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THE FORMAL BEGINNINGS: THREE TRADITIONS

Like psychology itself, the psychological study of religion has emerged out of a shadowy past that long antedates its formal history. The beginnings of the field as a formal discipline are sometimes dated to 1881, when G. Stanley Hall gave a public address in Boston on moral and religious education (Kahoe, 1992). Whether we agree that Hall's report of impressionistic evidence linking conversion and adolescence inaugurated the field, or would prefer to locate its origins rather less definitely, somewhere late in the nineteenth century, we are defining only the latest period of reflection on human piety. Such thinking and speculation, even though sporadic and never widely popular, can be traced back to antiquity.

Two Fundamental Trends

Two trends may be distinguished in these reflections, one descriptive and the other explanatory. Roots of the *descriptive* trend in the psychology of religion can be found in the writings that comprise the scriptures of the great religious traditions; in NONCANONICAL works for spiritual edification, such as Augustine's *Confessions* and the reports of the medieval mystics; and in the writings of certain philosophers and theologians, including Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), and Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889).

The *explanatory* trend, prompted by the suspicion that religion is other than what it appears to be, may be found at least as early as the third century B.C.E.,[1] when Euhemerus, along with other Greek rationalists, maintained that the gods are only past rulers and other benefactors of humankind who had come to be

[1] Although the expressions B.C.E., "before the common era," and C.E., "common era," have not yet been widely adopted in the place of B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*anno Domini*, in the year of the Lord), they are used in this book as a reminder that the silent presuppositions of linguistic usage may distort our perspective on other traditions. For the same reason, "Hebrew Bible" is often to be preferred to "Old Testament," which again is a Christocentric expression appropriate in some contexts but not others.

deified. Two centuries later, Lucretius, the Roman poet and leading expositor of EPICUREANISM, asserted that the gods were born from dream images and from fear of nature's destructive power. Writers of the Enlightenment, including Scottish philosopher David Hume (1757), elaborated the Lucretian dictum into a full-fledged psychology of religion. They concluded that fear, in combination with the wrenching sacrifices demanded by power-hungry priests to placate the raging gods, led to ill temper, inner rage, and ruthless persecution of unbelievers. Moreover, just as religious superstition was said by these eighteenth-century thinkers to be proportionate to how vulnerable people felt, so they argued that such belief declined as the capacity for ABSTRACTION increased (Manuel, 1983). Yet another explanatory thesis appeared in the nineteenth century when Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), writing only a few years before Sigmund Freud was born, argued that the gods are projections of idealized human nature that serve as unconscious means of self-knowledge and self-transcendence.

These two fundamental trends in the psychology of religion—the descriptive and the explanatory, the first portraying religion sympathetically and from within, the second, more critically and from the outside—continue to characterize it to this day. Although it is not impossible for a particular writer to embrace both trends, usually one or the other trend is strongly emphasized. Freud and the behaviorists, for example, have bequeathed to us almost purely explanatory models of religion whereas the phenomenologists have embraced an ideal of pure description. James may serve as a mixed example, for although he is usually identified with the descriptive approach, there is an undercurrent of explanation in his famous reflections on religion.

An accent on one trend or the other is likewise typical of entire literatures. The clearest case in point is the Russian psychology of religion, which has long suffered from both political and linguistic isolation. In the shadow of the former Soviet Union's official policy of promoting atheism, Russian psychologists of religion long devoted themselves to explaining why their fellow citizens were so intransigently religious; they also sought ways to convert them to militant atheism (Kryvelev, 1961; Platonov, 1975). Some contributors followed the classical Marxian view that religion is false because its claims contradict the materialist conception of history, and that as a social force preserving the interests of the ruling class, religion will disappear in a classless society. From this perspective, then, the psychology of religion is called to investigate social conditions and economic relations, not the experience of individuals (Ugrinovich, 1986).

