

Religion and World-Maintenance (Berger, chapter 2)

All socially constructed worlds are precarious, threatened by stupidity, forgetfulness, and self-interest.

Three key processes in world-maintenance are socialization, social control, legitimation. Legitimation is second-order knowledge that explains and justifies the social order. Legitimations explain not just what *ought to be*, but also what *is*. They answer *why* questions.

Religion has been the “historically most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation [because] it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality” (p. 32).

Religious rituals remind people of “the fundamental reality-definitions and their appropriate legitimations” (p. 40).

Religion also integrates marginal situations into a comprehensive nomos. For individuals, the most significant marginal situations involve confronting death. For societies, these situations include natural disasters, wars and social upheavals. Religion also may legitimate society’s demands that people kill or risk their lives.

The existence of a social world, both objectively (in its taken-for-granted facticity) and subjectively (in an individual’s consciousness) requires a social base, i.e., a plausibility structure.

All religions require communities for their continuing plausibility. [T]he *same* human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the relation between the two products always being a dialectical one. Thus, it is just as possible that, in a particular historical development, a social process is the effect of a religious ideation, while in another development the reverse may be the case” (p. 47-48).

World-maintenance is less difficult in a monopolistic situation.