Economies of Religion: Symbolic, Communicative and Spatial Terms of Religious Production and Consumption

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Abstract

In the case of contemporary religion, attempts to analyse the financing of religious institutions and the 'economy of religion' in terms of *homo economicus* and rational choice theory have repeatedly been addressed and criticised. As regards antiquity, the major focus of analogous studies has been the economic nexus implied by sacrificial consumption, or, to a smaller extent. On exotic requisites for more elaborate rituals such as spectacles. This keynote lecture briefly reviews these issues (section 1), but takes a fundamentally different approach, starting from the issues of religious agency, lived ancient religion and the urban setting of much of what we can represent as religion in the ancient world. I argue that ancient religion involves three different sorts of 'economy' that are incompatible with the notion of 'balance sheet' and cannot be represented meaningfully in monetary terms, namely the symbolic or political economy of religion, the economy of religious communication and the economy of space.

Of the three substantive sections, the first argues that religious practices – that is, cult formally addressed to divine beings – were given a crucial role in establishing specifically public roles and created cultural capital that could readily be transformed into political authority. The argument of the second section is that the very logic of communication with non-human addressees stimulated massive investment into media that both increased the efficacy of religious communication and produced religious goods that subsequently became available for consumption or reuse by others. Finally, given the density and diversity of ancient cities, space was a scarce resource that prompted different types of religious use, for example in increasing (and sometimes reducing) competition in different types of sacralisation and the use of space over time. The lecture will mostly rely on examples taken from the city of Rome, but will attempt more general conclusions.

1 Economics of Religion: Methodological Options

When Burkhard Gladigow presented the results of a Tübingen research group working on 'economics of religion' (Religionsökonomie) at the biennial national conference of the German Association for the Study of Religion at Bremen in 1994,[1] he was reacting to the recent rise of economic theories of religion developed by American sociologists, in particular Rodney Stark, William Bainbridge and Laurence R. Iannaccone,[2] which

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had already attracted critical discussion in the USA, for instance in an issue of "Social Compass" in 1992.[3] The main methodological innovation of this approach was the application of rational choice theory to religious commitment and the development of religious groups under the conditions of a hypothetical 'religious market' determined to maximize their own profit, each agent determines their investment (i.e. religious commitment) in the light of the immediate social rewards to be expected and the recompense promised for perceived deprivations, ranging all the way from lack of political and economic power to the fact of mortality. It was indeed its apparent ability to explain seemingly irrational behaviour with reference to goods not otherwise seen as relevant in economic theory that gave this approach its appeal. However, given the problems involved in transferring the theoretical model of totally rational economic actors to actual behaviour, it now seems obvious that the temporary success of the approach was due primarily to the prestige of the economic model itself.[4]

As far as German "Religionswissenschaft" is concerned, the idea of "Religionsökonomie" was immediately expanded to combine the application of behavioural theories developed in the discipline of economics *to* religion with the study of religions as factors *in* the economy and economic aspects *of* religious actions, including the financing of religion. Thus, traditions of research going back to Adam Smith and Max Weber were linked to then topical concerns about the financing of the major confessions and the question of church taxes as an annex tax to income taxes raised by a German State in the process of integrating the de-Christianized former GDR.[5] The concept of "Religionswissenschaft", understood as a discipline aiming to trace the history of religions in the plural, together with their textual productions, material expressions and institutional forms in different societies and at different periods, as well as the nature of religion *as such* (an aim much criticised and refined in recent discussion), demanded nothing less.

It was in that context that I myself embarked on an analysis of the financing and economic behaviour of Roman priests.[6] The starting points of such a project were a substantive conception of economy as the field of production, exchange, and consumption, and a substantive conception of religion, identified as those activities related to communication with actors considered in a loose sense as transcendent.[7] Any division of labour that has a place for religious specialists and organizations must involve the concomitant transfer of material resources, since both the infrastructure (e.g. sanctuaries) and the regular performance of a cult need to be kept up over the long term. At any rate in antiquity, direct financing via contributions such as pastoral perquisites, collections, fees or cost-sharing seems to have been the exception; occasional but generous contributions from patrons more important. The ownership or leasing of land by temples guaranteed long-term stability and was widespread in Mediterranean antiquity and far beyond. Over the short term, of course, pilgrimage centres or individuals offering specialist religious services (healers, soothsayers, magicians, makers of devotional objects) had to make a living, but even so the conditions of an economic market, such as complete product information, price-transparency, and price elasticity of demand, are

hardly present. It is thus obvious that factors such as redistribution and the different types of reciprocal exchange familiar since the work of Karl Polanyi need to be taken into account.[8]