However, observing that religion was not fading away in communist societies, other researchers departed from Marxist doctrine by looking for religion's origins in personal dispositions and universal life circumstances. Acknowledging at least tacitly that religion is animated by phenomena that are not peculiar to class society—such as mental suffering and fear of death, on the negative side, and the need for pleasurable and uplifting experiences on the positive—some investigators proposed instituting a program of aesthetic education designed to meet the needs that have been satisfied in the past by the aesthetic elements of religious tradition (Bukin, 1969; Glassl, 1970; Kolbanovskii, 1969).

The promotion of atheism was secondarily pursued by establishing that, contrary to popular opinion about the famous scientist, Ivan Pavlov was an uncompromising atheist (see Windholz, 1986). Although Pavlov, the son of a Russian Orthodox priest, did indeed deny the existence of a spiritual domain as well as the survival of bodily death in his reply to C. L. Drawbridge's (1932) questionnaire, he also

wrote, in English, "My answers do not mean at all that my attitude toward religion is a negative one. Just the opposite. In my incredulity, I do not see my advantage, but a failure comparatively, to believers. . . . I am deeply convinced that the religious sense and disposition are a vital necessity of human existence, at least for the majority" (p. 126). The dissolution in 1991 of the Soviet Union and, with it, the Central Committee's Institute for Scientific Atheism has freed Russian psychologists of religion to share Pavlov's open attitude. The reprinting in 1992 of the 1910 Russian translation of James's *Varieties* (1902) suggests progress in that direction.

The trends in the three major literatures in the psychology of religion—the Anglo–American, the German, and the French—are far more diverse than the Russian and thus less easily characterized. Yet the simple descriptive/explanatory typology provides a useful framework for discussing them as well. Above all, it helps us to understand why today contributors to this field are still at loggerheads on the fundamental questions of methods and goals.

Throughout its brief history, the psychology of religion has been subject to the shifting fashions in Western psychological and religious thought. Commonly viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility by psychologists and theologians alike, and threatened from within by sectarian views of its subject matter and methods, the psychology of religion has lacked the systematic development that might have allowed it to fulfill its original promise. As in the case of psychology itself, most of the early studies in this field have been left behind and forgotten, not because they were found wanting and then surpassed, but because they went out of fashion. The few that managed to survive—including studies by James, Freud, and Jung—have remained to this day the standard and best-known works in the field. Reexamination of some of these classics (e.g., Glock and Hammond, 1973) as well as the recent reprinting, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, of other early contributions suggests a renewed effort to assimilate what may be of value in this surprisingly voluminous literature. It is becoming increasingly apparent that every serious student of the contemporary psychology of religion must have some familiarity with the field's erratic development.

In the historical overview that follows, we meet some of the contributors who, because they are still influential today, are featured in subsequent chapters of this book. Briefly encountering them here will allow us to see them more clearly in their historical context. This overview will also introduce proponents whose contributions are much less well known, especially in America. Generally, they are included not only because of their early significance but also because their insights or principles speak to the contemporary debate on the nature of this field.

THE ANGLO–AMERICAN TRADITION

Although elements for a systematic psychology of religion were already abundant in the eighteenth century, formal treatises explicitly applying psychological principles to religion did not begin to appear until a century later, in the mid-1800s. These works were symptomatic of an emerging confluence of intellectual, social, and personal factors that were eventually to give rise to what we know today as the psychology of religion.

A major factor was the remarkable success of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century. Science, as a general attitude and a body of research methods, became widely popular. There was much enthusiasm in particular for its application to human mental life. Psychology, still struggling for independence from philoso-

phy, was one conspicuous outcome; another was the new science of the history of religions, whose widespread acceptance in American universities and seminaries was greatly aided by the ascendant religious LIBERALISM.

In the theological context, among others, the word "liberal" implies an attitude of openness unconstrained by ORTHODOXY, authority, or convention. Although religious liberals may remain associated with some tradition, their chief loyalty is to truth as it becomes known through human experience and subsequent reflection on it. The theological liberalism of the nineteenth century rejected the orthodoxy and RATIONALISM that prevailed early in the century and focused instead on inner experience. Most influential among the nineteenth-century liberal Protestant theologians was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1799), who maintained that religion is not primarily a matter of knowledge or morals, as earlier philosophers of religion had argued, but of attitude. Religion, he said, is a feeling of absolute dependence, which arises naturally in the self-conscious individual.

