a scientific study of religion (Religionswissenschaft) appropriate to the modern research university found itself well established in those institutions. Indeed, I think it is closer to the truth to say that there have been virtually no departments of Religious Studies (or only a blessed few) that have espoused a scientific agenda that not only sought to increase our fund of empirical knowledge about religions but also aimed at seeking explanatory or theoretical accounts of them. I think the effect religion and theology had on the rise and development of our colleges and universities (and its continuing influence on the societies that support them today) largely accounts for the failure of that nineteenth century ideal of a scientific study of religion as an enterprise able to provide us with objective knowledge of religions and religion. Several additional reasons for that failure can be cited, including the rejection of the claim that nineteenth century students of religion actually espoused, or even contemplated the possibility of, an objective, scientific study of religion, and the fairly widespread belief among contemporary students of religion that postmodernism has debunked the epistemic claims (or' pretensions, as some would have it) of the sciences; that is, that partisanship has been shown to be an irremovable aspect of the epistemological framework of the modern university. I reject both of these claims and will set out reasons for my disagreement in section three of this paper below - which, for pressure of time, I will not present orally here - because my central concern in this paper is the notion of the Kritikpotenzial der Religionswissenschaft which, it seems to me constitutes an inappropriate, extra-scientific agenda for the academic study of religion which has been given a renewed impetus for many scholars by the recent world-wide resurgence of religion. I shall argue here, therefore, that a properly formulated scientific study of religion (Religiol1swissenschaft,) -- which ideal flowered briefly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries largely because of the classical critiques of religion raised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - necessarily precludes Kritikpotenzial in the sense in which it is used in the announced theme of the conference.

I hope that in stating my thesis so baldly, I have not offended anyone; I mean only to try to get to the point as quickly as possible. Furthermore, in order not to create any

confusion, I should also note that it is not the general theme of "religion and criticism," or even the notion of the critical potential of religions that I find problematic. Clearly, there are many substantive Religious Studies research projects possible in connection with religion and religions seen either as the object or source of criticism, such as the issues involved in intra-religious and inter-religious critique, or the religious critique of nonreligious elements or aspects of culture. The study of religion, obviously, should attempt to explain or shed light on such religious critiques, which are reasonably labelled religious apologetic, just as it sets out to explain any other element or aspect of religion. What I do find problematic, however, is the assumption of the "Kritikpotenzial der Religionswissenschaft" because it suggests that the scientific student can or should employ the kind of criticism exercised by religions, which, it seems to me, would amount either to the engagement in anti-religious polemic or some form of constructive socia-political undertaking. I shall refer to this notion of criticism as the active or explicit Kritikpotenzial of the field. Furthermore, although I do not dispute the claim made in the elaboration of the theme provided to conference participants that Religionswissenschaft may have a negative impact on the selfunderstanding of religious individuals and/or communities -- in consequence of which the scientific study of religion may "legitimately" (reasonably) become the object of religious critique -- I do not consider this to be indicative of what one might call a passive or implicit Kritikpotenzial. Thus, to put the matter bluntly, if somewhat paradoxically, I will argue that Religionswissenschaft is without Kritikpotenzial, active or passive, whatever the social or cultural activities in which individual scholars (qua citizen) may become involved, or the implications that the study of religion may appear to harbour for religion. That is, structurally speaking, social and cultural critique is not, and cannot be, a significant element of the modern scientific study of religion. In so far as the modern study of religion is a scientific undertaking it obviously involves critical thinking -- which may in fact have some practical relevance for those who are committed to extra-scientific social objectives -- but it is not, nor does it involve, a form of ideology critique, pragmatic critique, critical theory, or any other type of criticism or critique that involves "oppositional thinking" or any other kind of engagement in socia-cultural affairs. It is critical in the sense that it subjects its claims to the informed judgment of reason -- testing them for coherence and consistency, and against objective, empirical evidence. To summarize, then, I will argue, on historical and methodological grounds, both that active Kritikpotenzial may be the legitimate task of the public intellectual (whether a religious or a secular critic) but not of the Religionswissenschaftler, and that the notion of a passive or implicit Kritikpotenzial is a pseudocategory .