The insights thus gained can be illustrated by a quick look at the economic aspects of sacrifice.[9] Pigs and sheep were the main private sacrificial victims. Public sacrifice however was dominated by cattle, which were substantially more expensive but of course provided more meat. As for age, the victims in private contexts were usually young animals: they were not too expensive, but could still feed a small group. There is a world of difference between having to buy a choice, fat, adult pig for sacrifice, or a small sucking-pig. The *sacra publica* provided a model, representing an 'ideal' ritual order, but it was not necessary to copy them in every detail. This is quite clear from Cato's account in his *De agricultura* of the *suovetaurilia,* i.e. the parading and sacrifice of pig, sheep and bull, to be performed at a farm, in the course of which he substitutes young animals for adult ones – in a text that advertises the investment of capital in agriculture.

Animals had to be bred, raised, bought and transported to the place where the sacrifice was going to take place. This presupposes an entire industry. The sacrificial rules had to be co-ordinated over the "longue durée" with the basics of stock-rearing. If the stock-rearing economy proves unable to provide the animals required for sacrifice, traditions break down. Thus, store animals were eaten relatively, but not extremely, young.[10] In the case of pigs and cattle, the ratio weight-gain/feed-costs reached an optimum of between 12 and 16 months. If the animal is kept alive longer, the ratio progressively decreases. The sacrificial rules were therefore likely to call for animals of this optimum age. Since it is omnivorous, the pig was a very attractive animal for meat-production alone. The case is more complex with cattle, which in antiquity produced meat, milk, hides and labour. In general, males were fattened and killed as steers (i.e. castrated in the age of two to four months), unless they were intended for farm-work as oxen; females were only killed around the age of ten years, once they became too old to carry calves to term. There was thus a very high proportion of suckler-cows to breeding-bulls in a herd, around 70 cows to 2 bulls. Both males and females could be used as work animals, the males of course being castrated; they were slaughtered when they became too old to work (9–10 years old). Under these conditions, the ox was understandably the main parade sacrificial animal, and pregnant cows common; rules that call specifically for bull-sacrifice, however, were bothersome, since bulls are hard to handle and might have to be kept in the herd longer than their value for breeding strictly warranted.[11]

Analysis of archaeo-zoological finds, to which ever more attention is paid these days, confirms these general conclusions. In Greece, emphasis was laid on the production of (sheeps-)milk and wool, for clothing. That corresponds to the majority of Greek sacrificial rules that we know of, or at least does not contradict them: sheep were the standard sacrificial victims. Overall, the consumption of meat was low; in the case of Greece, it is calculated on the basis of the taphonomic evidence to have been less than one kilogramm per person per year. If the amount of meat envisaged by the Athenian

calendar of official public sacrifices is divided by the number of persons theoretically entitled to partake in the meal, we get a consumption of roughly two kilogramms per participant per year, which is quite a lot for antiquity. Athens must have been one of the few places where more animals were sacrificed than were bred in the surrounding countryside. Such quantities imply the relatively large-scale import of ungulates for sacrifice. In Rome, by contrast, the finds in the Area Sacra of Sant'Omobono included a large quantity of pig bones. The Athenian pattern of increased meat consumption seems to apply to Rome as it expanded to become a great power. On the other hand, as later Roman sources confirm, the cultural dominance of sheep in Greece gives way in Rome and west-central Italy to that of pig. This is however not the case either in the old Greek areas of southern Italy, where sheep maintained its dominance, nor in northern Italy, where both cattle and sheep remained important. The dominance of pork, just raised for the purpose of eating, rather than of beef eaten at the end of the life of an animal working or even producing milk and offspring, might been an indicator of the comparative wealth of urban regions as well as central Italy as a whole.[12]

