Marco Frenschkowski

# Categories of reality in ancient lexical lists and in late antique lexicography

The categories by which we perceive culture and reality have become the subject of cultural studies critique in quite a number of ways. Post-colonial critique has questioned these categories with good arguments as Western hegemonic forms of domination when used for non-Western and non-modern societies. Some categories, such as "religion", have become particularly problematized with regard to their descriptive value. The lecture looks for possibilities to get a view on the segmentations by which ancient cultures and languages perceive themselves. The word lists and lexica of antiquity, especially late antiquity, provide important material on how these cultures constructed social, cultural and religious reality. A comparative semantics, which asks about the mental lexicon of languages, can be supplemented by observations from the composition of terminology in these texts. Some widely divergent examples of Greek, Latin, Iranian (Frahang ī Pahlavīg), Chinese (Erh ya) and other lists and lexical texts will be used to demonstrate the usefulness of this question. Paradigms of cultural domains can be named even if the corresponding languages do not have their own special abstract terminology for them. The paper also hopes to shed some light on our modern cultural segmentations, such as the concept of religion in particular.