II

My concern with the promotion of active Kritikpotenzial as an element of the scientific study of religion emerged twenty years ago on reading prof. Kurt Rudolph's proposal for a history of religions that would embody a critique of ideologies. In chapter four of his *Historical Fundamentals and the Study of Religion*, Rudolph differentiates several forms of "ideology critique" which he labels theoretical or logical, and pragmatic. It is what he calls pragmatic ideology critique that caused me concern, however, because his motivation for including such ideology critique as an aspect of the history of religions was, as he puts it, "the possibility of directly addressing the political and social reality of our times" (Rudolph. 1985:61). From the point of view of his understanding of the

historical fundamentals of the study of religion -- and, therefore, from the point of view of modern science more generally -- his notions of theoretical/logical, and factual critique are unproblematic, for they relate to issues of method and methodology that are aspects of a framework of analytical and critical rationalism designed to achieve objective knowledge about religions (Rudolph 1985:68). It is pragmatic critique which is geared to psychological and social emancipatory concerns, and therefore involves extra scientific (or non-epistemic) objectives, that creates difficulties in providing a coherent characterization of the scientific study of religion. There can be no doubt, to be sure, that such pragmatic critique makes possible direct involvement in the political and social reality of our time, as Rudolph put it. What is in question, however, is why Rudolph sees this as an essential element of the methodology of the scientific study of religion (or of any other natural or social science) given that it in no way contributes to an increase either in our factual or explanatory/theoretical knowledge of religion (or some other aspect of the natural or social world). And if it is not presumed to be an integral element of the scientific study of religion, promoting pragmatic ideology critique -- that is, insisting that the academic study of religion have emancipatory effect on the self-understanding people have of religion through the relativisation of religious confessions and traditions -- does nothing more than saddle students of religion with a political agenda, drawing them away from scientific work and into an engagement in an antireligious polemic. Although Rudolph may see this as possessing "an altogether positive significance for the common life of humanity" (in so far as he thinks this will further "understanding, tolerance, and mutual recognition" [Rudolph 1985:77]) his judgment that this is an essential aspect of a science of religion is not likely to go undisputed; indeed, it is more than likely to be interpreted as propagating an alternative non-religious worldview that is politically and morally preferable to religion -- thus involving the scholar in the work of social formation, something he rightly claims is not a task for the scientific student of religion (Rudolph 2000:238 [Some Reflections on Approaches to Methodologies in the Study of Religions]).

It seems to me that implicit in Rudolph's position is the claim that the history of religions, as he conceived of it, also possesses a passive or implicit Kritikpotenzial. When speaking of the scientific study of religion, he notes that "[t]o the extent that the history of religions is a scientific endeavour, it exercises a critical function" (1985:69). If he were to leave the claim as formulated, it would appear that Rudolph would be simply espousing a form of what Stanley Fish calls "cognitive idealism"; a position that commits one to believing, as Fish puts it, that "if we can only get our intellectual categories straight and in order, then we will be able to order, revolutionize, clean up, improve, and purify the world" (Fish 2002: 122). But then science and Kritikpotenzial would be the same thing and his argument would be unnecessary. But this clearly is not what Rudolph affirms, for he (inconsistently) gives place in his understanding of the scientific study of religion to a form of criticism beyond that found in the analytical framework of thought to which I have referred above. He writes: "If the history of religions is to preserve the present spirit and further its autonomy, it must not only work out the peculiarities of its methods, it must also revive its religio-critical, or rather, its ideological-critical function" (Rudolph 1985:74). This, however, seems to muddy his account of the history of religions as objective scholarship which, it seems, established a clear demarcation between the study of religion on the one hand, and religion on the other (and thereby transcended all engagement with religion). Yet Rudolph also seems to suggest that the "secular" character of the study of religion is more than simply a methodological stance; that such a study of religion implies a

substantive rejection of religion -- a replacement of a religious world view, as he puts it, with another "tradition that is not accepted without examination" (Rudolph 1985:77). This hardly makes the scientific study of religion a neutral undertaking in the sense he requires of it in a later essay where he claims that "the study of religions ought not to permit itself to propagate in any way either a religion or theology or an atheistic worldview ... (Rudolph 2000:238). When it comes to the relationship of the scientific study of religion to religion itself Rudolph brusquely states that "either one engages in scholarship or in worship" (Rudolph 2000:235). In the same fashion I want to suggest that when it comes to a discussion of the relationship of the scientific study of religion to ideology-critique, either one engages in scholarship or in politics; that one cannot, qua scientist, do both at the same time; that in doing so, the scholar would involve herself in a conflict of interest. This holds true, I contend, with respect to those who, like Rudolph, wish to show the positive significance Religionswissenschaft may hold for the common life of humanity (Rudolph 1985:77) and who, therefore, wish to link this science to institutions beyond the walls of the academy that will provide the field with political clout (Rudolph 2000:241). I now turn more directly to the question implicit in the title of my paper, namely, the significance of the criticism of religion for the scientific study of religion. Whereas Kurt Rudolph maintains that criticism of religion and ideology-critique more generally, is an essential element of the scientific study of religion, without which its autonomy would stand jeopardy, I suggest a much more limited role for the criticism of religion. A proper understanding of the import of the critique of religion for the scientific study of religion, I will argue, is of historical significance only; that it is only the criticism of religion that antedates the emergence of a scientific approach to understanding religions and religion which is essential, because it was, in an important sense, foundational to a scientific study of religion.