However, granted the importance of attending to the economic effects and long-term sustainability of certain religious practices, and their responsiveness to environmental and economic change, this is not what I intend to discuss here. Instead, I propose to follow the lead of the German historian of religion, Anne Koch, in her recent introduction to "Religionsökonomie"[13] and add yet another strand to the collage of approaches that she describes. As we all know, a number of social or anthropological theories that focus on culture rather than economy make use of economic metaphors. Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' is perhaps the best known example. In the final book of "The Wealth of Nations", of course, Adam Smith had already discussed under the rubric of 'political economy' the role of sectarian religion for immigrants to early-modern English cities, the significance of religious institutions for moral education, and the economic behaviour that ensues from this. However, as Smith pointed out, such effects are not one-directional but also condition clerical behaviour and outlook. Religious action is thus a factor in the institutional framework of a market economy; but it is at the same time a product in the market of respect and prestige. For this reason, in what follows I focus on Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic economy', picking up his reflections on different types of capital other than purely economic. More concretely, I argue that in antiquity religious practices – that is communication formally addressed to divine beings – played a crucial role in establishing specifically public roles, creating a form of capital that could easily be transformed into political authority. The notion of the 'political economy of religion' will be used in this narrow sense. Likewise, my second and the third 'economies' are viewed as modes of production, exchange and consumption in specific fields, each looked at from a different analytical perspective. The 'economy of religious communication' deals with the logic of communication with non-human addressees. The attempt to gain relevance in such communication stimulated massive investment into media that increased the efficacy of religious communication and produced religious

goods that, in the long run, became available in turn for consumption by others. Thirdly, given the population density and diversity of ancient cities, space was a scarce resource that prompted different types of religious use, for example in increasing (and sometimes reducing) competition in various forms of sacralisation, and the use of space over time. This is the 'spatial economy', only very marginally related to the property market, that I discuss briefly at the end of the paper.

2 Political Economy of Religion

Sometimes rituals in or at a tomb might be witnessed by just a few people, in other cases by many, extending well beyond the group of primary participants. Processions might attract the attention of large numbers. Durable media such as *stelai* or entire buildings made it possible to extend the 'attention-period' far beyond the occasion of the ritual activity itself, thus providing an opportunity for agents both in the immediate vicinity and even far off to compete for distinction on their own account. Sacralising a location might form a focus for religious activity: the tomb served as a medium for the family to communicate with its deceased members, thus providing a location, images, and narratives that others too could adopt as a collective identity, and so integrating themselves into the wider family, and perhaps thereby foregoing other possible identities. Other cult locations might perform similar functions. They too encouraged members of other houses and families, perhaps even newcomers, to participate in religious activities, and often without identifying a particular divine addressee.

If religious communication provided an opportunity to reinforce or create collective familial identities that might ultimately extend to larger associations of families, i.e. clans, for which we should use the Roman and Latin concept of *gentes,*[14] the same applies to territorially defined associations. In the case of central Italy, these groups were probably the *curiae,* which we should perhaps understand as extended neighbourhoods,[15] but also 'hills' (*montes*), 'tribes' (*tribus*) and quarters (*vici*) at Rome, which correspond to the phratries and *genê* in Athens.[16]

If under the heading of political economy of religion we now turn to the state and the city, the first thing to note is that the idea of 'state' at least is highly problematic at least for the Roman Republican period, if not beyond.[17] Great clans defined the political fate and the cohesion of Rome well into the medieval Papal era, whether in confronting one another or competing for positions, even to the extent of installing small children into high office, or in their readiness to tolerate and support centralised administration. The readiness of such clans to cooperate in particular instances varied dramatically, as did the degree to which social imaginaries were able to develop into collective identities enjoying a degree of institutionalisation. In fact, the term we should keep constantly in mind in the case of the Roman Republic is 'precarious statehood'.[18] The development of a strongly-marked, shared, imperialist orientation towards the outside world, and

the conception of a broadly-based common interest, ethos, and division of power, both of which emerged among the elite in the second half of the fourth century BC,[19] were constantly in conflict with efforts to anchor within the institutional fabric the factional interests of increasingly vocal special groups, such as landowners, veterans, the landless, and others, combined with ever more pronounced concentrations of power in the hands of individuals.