Schleiermacher's views are prominent, if not always affirmed, in the first works explicitly on psychology and religion: in England, Richard Alliott's *Psychology and Theology: or, Psychology Applied to the Investigation of Questions Relating to Religion, Natural Theology, and Revelation* (1855) and sometime later in America, Duren Ward's *How Religion Arises: A Psychological Study* (1888) as well as Charles Everett's *The Psychological Elements of Religious Faith* (1902), a posthumous work constructed from the notes of his Harvard Divinity School students, including Duren Ward. Drawing critically on both British and continental thinkers, each of these writers analyzed religion in terms of the traditional threefold division of emotion, thought, and will. Because they were writing before psychology had become separated from philosophy, they based their work on armchair reflection, not systematic investigation. Their approach was emphatically from within, for each, like Schleiermacher, saw in religion an essential activity of the human mind.

Francis Galton

The first studies of a more critical and strictly scientific nature were undertaken by Sir Francis Galton (1822–1911), the ingenious English scientist who, in spite of interests that led him far from psychology, was to become the founder of the psychology of individual differences and the first to employ the method of statistical CORRELATION. Undoubtedly best known is his investigation of the objective efficacy of petitionary prayer. Wherever he looked for evidence, Galton (1872) reports, neither leading a prayerful life nor being the object of prayerful concern was associated with any discernible objective advantage. In like manner, his systematic comparison of notable Protestant clergymen with other eminent men yielded no evidence that a life of piety was blessed, on the average, with such tangible gains as health, longevity, or notably influential offspring. If anything, Galton observes, the findings suggest the opposite. That prayer might have subjective gains, on the other hand, Galton had no doubt.

Apparently the first contributor to the correlational psychology of religion, Galton may also have been the first to conceive of a wholly DISINTERESTED experimental approach to religion. In an effort to understand how religious images come to be revered by their worshipers, Galton sought to induce in himself a like attitude toward a cartoon figure of Punch. "I addressed it with much quasi-reverence as possessing a mighty power to reward or punish the behaviour of men towards it, and found little difficulty in ignoring the impossibilities of what I professed. The experiment gradually succeeded; I began to feel, and long retained for the picture

In Galton's experiment, Punch became for him an object of awe and reverence.

a large share of the feelings that a barbarian entertains towards his idol, and learnt to appreciate the enormous potency they might have over him" (Galton, 1908, p. 277).

Reform in America

In spite of modern psychology's profound indebtedness to Galton and other British and European thinkers, it was in the United States that the psychology of religion first gained momentum. Some European commentators have suggested that America's religious diversity gave the advantage to the psychology of religion in this country. More significant, however, was the spirit of reform that permeated both the social sciences and liberal EVANGELICAL Protestantism. It was the era of PROGRESSIVISM, when many high-minded individuals actively worked to counter the social evils of industrialization. Prominent among the reform efforts that constituted progressivism was the SOCIAL GOSPEL MOVEMENT, which swept through the liberal evangelical churches around the turn of the century. Proponents of the social gospel sought "to align churches, frankly and aggressively, on the side of the downtrodden, the poor, and the working people—in other words, to make Christianity relevant to this world, not the next" (Link and McCormick, 1983, p. 23). Confident in their moral and spiritual vision and the eventuality of a world won to Christ, the evangelical Protestants found corroboration in the optimistic environmentalist and interventionist assumptions implicit in psychology and the other social sciences, which were themselves animated by pervading ethical concerns. Together they set about to gather and interpret relevant empirical facts and then to apply them toward the end of human betterment (Handy, 1984; Link and McCormick, 1983, p. 24).