Early modern discussion and debate on religion, as Samuel Preus has pointed out in his history of the changing intellectual ethos of modern European society, reveals a series of minor revolutions in thought about religion the cumulative effects of which, by the end of the nineteenth century, made possible a radically different approach to the study of religion from that governed by piety and theology up to that time. Both the internal critique of religion by theologians and the discovery of a religious world outside of Christendom, he maintains, disclosed religion to be problematic -- that is, divested religion of its until-then obvious claims to truth and authority. This in turn, methodologically speaking, was seen as justification for setting aside religio-theological presuppositions, and commitments in the study of religion and made possible the search for alternative -- that is, rational -- explanations of religious phenomena. According to Preus, it was Hume who brought this development to completion for, as he puts it, it was Hume who "in effect closes an era of criticism and opens the paths of future research" (Preus 1996: 100; emphasis added). Eric Sharpe's institutional history of the field -- although in some senses an apology for what one might charitably call a "religiously sensitive" scientific study of religion, but ultimately a religiously critical reading of the rise of a naturalistic study of religion -adumbrates the new path for future research that followed on the heels of the classic general critiques of religion; that is, on the heels of the pre-scientific, anti-religious criticism common in early modern Europe. The early scientific study of religion, that is, did not simply continue to multiply criticisms of religion but rather transformed criticism into methodological injunctions. It is in this period that the study of religion adopted a new research program that generated a search for an explanatory account of religions and

religious phenomena that moved beyond earlier theological and philosophical arguments either on behalf of or against religion (Sharpe 1986:26). According to Sharpe, "evolutionism" provided a grounding principle for the study of religion that for the first time made it possible for that study to understand religion in other than religious terms. In the nineteenth century -- and particularly because of the thought of Charles Darwin -- Sharpe writes, "it became increasingly clear that the real focus of the study of religion was to be located not in transcendental philosophy, but in the altogether this-worldly categories of history, progress, development, and evolution" (Sharpe 1986:24).

The academic study of religion, then, emerged as a form of secularized scholarship of the same order as the natural (and social) sciences. And as a scientific enterprise, it, like the other sciences, sought knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone and was committed to the same obligations of neutrality and objectivity, as were the other sciences. Knowledge about religions and religion, that is, could only be mediated through a set of intersubjectively testable theoretical

claims and observation statements about religious phenomena and religious traditions. And that, I maintain, methodologically precludes all possibility of a Kritikpotenzial for the scientific study of religions (and constitutes a negative constraint on the student of religion with respect to mounting critiques of religion) despite the fact that it is only by virtue of the earlier substantive critique of religion that such a scientific study emerged as a possibility.

I am aware that one might well argue both that our methodological prescriptions regarding the invocation of non-natural (that is, supernatural) causes in accounting for religious phenomena and that our increasingly persuasive scientific knowledge about religions and religion constitute Kritikpotenzial in that they singly, or in tandem, appear to provide a reasonable foundation for debunking religion as deceptive or illusory and, consequently, as possibly dangerous to the individual or society. Making use of that Kritikpotenzial, however, is of little value to the student of religion qua scientist because it makes no new contribution to our knowledge of/about religion; effectively it amounts to a polemical engagement with religion. "Making use" of such Kritikpotenzial, therefore, would go beyond the objectives of the student of religion as scholar scientist whose concern is epistemic/cognitive rather than polemical or pragmatic. In this judgment I follow Max Weber's analysis of the notion of "science as a vocation" in which he shows decisively that science is a new cultural value -- committed, as Weber puts it, to the self-clarification of ideas and knowledge of interrelated facts -- which is undermined or destroyed when pragmatic values (whether personal, political, social, or cultural) are introduced, so to speak, into the scientific agenda. This is not to say that the results of scientific inquiry are necessarily irrelevant to such pragmatic concerns, but rather only that the relationship between them and the sciences is purely instrumental and therefore external to the scientific agenda. And the student of religion who takes up such a task of critique, as I have shown in my analysis of Russell McCutcheon's political aspirations for the field of Religious Studies (Wiebe 20(5)), fails to see the radical difference that exists between the student of religion as scholar-scientist and McCutcheon's conception of the student of religion as public intellectual -- or, conversely, the fundamental identity between the religious critic and what in McCutcheon's system must amount to a religious-studies critic (McCutcheon 1997; 2000).