From day to day, the common cause found visible expression in the magistrates, distinguished by the broad purple stripe on the tunic and in most cases elected for only one year. It was these men, the *praetores, consules, aediles,* whose titles were etymologised to mean 'those who walk in front', 'counsellors' and 'builders', who, along with their personal assistants and slaves, in principle saw to such official business as there was. Their presence was felt not as 'departmental heads' in an administration, but rather in dealings with the plenary assembly of hereditary or promoted nobility (in other words, the Senate) and the various types of popular assemblies, and of course as military commanders. Religious activities, in the form of praying aloud, leading processions, or presenting gifts to a deity, were occasional parts of their roles and could also take their own supplementary forms.[20] Magistrates also took part in rituals that took place outside Rome, such as the *feriae Latinae* on the Mons Albanus, and occasional rituals at Lavinium,[21] and might enter into religious communication with inhabitants of more remote parts, which was a practical impossibility for other city-dwellers. In either case, these occasions involved various forms of indirect communication, for example via communiqués, inscriptions and poetic representation.[22] Here, we may see attempts being made to exploit the advantages of secrecy, so well set out by Georg Simmel more than a century ago.[23]

These persons also built on their religious activities within their house or clan to create greater opportunities for direct encounters with the populace. Thus, to stay at Rome, lavish games, grand occasions of animal sacrifice, or simply *viscerationes,* i.e. the large-scale distribution of meat out of the surplus stock of this land-owning elite, were an important element in the construction of a *res publica* that, as regards the free citizenry, represented less a form of political communication and co-deliberation than a forum for the staging of asymmetrical exchange. The same is true of demonstrations of the elite's power of disposition over building-materials such as stone, clay and timber, and the employment of free labour for the construction of temples and other religious infrastructure. Such asymmetrical exchange assured the maintenance of inequalities, obligations, and the recognition of shared values over the long term. In increasing numbers competing intellectuals fundamentally criticised these religious strategies, criticising sacrifice and replacing it by discourse and knowledge,[24] a good the prize of which and the scarcity of which was deliberately driven up.

We may now turn to the special group of the priestly college of *pontifices.* These men, whose title was etymologised as 'bridge-builders', appear to have dealt mainly with problems involving the validity of norms across clan or family boundaries, above

all claims that had been raised concerning issues involving religious action. Even if claims formulated in religious terms were not a separate category, they were raised with particular urgency. It may have been inevitable that the arbitration committee itself, i.e. the senators as representatives of all the clans, also used religious communication, and was a participant in the ritual that constituted the most elaborate of all mechanisms for resolving inter-clan problems, namely the plebiscite, the vote of all the people. It has been surmised that the bridge that the pontiffs were supposed to have built was the gangway, called *pons,* leading to the poll. The name might have arisen because it was here that their function became most visible. If true, this might explain the pontiffs' later function as experts in, even inventors (or translators) of, what was emphatically non-religious law (*ius*), as well as their assumption of a supervisory legal role over important categories of religious activity, and the associated functions of religious actors. These individuals thus contributed to the definition of a specific sphere of action known as *publicum,* distinguishable from *privatum* and *sacrum.*[25]

The major players who decided to invest in temple-construction quite consciously left behind far more visible traces than those resulting from discussion of ritual rules. This more concrete opportunity for obtaining distinction by means of religious activity became even more important at Rome from the end of the fourth century BC. The complexity of the religious communication that might arise in this connection extends far beyond the choice of a particular divine addressee. Even in the case of the great Capitoline temple of Jupiter, there were clear references to Juno, his consort, and more or less ingenious tales to explain them.[26] However that may be, the architecture itself was a more visible and effective factor. Collaborating with the architects, those who commissioned temples could express and communicate their desires regarding external size and shape, and internal design in terms of spatial effects and decoration, as well as the image of the god, its size and positioning in the inner room, the *cella.*[27] This is especially evident in the choice of unusual forms, such as the famous round temple to Fortuna dedicated by Q. Lutatius Catulus after the battle of Vercellae in 101 BC.

Leading members of the clans in Rome had increasingly found that, in organising games for the gods, they had also discovered a medium of communication with the citizenry. In the fourth century BC, the 'circus games' comprising aristocratic chariot races became associated with stage-farces and, in the final third of the third century, comedies and tragedies in the Greek style. As well as broad themes of Greek city life, the subject matter included Roman history and pan-Mediterranean mythic history. The institution itself served to profile not so much the actors, who were kept as far as possible concealed behind masks and socially segregated, as for the patrons and benefactors; anyone who had taken on himself to defray the cost of putting on games was taken up and advanced socially. The heightened expectations of the gods thus expressed – the gods after all were conceptualised as the primary recipients of these performances and honoured by their quality and quantity – were an aspect of electioneering highly prized by political players at the end of the Republic.

