

## **Religionswissenschaft in der Geschichte: Ambivalenzen des Fortschritts bei Friedrich Max Müller**

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In the study of religion great store is set by a reflective history of the discipline. It allows being aware of the own identity while at the same time being able to work beyond its limits. Keeping academic work open for transgressions and cooperation is necessary to understand the complex phenomena called religion. But without narratives of heritage, forefathers and ideas institutional identity cannot be built. Conducting research on history of science can affect academic work in two directions: in a limiting, conservative, even ideological way on the one hand, and in a reflective, critical, and innovative way on the other. Aiming for the second quality and looking for new foci it is productive to listen to questions of students. One of these focal points is the irritation the beginners express when they perceive one of the “founding fathers” of our discipline, Friedrich Max Müller, as ambivalent and contradictory in his argumentation. How can it be that Müller is the academic precursor of tolerant and comparative approaches to the study of religion and at the same time tries to value Christianity as the best and highest religion? By re-reading some of Müllers texts, including his biographical notes, and on the basis of three examples it will be shown that this ambivalence in the days of Müller is rather to be understood as the solution of a crucial problem: bringing together the demands of modernity and the renewal of religion by implementing a new universal mode of meta-religion in the medium of science. The compatibility of science and religion is an important question until recent days - not just for “creationists”. The following example points to the interconnectedness of science and religion, and knowing about this history helps to debate and decide the perspectives on religion a society is willing to have.

### **Überlegungen zu Nutzen und Nachteil der Wissenschaftsgeschichte**

Warum betreibt man Disziplinen- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte? - Auf diese Frage gibt es unterschiedliche Antworten: Um zu existieren, denn wer keine Biographie hat, keine Gründungsfiguren, keine Narrative, dem sind die Stra-