It is true, nevertheless, that Preus's account of the conditions that made possible the emergence of this naturalistic framework for the study of religion centrally involved the critique of religion and the religious study of religion. Consequently it is in some sense

reasonable to suggest that the new, naturalistic study of religion by its very existence constitutes a critique of the crypto-theological frameworks that still seem to dominate the field of Religious Studies today. The critique of religion in early modern Europe that made this development possible, moreover, involved the substitution of a secular for the earlier sacral world view and so, again, it might reasonably be argued that the consequent secularity of the new style of academic study of religion amounts to a continuing, even if only implicit, critique of religion and the religious study of religion. However, I am not persuaded that "implicit critique" is an altogether coherent notion. First, the notion seems to involve a form of circular argumentation in that it simply expresses the substantive (metaphysical) implications of the classical critique of religion that made possible development of the methodological foundations upon which the scientific study of religion rests. And second, it obviously differs radically from our general understanding here of critique as the debunking of religious claims that attends the disclosure of the intellectual naïveté of religious belief and practice, and also differs from the anti-religious criticism meant to undermine the influence of religion on culture and society. Once having achieved independence from religion, this naturalistic study of religious phenomena focusses attention on obtaining scientifically respectable knowledge about religions comparable to the kind of knowledge of states of affairs of the world sought by the other natural (and incipient social) sciences. The work of the natural and social scientists also precludes all recourse to religious or supernatural resources in the formulation of their empirical and theoretical claims. Does this mean that they too (qua scientists and not qua citizens) must "work out" this implicit Kritikpotenzial in their respective enterprises? Do they need, on a continuing basis, to justify themselves against the criticism that their work constitutes an (implicit but nevertheless offensive) attack on religion? The answer, clearly, is no to each question. In this regard I think the scientific student of religion can rebut the charge of engaging in surreptitious or implicit anti-religious polemic in the way Freud rebutted the same charge against his book on Moses and Monotheism. As he put the matter: "It is an attack on religion only in so far as, after all, every scientific investigation of a religious belief has unbelief as its presupposition." Like the other sciences, then, the scientific study of religion clearly distinguishes its epistemic-scientific objectives from broader religio-political or religio-cultural goals that its practitioners, qua public intellectuals, or simply as concerned citizens, might espouse. Thus, as Preus has put it: "The naturalistic approach [to understanding religion] is at once more modest and more ambitious than the religious one: more modest because it is content to investigate causes, motivations, meanings, and impact of religious phenomena without pronouncing on their cosmic significance for human destiny; [more] ambitious, in that the study of religion strives to explain and to integrate its understanding into the other elements of culture to which it is related" (Preus 1996:211).

To summarize then, it is true to say that some students of religion have assumed that the new science involves a duty to religion and/or culture, or to culture over against religion. I have argued, however, that a proper understanding of the history of the formation of the scientific study of religion undermines that claim. Lammert Leertouwer, in his brief study of Gerardus van der Leeuw's understanding of the ultimate aim of phenomenology of religion, has persuasively argued that Religious Studies "has gained scientific strength at the price of losing its powers as a critic of culture" (Leertouwer 1991 :63). And I think. I have shown here that one is also justified in saying the same about foregoing the notion of the Kritikpotenzial of the scientific study of religion; of properly

recognizing that, at best, one can talk -- in a Weberian fashion -- about the possible pragmatic uses to which the results of scientific study in this field might be put by others relative to their non-scientific goals and objectives. The problematization of religion in early modern European discussion and debate made possible an academic treatment of religion as a cultural artifact like any other, without the need for an alternative metaphysical commitment. In problematizing the epistemic authority of religion, the study of religion was licensed, so to speak, to seek alternative explanatory accounts for religious belief and practice; it was, that is, licensed as a scientific/epistemic enterprise in the context of the modern university -- not as a tool in the socio-cultural transformation of society.

III

It is clear that my argument here rests on the assumptions that the sciences represent humanity's soundest epistemic/cognitive achievement, and that late nineteenth century scholars of religion envisioned and attempted to establish an objective, scientific study of religion. Given the fact that criticism of these assumptions lies at the basis of the success of the current dominant non-scientific -- whether religio-theological or metaphysically oriented humanistic -- approaches to the study of religion, as I pointed out in the introduction to this paper, at least a brief response to those critiques is called for here.