In the Greek cities with their restricted citizenries, permanent theatres had commonly been constructed for shared celebration and reflection since the fifth century BC. Beginning with Syracuse, the governments of Italian cities founded on the Greek model also decided in favour of such structures in the following centuries, initially in Sicily, but later also in for example Metapontum and Locroi Epizephyrii, in the second century in Campania, and at the end of that century also in Nuceria and Pietrabbondante, and perhaps in Lanuvium too.[28] The architectural element was of course also part of the gift to gods and humans. The initiating elite did not have complete control over the dynamics resulting from the ritual institution and the architectural space. Already in the first century BC, actors such as Decimus Laberius could become highly paid solo performers, while charioteers in the Imperial age were celebrated like pop stars. Aphorisms (*sententiae*) extracted from the mimes of the former slave Publilius Syrus marked the everyday moral awareness of several generations, while the fan clubs of the four chariot teams marked the divisions between political positions of city-dwellers in Late Antiquity. Spectacle thus afforded some of the most significant developments in Rome's religious history. That the political elite was prepared to bear the enormous costs shows how seriously they took this form of direct communication in a city that was increasingly becoming a metropolis. Although building temples remained a common option, financing games became ever more important.[29] By contrast with a temple, the racetrack and the theatre offered fine opportunities for calling attention to oneself, and winning popular favour by staging spectacles that were worth seeing.

Members of the elite used the possibilities of religious communication for various purposes. For the political players such a 'transcending' reference was ideally suited for creating a communicative space beyond the *gens,* combining an emphasis on shared interests with the exploitation of religious activity as a field for competition and distinction. This flexibility helped ritual activity and religious architecture achieve a high degree of dynamism: ever new possibilities of religious communication were invented, or existing Mediterranean-world traditions appropriated and altered in order to manage the problems thrown up by Rome's imperial expansion, by the remorseless growth of the urban space, and by increasing social differentiation and competition. It was not only the significance of religious practices that increased with the growing complexity of the institutions required to administer the 'common cause', but also the pressure to develop rules and fix practises. Throughout the 2nd and 1st centuries BC the strategy of tacit modification lost its former flexibility. It may have been this situation that triggered a new reflexivity, altering the notion of 'religion', or perhaps even creating it for the first time. Varro, Cicero, Lucretius offer ample evidence for that.

3 Economy of Religious Communication

In studying the ancient Mediterranean world, I have suggested that we should theorise religion as communication with special agents (sometimes also objects) – frequently conceptualised as god or gods, but in the period under consideration also as ancestors or demons – that are accorded agency in a not unquestionably plausible way. Communication with or concerning such divine agents might reinforce or reduce human agency, create or modify social relationships, alter power relationships.[30] Thus religious agency is to be understood as a) the agency attributed to such non-human or rather supra-human agents, and b) the agency of human instigators of such communication. We have just seen how political actors could translate religious initiative or conspicuous religious roles into political prestige and power. Our next task is to focus even more on communication.

Religious communication aims at attracting divine attention. The material presence of media acts as stimuli for the gods, but at the same time opens up the dyadic relation (i.e. the human-divine communication) to secondary addressees, audiences and witnesses, connoisseurs and tourists. Thus, spoken prayers and written curses, family sacrifices and public processions constitute very different publics,[31] while material remains may continue to stimulate responses even beyond the act of communication itself. Let me offer a few concrete examples.[32]

The practice of depositing clay heads in sanctuaries was already popular at the end of the fifth century BC. Coroplasts were able to cater to the new demand by means of a new technology, namely the mass production of images by using either a single or a double matrix. Throughout central Italy, especially at the bigger cult locations, people could thus be offered a supply of heads or – surely cheaper – half-heads[33] that they could use for religious communication. The objects themselves suggested the uses to which they should be put, many of them being provided with stands at their base, by means of which they could be stood securely on podia or benches, in chests or showcases, even on the ground if that was appropriate. The half-heads, on the other hand, had fittings at the back, which allowed them to be hung on walls, thus assuring long-term visibility. The images were not painted, and almost always lacked inscriptions: lack of purchasing power was combined with low literacy. The message conveyed to gods and humans by donating such items was surely a simple one: the architecture and decoration may be splendid, and we know all about the people who paid for this shrine, and their position as members of the economic, military, political elite – and now, to top it all, but we too "are also here". These objects make our communication relevant, visible and lasting.

