Summary of the dissertation ‘Religious unity - playful duality’

This study entails the clarification of the relation between religion and play. This is called for because religion and play are connected in various different ways: they are equalized to each other and subjected to each other in opposite and contrary senses. The study aims to bring clarity about which connections and comparisons of religion and play are possible and plausible and which not.

The point of departure is that religion and play are forms of expression of the human being’s relation to reality as such. This relation is viewed as a transcendent relation, and then in the double sense of the word, namely as a relation in and through which reality transcends the human being and the human being transcends reality. Religion and play express this, religion the first form of transcendence, play the second one.

However, the two forms of transcendence are not equivalent of the same value because the human being is more transcended by reality than that reality is transcended by the human being. So the human being and reality form a unity and a duality, unity from the side of reality, duality from the side of the human being. Religion and play express this, and are also forms of what they express: unity and duality, unity from the side of religion, duality from the side of play.

However, human being and reality cannot form an unity and a duality at the same time. The only possibility is one of inversion: unity turns into duality and duality turns in to unity. The two ‘turns’ are not equivalent of the same value because the reality has here again a transcendent surplus value with regard to the human being. So the turn of unity into duality is more included in the turn of duality into unity than the other way around.

This involves a change in the relation between the two connections of human being and reality: human being and reality enter the turn(s) as unity versus duality and come out as unity which includes duality. Religion and play express this, and are forms of what they express: (religious) unity which includes (playful) duality.

Unity and duality are here optical concepts, optical in the sense of way(s) of seeing. So unity is unity-optic; duality duality-optic. It belongs to optics that they can alternate. However, the two alternations are not equivalent of the same value because the unity-optic has a transcendent surplus value with regard to the duality-optic. This leads to the same reasoning as above with the result: the two optics enter the alternation(s) as unity-optic versus duality-optic and come out as unity-optic which includes the duality-optic.

Religion and play express this, and are forms of what they express: the religious unity-optic which includes the playful duality-optic.

The above yields the following criterion for the connection of religion and play: religion and play form an unity and a duality, unity from the side of religion, duality from the side of play, unity that includes duality, that all in optical sense.

The application of this criterion on existing connections and comparisons of religion and play shows that the only possible connections of religion and play are priority-connections because they only take into account the unity and the duality of religion and play. That they can be opposites detracts nothing from this insight. Contrary interpretations of the priority of religion over play or the inverse can go together very well if they are seen as optical contrary viewpoints, to put it even stronger: they have to go together because human beings have several optic positions – it does not matter whether they are subordinated to each other, what matters is that they are alternating optic positions.