In a very recent paper on "The Problem of Disciplinary Formation in the Study of Religion" (2005) Steven Sutcliffe maintains that the science of religion that supposedly emerged in late nineteenth-century Europe "was from the outset bound up with defending a particular sui generis (Protestant) model of religion" (Sutcliffe 2005 :20) and was not therefore a scientific study of religion. In consequence he rejects my argument that scholars like F. Max Muller, Cornelis P. Tiele, and others actually "set up a viable disciplinary platform for R[eligious] S[tudies] that was only later arrested by a 'failure of nerve'" (although he grants that this claim may be helpful as a political strategy "to salvage a viable genealogy of R[eligious S[tudies] from a desperate field ... " (Sutcliffe 2005:20). I can to some extent sympathize with Sutcliffe's assessment of that period of the scholarly study of religion although I think the peculiar contexts in which Müller and Tiele worked mitigates its force somewhat. Regarding Müller, for example, there is a sense in which Britain constituted something of a "local culture" within the nineteenth century world of science, as David Knight puts it, in that it was not only an age of science but also an age of religion, which is to say that "science was entwined with other activities [such as natural theology, which, as he puts it] ... were not simply counterweights or antagonists" (Knight 1986:30). What this shows is that the search for a scientific account of the world would not only provide us with knowledge of the physical and social world but of the religious world as well. Thus, as Knight notes, it is not at all surprising that scholars assumed the disinterested pursuit of truth would be as fruitful in the study of religion as it was in the study of other natural phenomena (Knight 1986:204). Understanding this allows us to make sense out of Müller's belief that his religious convictions would ultimately

converge with scientific truth without fudging his scientific results. The whole point of science for him, that is, was to gain independent and autonomous (scientific) support for his religious beliefs. To put the matter another way, it is wholly in accord with the facts of Muller's career, I think, to claim that he brought science to bear on his religious convictions but never infused his religious convictions into his science. His science of religion was all of a cloth with all the other sciences. The case I made for Tiele does not now appear to me to be as persuasive as that for Müller. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Tiele's radical Kantian distinction between religion as a socio-cultural reality and religion-as-such reveals a wholesale acceptance of the scientific enterprise as necessary for a study of religion that would be found to be acceptable in the framework of the modern university. This alone, it seems to me, provides an explanation, as Jan Platvoet (1998) points out, for the special duplex *ordo statute* (in 1876) that separated the confessional from the scientific disciplines in the Dutch universities, thus establishing the discipline of Science of Religion free from confessional control. It is beyond dispute, I think, that Tiele's commitments to science were significant in bringing about radical changes in the institutional context in which such an enterprise might flourish.

The fact that both Müller and Tiele were honorary presidents of the International Congress of the History of Religions held in Paris in 1900 also shows, I suggest, their commitment to the establishment of a Science of Religion, free from all religious and ideological control. As Sharpe noted in his history of the field, the Paris Congress was not given over to religious agendas as were earlier meetings of scholars of religion in Chicago (in 1893) and Stockholm (in 1897); the Congress was focussed entirely on religions as objects of study and not as addresses to the human soul. And in this sense Müller and Tiele clearly provided an ideal or model for a new, non-religious kind of study of religious phenomena that actually did, at least to a small extent, make a difference to the field, as Sharpe indicates in the following brief description of subsequent developments:

We have been able to see the field being gradually taken over by 'the advocates of comparative religion as a pure science. The irenic enthusiast was not welcomed, and soon came to realise that his interests would only be served by an entirely independent kind of gathering devoted to the goal of the final unity of all believers. The separation became more and more marked as time went on, and the scholarly climate of opinion began to turn away from unilinear evolution and world-wide comparison, and towards culture history, culture circles and the uniqueness of religious traditions. Thus by the 1920s the two paths [of the study of religion as a pure science and an applied science] had become almost entirely separated (1985 :252).

In a series of articles over the past decade and more, as well as in his book on *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (2002/1997; (*Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte: Religionswissenschaft und Moderne*), Hans Kippenberg has provided us with a somewhat similar but much more detailed overview of the formation of the modern scholarly study of religion. If I have understood him properly, it is not the Enlightenment critique of religion -- and what I would refer to as the emergence of reason as a nonmoral instrument of inquiry during that period -- that gave rise to a neutral, objective, scientific study of religion but rather the "crisis of culture" caused by modernization that produced a scholarly study of religion that would restore to religions their right to exist and so to provide people with resources for living meaningful lives. In

other words, the so-called scientific students of religions in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were, in effect, crypto-theologians. As he puts it in the book, these scholars of religion set out to give "religions outdated by progress a new place and another function in modern society" (Kippenberg 2002: 193). Thus, as he argues in one of his papers, it is not a happen-stance that the "foundation of an academic study of religions coincided with the beginnings of modernization" (Kippenberg 1997: 164).