I turn now from religious practices in spaces accessible to the public to the domestic sphere and switch to the first and later centuries AD. For many in the great Imperial age cities and metropoleis, the street was a kind of 'house' comprising different rooms, and indeed constituted the primary living space. It were only the few owners or tenants of houses, who were able actively to choose the architectural features and furniture of

their homes, thus creating a sort of religious 'infrastructure' or even atmosphere that could also be opened to and used by visitors in a multitude of ways. Lighting played a large role here, and not just with reference to the spaces to be illuminated and used; for there was also the question of which spatial elements, say mural decoration or items of furniture, should be moved into the light. Lamps themselves were instruments of religious communication of the first order.

The same applies to another, vital religious apparatus, namely the altar. The slender, decorative, often richly decorated, Italic altar, and perhaps its portable and collapsible equivalent in bronze, also had its place in the garden.[34] It was used as an unmistakable sign of communication with a presence that was not otherwise immediately obvious to the eye, whether of 'gods' or the 'dead'. Its use was unthinkable without a flame or a libation. Yet the altar was not merely a piece of apparatus to be used, but was itself an enduring act of religious communication, inasmuch as its decoration often depicted ritual procedures and the instruments and materials required. It could be activated still further with a minimum of effort, by placing a lamp or flowers in front of it, or uttering some words, or singing a song. Other common options included the offering of cakes of various kinds, with a variety of different tastes and smells.

Practices used in houses (or in the street) might also be used in institutional spaces designed for religious communication, such as temple-grounds and temples. If graffiti were welcome in the home, as an emphatic reaction on the part of invited guests, this minimal but durable form of linguistic communication may also have played a role within the precincts of temples. That was demonstrably the case at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates at the eastern extremity of the Roman Empire. There, in the temples and assembly buildings of Jews as well as worshippers of Christ and Mithras, people endeavoured to place their requests to be remembered or blessed as closely as possible to the focus of religious communication, close to the cult image, on mural paintings, or in corridors; in doing so they also of course appropriated the great two- or three-dimensional signifiers of religious communication installed by others. Altars, both great and small, and increasingly lamps as offerings continued to play a large role in the Imperial age, sometimes at the expense of the practice of depositing objects. Such objects could keep the memory of religious practices alive at least to some extent and themselves attract interpretation, and so inviting new religious acts with new motivations.

The attribution of meaning as well as the imagination of effects does not come ex nihilo, but draws on previous experiences, shared meanings and imaginations, and shared strategies of interpretation.[35] Even if such evocations are in principle limitless, the range of interpretations is usually relatively restricted, although individual creativity is always possible.[36] There is no zero point in an encounter between a user and a sign. To articulate such an encounter or, more precisely, the experience evoked by a sign, is already to participate in a language and the shared meaning it encapsulates.[37] To say this, however, is not to advocate a culturalist approach. Linguistic research has demonstrated how quickly language may change and emphasised inter-personal and inter-group differ-

ences. The variety of meanings that can be conveyed, which of course are often purely implicit or oblique, as well as meanings communicated in form of narratives or images, go far beyond the clear-cut dichotomies favoured by structuralist interpretation or the systematisations attempted by indigenous or academic 'intellectuals'.

4 Spatial Economy

Let me stick with and deepen the notion of space. In using the term spatial economy, I am thinking of urban space, for the ancient Mediterranean urban world was as much conditioned by the density of its interactions as by a discourse about the unique quality of urban space. Here, however, I only have time to focus on Rome, while maintaining that what I have to say holds good elsewhere.

