

Seven Dimensions of Religion

Understanding a human phenomenon

The Seven Dimensions by Ninian Smart

- YouTube – The Exploration of Religion (~ 6 minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U00I4nAspRs&index=2&list=PLcF3Pgt8Rnc7UQ-ZilCcjGYkUH-yxulgk>

The Ritual Dimension



- This is the way in which the community re-enacts its myths and confirms and expresses its beliefs through action
- Worship, Praying, Regular Gatherings, Rites of Passage



<http://patdollard.com/wp-content/uploads/muslims-praying.jpg>



The Experiential Dimension



- this is one of the most attractive dimensions of religion - the capacity of ritual, prayer, worship to evoke feelings of security and comfort or on the other hand feelings of awe, inexplicable presence, mystery, ecstasy.
- People react when they have encountered something which they believe is very profound.



The Mythical Dimension

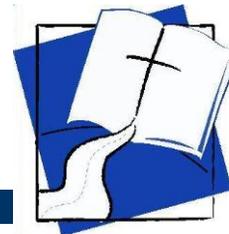


- Myths are the sacred stories that pass from generation to generation - they are sacred because they reveal and explain what that tradition believes to be the ultimate nature of gods, humans and the universe
 - One such story is the Hopi tradition of how peaches became sweet and the bees got wings.
 - The stories in the 3 case studies of the Australian Aboriginals, the Tinglint, and the Polynesians we studied



<http://www.groenqiantfresh.com/images/peaches.jpg>

The Doctrinal Dimension



- Many religions have a system of doctrines - beliefs about the nature of Divinity or ultimate reality and the relationship of humans to that ultimate, real, divinity.
- Provides rational for many of the practices and ideas of the religion.
 - Trinity
 - Bodhisattva



<http://www.rothburycommunity.org/images/RCC2%20Logo.JPG>

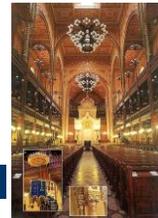
The Ethical Dimension

- In every tradition you will find sets of rules, behavioral precepts or guidelines for conduct according to which the community judges a person good or evil depending on the level of conformity to those precepts.
- Ideas and laws that shape behavior.
 - Laws of Manu
 - 5 Precepts
 - Ten Commandments
 - Beatitudes

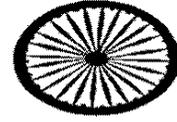


The Social Dimension

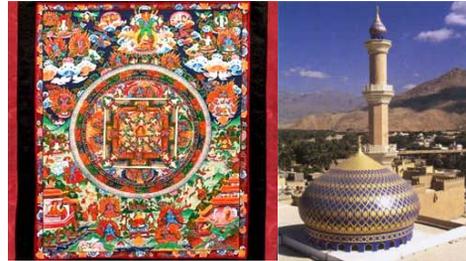
- a religious tradition implies some sort of social organization through which it perpetuates itself. There can be individuals who exemplify the religious tradition, and who live outside of society, but the teachings and the tradition itself is preserved and passed on through the social organization of churches, temples, mosques or monasteries
 - Masjid
 - Church
 - Synagogue
 - Sangha



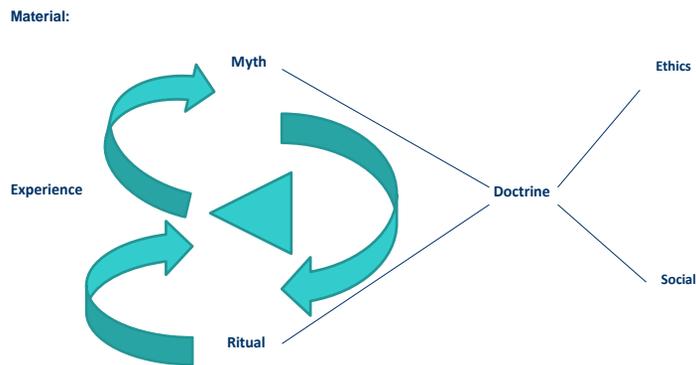
The Material Dimension



- The physical buildings, implements, paintings, statues, books, etc. associated with a tradition, as well as geographical places and features that are mythically associated with the tradition.
- An outgrowth of religious experience/encounter.
 - Music
 - Art
 - Symbol
 - Architecture



The 7 dimensions - Analyzed



Sources

- Seven Dimensions of Religion are from The World's Religions by Ninian Smart