According to Kippenberg, then, historians of religions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not undertake a single, positivistic kind of historical exercise; they were simultaneously, and primarily, engaged in fundamental human questions of meaning for which they sought resources for the "answers" in the worldviews of the world's religious traditions. That is, for them, "[writing religious history and the diagnosis of the menace of modern civilization were closely interwoven in religious studies" (Kippenberg 2002: 194). Their experience of modernity, he notes in another essay, pervaded the study of religion. As he puts it: "Religions in need of explanation not so long before were now studied by scholars in order to find the genealogies of modern culture. Religion moved from being an explanandum to an explanans ... " (Kippenberg 2000: 16). And, as he puts it, this meant that religion "could also be appreciated as foundation of a metaphysical self and of individualism in society (Kippenberg 2000: I 6-17). Kippenberg, therefore, claims that the "religious studies" created by these scholars was also a philosophy of religion in which, it appears, they assumed religion to be a sui generis phenomenon, and which was, therefore, directed to finding the contemporary and future value of past religions. Thus Religious Studies did not stand outside the world of religions and religious history but rather was involved in shaping even the religious situation of our time. Not only does he make this claim as being historically accurate about late nineteenth and early twentieth century students of religion, he also asserts that there can be no "religious studies" that is not also at the same time a philosophy of religion, just as he claims, for following Hayden White, and others, that -there can be no history without a philosophy of history.

If Kippenberg is right in the claims he makes, then, clearly, the scholarly (academic?) study of religion that emerged around the turn of the last century is less science than it is culture criticism, or a philosophy in service of culture criticism. I think, in fact, that Luther Martin has succinctly captured the message of *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* when he writes that Kippenberg has traced an "historical study of religion defined not by its compatibility with modernity but by its reactions against the 'perceived threat' of modernity" (Martin 2005:251) and, therefore, that the scholarly study of religion that modernity incubated amounts to "a recalcitrant apologetic for religion" (Martin 205:253).

Kippenberg's work on the history of "the study of religion" (Religious Studies) in Europe is both extensive and complex and deserves greater consideration than [am able to provide in the context of this paper. Nevertheless, I wish to comment briefly on two matters consequence here: 1) his choice of scholars deemed founding figures of the new science of religion and, in my estimation, his superficial treatment of their analyses and arguments, and 2) his understanding of historiography and its significance for the history of religions. As for his choice of representatives of the new discipline: it seems to me that he fails to distinguish theologically oriented scholars who had an influence on the field from those scholars interested specifically in differentiating the new enterprise from the old (even if revised) theology. I shall not here spend time on this issue however~ because I find the nature of the treatment of the scholars he does choose of much more importance; that

is, I find the interpretations he provides of the major figures in the field to be based on "analysis" of very limited portions of their work. My comments on E. B. Tylor to follow will, I hope, provide some justification for this judgment. As for Kippenberg's brief for a "philosophical history" and a history of religions that amount to a philosophy of religion: I find it flawed and unpersuasive for many of the same reasons that I find William McNeill's proposal for "mythistory" wanting (Wiebe 1989). I find Arnaldo Momigliano's view of the constitution of historical knowledge much more persuasive. As Edward Shils succinctly put it: Momigliano rejected the "resurgence and pervasive influence of Marxism among academics in all countries and the frivolities of literary critics who no less widely deny the difference between fictional narratives and historical narratives" (Shils 1997:228) which he saw as a challenge to the dignity of the human intellect" (Shils 1997:228). Comment on this and related matters, however, will also be made below.

I shall raise first my concerns over Kippenberg's interpretations of nineteenth-century scholars of religion with a few observations about his treatment of E. B. Tylor. It is clearly the case that Tylor understood ethnography and the science of culture (and, therefore, of religion) to be a reformer's science -- that is, to be of practical significance to "the advancement of civilization." And there can be no doubt, as Kippenberg notes, that Tylor's understanding of "survivals" is an important aspect of that enterprise. But I disagree with Kippenberg's claim that this shows that Tylor's Science of Religion is imbued with a philosophy of religion -- that it is not and cannot be a neutral and objective scientific undertaking. Re-reading Tylor's two volumes