I have already mentioned temples several times. They are eye-catching, often expensive, occasionally overwhelming, elements of the built environment, fully dedicated to religious use – without excluding other usages, banking for instance.[38] Lists of temples feature prominently in ancient descriptions of Rome as well as in modern histories of ancient "religion". They are taken to be the physical form of the 'pantheon' of the city, thus defining its 'religion'. Naturally, as ancient observers stressed, this has an economic dimension. The role of temples in the *Res gestae divi Augusti* is telling in this regard. They figure prominently in the summary at the end, being listed first among the new *opera* (August. *gest.* 35 app.2). In the following sub-section, the restoration of 82 temples, *aedes sacrae,* is mentioned immediately after that of the Capitol (35.3). The very last word of the Latin text sums up Augustus' immense expenditure on spectacles, donations, and subsidies as simply impossible to totalise, it is just *innumerabilis,* in the Greek, *apeiron plêthos* (35.4). In the text proper further details are given, locations (19) or the extraordinary expenses for those that were built on private property, which Augustus had to acquire for the very purpose (21). The value of the objects displayed in these and elsewhere is given as 100 million sesterces (ibid.). All in all, his is the perspective of an accountable administrator, of the initiator of architectural projects, intended not only for a Roman, but an Empire-wide, audience. At the same time, such details are above all part of a symbolic economy, highlighted now by a player whose stage is the world, at least the bilingual world of Latin and Greek. You should know what you cannot see, the Monumentum Ancyranum e.g. tells the reader: the instigator behind a restoration, the real donator behind the name nicely displayed on the building, the value of what you cannot test in a market. The text is very precise to stress where Augustus was behind a donation or building 'in his one name' or without having mentioned his name by the time (e.g. 19–20). Political and spatial economy of religion seem intimately linked.

But what about the perspective of the users of these buildings, those praying, visiting, waiting around, admiring or cursing? Fortunately, we have a contemporary witness, a

text, which may not be representative but nevertheless presents a very different view, one that we can infer was shared at least in some respects by many others – otherwise it would not have been so successful. I refer to Ovid's *Fasti.*

In generic terms, Ovid's *Libri fastorum* is a commentary on the calendar,[39] and in other hands it might well have been just as bureaucratic as the *Res gestae,* with lists and more lists. However, his text presents people going to places and gods coming to places: *eunt, itur,* 'one goes', the imperative *i* (1.249), 'go!', joined by *venire* etc. are frequent. Despite the length of many entries, the text offers no descriptions of temple architecture. Occasionally, the interior of a temple is mentioned as the setting of ritual action (e.g. 1.587). Sometimes the access route, an ascent for instance, is briefly described (1.79, 638). But the viewer is no *flaneur,* nor is this an ancient Baedeker. It is ritual agents who move. The very first description is a model in many respects (1 January, 1.63–88). People move properly dressed (*uestibus intactis*), decked in festive colors (*concolor*). Optical effects are more important than architectural features, here the flickering of the flames and their reflections in the temple's gilding (1.77 f.). I should however stress that the visual is not actually dominant. Religious events were truly multi-sensorial. This is again clear from the very first ritual that Ovid narrates, pointing to smell as well as sound (e.g. *odoratis ignibus … sonet spica,* 1.74 f.). Ovid is less interested in buildings, objects and routes than in integrating interior spaces and open places in dynamic motion. Even statues or images figure very rarely.

Ovid's *libri fastorum* help us to see that spatial economy is far more than real estate, or building- and maintenance-costs. In fact it was not a monetary economy at all. Changes in prices are neither praised nor criticized, luxury is part of the contemporary way of life as much as simplicity was before. The old homespun religion performed with Sabine herbs for instance (1.341–44) is recorded but neither praised nor condemned. By and large, Ovid's accent is on the ephemeral. His interest in space is in lived and embodied space, peopled by ordinary participants, occasionally religious specialists, and – in a different way – gods. This space cannot not adequately be captured by maps, GIS data, or digital reconstructions, and for that reason I have said nothing about them here, despite their usefulness in many other contexts.