on Primitive Culture suggests to me, rather, that he understood ethnography as well as the sciences of culture and religion, to be positivistic and reductionistic, and, therefore, radically free from the "mythologic" of savage thought -- however much continuity there existed between that "logic" and modern science. Nor do I find clear indication in Tylor's texts that he sought in savage religions a framework of meaning that would save society from modern ills. What is clear, however, is that Tylor saw modern science (ethnography and the scientific study of religion) as possibly providing modern society with the "means of furthering progress and removing hindrance" (Tylor 1958 V2:xiii; emphasis added) in the advancement of civilization by providing it with genuine scientific knowledge rather than a philosophy of life. Whereas Kippenberg writes that for Tylor "[m]odern civilization has superseded past models in explaining natural events[,] [s]cience has replaced them gradually, but not altogether[;] [there remained a small but fundamental continuity; the concept of the soul" (Tylor 1958 V2:305). [-How a small continuity also amounts to being fundamental is not revealed by Kippenberg. Moreover, Tylor maintained -- to the contrary it appears -- that the early Greeks "began the supersession of the archaic scheme, and set in motion the transformation of animistic into physical science, which thence pervaded the whole cultured world" (Tylor 1958 V2:293). That "mythologic," Tylor maintains, is still to be found in modern theology, but for him it is an irrational idea in that context, but it is not found in modern science. (And for modern science, it is also irrational in its original context even if it was not so for the persons who formulated that belief then; for them it was "crude science. ") Modern science, therefore, is discontinuous with savage mythological thought even though Tylor refers to it as "rude science"; modern science has superseded such thought and has therefore disenchanting the world (Tylor 1958: V2:267). The assumption that religion (that is, a form of "mythologic") must necessarily exist in modern society, or that Tylor espoused such a claim so as to be able to provide a source of meaning over against the nihilism of modern society, runs contrary to Tylor's thought.

Tylor, that is, did not think religion an eternal value, or even necessarily coeval with society as Kippenberg seems to suggest when he writes: "The notion of 'survival' served as a category of historical imagination [for Tylor]; it conceived of past religious phenomena as relevant in future times" (Kippenberg 1998:308). But as I read Tylor, he recognized that religion may well have a non-religious origin and, that it might also cease to exist sometime in the future and need not necessarily, therefore, have any relevance to later societies. Fie maintains, for example, that one cannot with justification claim that hW1lallS "cannot have emerged from a non-religious condition, previous to that religious condition in which he happens at present to come with sufficient clearness within our range of knowledge" (Tylor 1958 V2:9). Nevertheless, Tylor recognizes that a belief in spiritual beings characterizes all peoples with whom scholars of religion are acquainted -- but this he sees merely as the grounds for approaching the study of religion on the basis of observation rather than speculation, and he advises that the scientific student of religion proceed in the same way the naturalist studies the geography of flora and fauna, or the astronomer, the planets and the stars. Clearly, therefore, the study of religion for Tylor must proceed free of the influence of religions, revelations, and any other metaphysical/philosophical systems of belief and must focus on achieving objective knowledge about the past (that is, about past religions). That such knowledge may be relevant to the aims and objectives of social reformers does not imply that the ethnographers and scientific students of religion are themselves (or must be) such reformers.

I also find Kippenberg's more general claim that an implicit philosophy of religion pervades all historiography of religion unpersuasive; that is, that all historians of religion place the academic study of religion in the service of a philosophy of religion. To suggest, as he does, that all nineteenth-century scholars of religion were simply involved in "shaping a scholarly fund of world views and norms that served a broader audience as a resource to meaning" (2002: 192), and that they in the process, therefore, crossed over from dealing with fact into producing fiction, is also unpersuasive; it does not fit the facts we know about their scholarly interests, nor does it adequately account for the nature of their research activities. Scholars like F. Max Müller, Cornelis P. Tiele, and others worked hard to distinguish their scientific research objectives from their religious and theological concerns and commitments. They were quite consciously aware, on the one hand, of their religious and philosophical commitments and their political and cultural agendas and, on the other hand, looked to the possibility that their scientific work might provide means by which their extra-scientific objectives could be achieved. Indeed, as I have suggested in my comments on Sutcliffe above, one can see in Muller and Tiele a conscious and deliberate effort to exclude religious and philosophical prejudice from their attempt to understand religion. In this regard their work is clearly of a different order from that of Gerardus van der Leeuw for whom the idea of an objective study of religion was inconceivable (Wiebe 1991; reprinted in 1999), or of the work of Historians of Religion such as Gershom Scholem, Henri Corbin, or Mircea Eliade who, as Steven Wasserslrom has shown (1999), saw their undertaking as a kind of sacred (religious) science (Wiebe 2002). Müller and Tiele, that is, were Weberian in their understanding of the external and instrumental nature of the relationship between science and cultural values.

It seems to me that in some sense Kippenberg is himself aware of the distinction I am trying to draw here between these two types of religious studies scholars. He notes, for example, that the nineteenth-century scholars of whom he claims that they not only "doubted modern society" (and therefore sought values beyond it), but that they also

"trusted science as the way to reliable knowledge about religion" (Kippenberg 2002: 194). It may also be the case that, as he puts it, they doubted "the claims to truth of handed-down religions, yet believed in their lasting achievements" (Kippenberg 2002: 194), but it is still the case that those who held such views, strove to show this to be so through objective, disinterested, scientific procedures. If, as Kippenberg also claims, they still nevertheless crossed over from fact into fiction, they did so inadvertently, by way of error, and therefore fell short of their consciously espoused ideal. And this, as I have just pointed out, differentiates their work from their predecessors and many to most of their successors in the field.

Four further brief points of interest. First: If Kippenberg is right about his claim that all history of religions involves or presupposes a philosophy of religion, it is not altogether clear what his complaint about the loss of the notion of history to the field amounts to -- unless he means to suggest that students of religion should critically assess their positions for the implicit philosophies that pervade them and then consciously continue their work from within those (or other consciously chosen alternatives) philosophical perspectives. Second: Given Kippenberg's theory of historiography (that is, that all history is really philosophy of history), it might reasonably be asked whether one would be justified in suggesting that his work is not a "history of the study of religion" but rather a fiction informed by an unconscious philosophical objective. Third: Given that our involvements in history are local and particular, how can we succeed, as he puts it (Kippenberg 2003:919), in rendering that involvement into common categories (fictions) which must -- like Kant's categories -- apply universally to all those engaged in the enterprise? Finally: What sense can be made of Kippenberg's claim that all historians cross over from fact to fiction but that fictions nevertheless are not totally arbitrary -- that "[not] everything that is fiction is unreal" (Kippenberg 2002: 189).

Given Kippenberg's flirtation with postmodernism, I now turn to the postmodern claims -- espoused by many students of religion and theologians -- that the objective of the modern research university to seek a disinterested or neutral knowledge of the world is incoherent and cannot, therefore, provide an appropriate bench mark of achievement for the scholarly/academic study of religion. No detailed analysis of those claims is possible here. In lieu of argument, I refer the listener/reader to John H. Zammito's critical review of post modern theory in his *A Nice Derangement of Epistemes: Post-Positivism in the Study of Science from Quine to Latour* (2004) in which he shows that the constraints and demands of empirical science cannot be so easily subverted. His history reconstructs what he calls the three hyperbolic dogmas of "anti-empiricism" that have dominated postmodern theory throughout this period, namely: theory-ladenness, underdetermination, and incommensurability; and he shows that "[n]one is justified in the radical form which alone empowers the extravagances of postmodernism" (Zammito 2004:271). Consequently, he claims, they do not justify the denigration of science that postmodernists have heaped upon it; and "real philosophers," he insists, "have increasingly taken a deflationary view of their authority over the empirical disciplines" (Zammito 2004:3). Although he does not deny that the postmodern theorists have something to teach us, he nevertheless contends "that it is time to take up a more moderate historicism" (Zammito 2004:5) and claims that after the extravagant postmodern claims are dispelled, what remains will be "fully assimilable into -- not preemptive of -- empirical inquiry" (Zammito 2004:2). His concluding paragraph is worth quoting in full here:

There has been a derangement of epistemes. Philosophy of science pursued 'semantic ascent' into a philosophy of language so 'holistic' as to deny determinate purchase on the world of which we speak. History and sociology of science has become so 'reflexive' that it has plunged 'all the way down' into the abyme of an almost absolute skepticism. In that light, my fears are for empirical inquiry not in the natural sciences, whose practitioners brush all this off as impertinence, but in the human sciences. Hyperbolic 'theory' threatens especially the prospect for learning anything from others that we did not already presume. It is time for hard reckoning, for a rigorous deflation. Willard Quine put it with uncharacteristic bluntness: 'To disavow the very core of common sense, to require evidence for that which both the physicist and the man in the street accept as platitudinous, is no laudable perfectionism; it is a pompous confusion (Zammito 2004:275).

IV

In summing up the argument of this paper, I think it fair to say that although the "historical resources" that made the emergence of a scientific treatment of religion possible creates some ambiguities about the question of its Kritikpotenzial I have nevertheless shown that that new enterprise requires scientific students of religion deliberately (that is, methodologically) to eschew the notion of a Kritikpotenzial for the discipline. Moreover, I have also provided sufficient justification for the two major assumptions upon which my argument for that claim rests. First, I have been able to lay bare serious weaknesses in the arguments presented in support of a "continuity thesis" that maintains there is an essential identity between the nature of the study of religion in pre-modern Europe and that which came into existence in the modern university around the turn of the last century. And, second, I have shown that postmodern critics have not delivered knock-down arguments sufficient to undermine our epistemic confidence in common sense and the sciences, or the appropriateness of using the sciences as the epistemic/cognitive bench mark of achievement for the academic study of religion.