Why do I call this an 'economy' at all? Is it not simply about the visual, about perspectives, perhaps performance, too? No, an economy of religious space is about the production, consumption and ex-"change" of space. Religious space is not simply given and revealed in epiphanies. It is produced, sometimes with an intention to keep it permanently sacralised, not least for the reasons I have discussed under the heading of political economy. More often, it is produced *ad hoc,* ephemeral religious space identified by traces of oil, wax or bones or irretrievable. In ephemerally sacralised space, production and consumption of space are closely related. Permanent religious space is consumed, too, by visiting, enjoying, by usage, which causes wear and modification: There is an exchange, the space is accepted and affirmed by modifying it, by depositing one's head or celebrating one's memorial party. Occasionally, price lists are displayed,

but they do not list the most important economic factors, the values attached to such 'lived', enacted as much as imagined spaces, namely the attraction and receiving of the attention of divine agents for successful communication. I am talking economies of religion, after all.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that ancient religion involves three different sorts of 'economy' that are incompatible with the notion of 'balance sheet' and cannot be represented meaningfully in monetary terms, namely the symbolic or political economy of religion, the economy of religious communication and the economy of religious space. Religious practices, I have shown firstly, were given a crucial role in establishing specifically public roles and created cultural capital that could readily be transformed into political authority. Secondly, I pointed out that the very logic of communication with non-human addressees stimulated massive investment into media that both increased the efficacy of religious communication and produced religious goods that subsequently became available for consumption or reuse by others. Thirdly, I have proposed to look for production and consumption of space beyond the real estate market.

These three perspectives by no means exhaust the phenomenon of religion, however delimited. Given the objectives of this volume, my aim is simply to make archaeologists aware of the very different logics that may lead to the production and consumption, sometimes even the exchange, of those objects and constellations that form part of the archaeological 'record', and consequently require contextualisations appropriate to those differences. The historian of religion is forced by the notion of economy to give much more attention to the symmetries and asymmetries of exchange, to costs and scarcities of productiion and consumption, and the political, communicative and spatial context of religious action.

Notes

[1] Gladigow 1995a. I am grateful to Richard Gordon, Elisabeth Begemann and Asuman Lätzer-Lasar for their many comments and improvements, above all the former's thorough revision of language (and argument). In keeping with the general character of this chapter, my annotations are reduced. I thank the organisers of the Congress for the warm welcome and the excellent organisation. A full version is published in Mythos 16 (2022), https://journals.openedition.org/mythos/.

[2] E.g. Iannaccone 1998, Stark u. Bainbridge 1987, Iannaccone 1992.

[3] Critique: Robertson 1992; see also Bruce 1993.

[4] Thus Rüpke 2008; in more detail Rüpke 2007a.

[5] E.g. Lienemann 1989.

[6] Rüpke 1995b.
[7] See Rüpke 2015.
[8] Polanyi 1968.
[9] The following is taken from Rüpke 2007b, 152–153.
[10] For Greece, cf. especially Jameson 1988.
[11] Varro *RR* 2.5.12 notes the rule of having two bulls for 70 suckler-cows.
[12] See Nimtz 1925; King 1999, 169–173 and 192–193, and now Ikeguchi 2017. I am grateful to Richard Gordon for the references.
[13] Koch 2014.
[14] For a full account of the research Smith 2006.
[15] See Smith 2005,78–80 with reference to the Latin background.
[16] Sourvinou-Inwood 2011, 340–353.
[17] The following is based on Rüpke 2018, ch. 5, with further bibliographical references.
[18] Walter 2014, 105.
[19] Hölkeskamp 2011.
[20] See Scheid 2001.
[21] Pina Polo 2011, 104–108.
[22] See e.g. Propertius 4.8.
[23] Simmel 1907.
[24] Ullucci 2012.
[25] In general Mitchell 1984; Schiavone 2012, 56–78; bridge: e.g. Fest. 452.13–22 L.
[26] Plin. *HN.* 36.43.
[27] See e.g. Davies 2012.
[28] Sear 2006, 48–52. For Greece: Kotlinska-Toma 2015.
[29] Orlin 1997.
[30] Rüpke 2015.
[31] For the dimensions of the concept 'public' in a history of religion perspective, see Gladigow 1995b; Rüpke 1995a, 605–628; Fine 2010; Mullaney, Vanhaelen u. Ward 2010; and Wolson u. Yachnin 2010.
[32] The following case studies are parts of my arguments in Rüpke 2018.
[33] See e.g. Turfa 2006, 102, fig. VI.13.
[34] Dräger 1994.
[35] For the latter see Fish 1995.
[36] Joas 1996.
[37] See Jung 2005.
[38] The temple of Saturnus on the Forum Romanum hosted the *aerarium.*
[39] Rüpke 1994.

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