Members of the founding generation of the American psychology of religion

were committed to both empirical science and the social gospel. George Coe (1937), for example, who had once expected to become, like his father, a Methodist minister, eventually switched from graduate study in theology to philosophy and psychology, in accordance with the gradual but momentous shift in his point of view. His reading of Darwin's controversial *The Origin of Species*, encouraged by a college zoology professor, convinced him that the scientific method could be used to settle both intellectual and spiritual questions. Later influences included the writings of socialist theologian Walter Rauschenbusch and others prominent in the Social Gospel movement; his participation in settlement work and local political reform; and the new social psychology, which he said provided a scientific foundation for his changing perspective. The true function of religion, Coe was to conclude, is the development of personality in the context of relations with others, a view he elaborated in a series of books and articles spanning more than 40 years.

Coe also illustrates the role of more individual and deeply personal experiences in shaping the psychology of religion. Reared in a conservative Methodist home, Coe was troubled as an adolescent by his seeming incapacity to undergo the prescribed experience of conversion. He finally abandoned his quest for the highly touted sense of ASSURANCE late in his college years, affirming instead the importance of the ethical will. Other, similarly pious youth, he soon discovered, also suffered from "religious darkness," and thus it was virtually inevitable, he says, that he would later undertake a formal psychological study of such individual differences. We return to that research in Chapter 3.

The Clark School

G. Stanley Hall, effectively the founder of the American psychology of religion, had likewise started out in theology, opted instead for psychology, and in time proposed using the new discipline as a means of reconstructing religion to accord with the personal and social needs of the modern world. As we see in the next chapter, much of Hall's work, too, shows intimate ties to his own early experience and evolving religious outlook. Hall is distinguished, however, as the founder of America's only "school" of religious psychology, at Clark University where he was president (Vande Kemp, 1992). Among the other members of the famous CLARK SCHOOL, two stand out, James Leuba and Edwin Starbuck, both of whom chose religious CONVERSION as their first topic of research. Of the work by Hall, Starbuck, and Leuba, Starbuck's (1899) is most typical of the Clark school and its legacy. Made available through a German translation in 1909, it was also better known abroad.

Edwin Starbuck: For his 1899 work Starbuck painstakingly analyzed autobiographical questionnaire responses from 192 subjects, the great majority of whom were Protestant Americans; he also obtained 1265 replies to a far briefer questionnaire that were to allow him to demonstrate the coincidence of conversion with the onset of puberty. By means of frequency distributions and percentages as well as brief illustrative quotations from his subjects' reports, Starbuck traced the typical course of conversion and of religious growth more generally. Although the true dawning of the spiritual life proved to occur most commonly during the years of physiological and particularly sexual maturation, Starbuck emphasizes that the latter is merely the occasion, not the cause, of religious awakening. Religion, he says, is nourished by many roots. With time, however, it becomes so far differentiated from its sources—perhaps even opposed to them, as in the sexual sphere—that their connection is no longer apparent. An understanding of these roots is

worth pursuing, Starbuck concludes, not because it will give us the key to religion's nature or value, but because it will allow the religious educator to ease the individual's way through the stages of growth into religious maturity. By understanding and promoting the development of the child's character, Starbuck was deeply convinced, one might help to secure world peace and to save humanity (Booth, 1981; Starbuck, 1937, p. 241).

Starbuck's research is representative of the Clark school in several respects. The focus on religious development and conversion reflects not only Hall's leading interests but also those of others of his students. Moreover, Starbuck's commitment to gathering facts in the largest number possible and then to quantifying them in order to reveal general trends became the distinguishing feature both of the Clark school and, to this day, of American psychology of religion. Finally, his concern with religious PEDAGOGY reflects Hall's own, which was clearly expressed in the title of the journal Hall founded in 1904, *The American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education.*

James Henry Leuba: The pedagogical interest of the Clark school was not always in the service of traditional religion. Leuba, unlike his liberally pious colleagues, was convinced that religious experience lacks altogether a transcendent object. Such experience, he insisted, is entirely the result of natural forces. Leuba's challenge to religious tradition was twofold. On the one hand, he sought to demonstrate that mystical experience could be satisfactorily explained in terms of psychophysiological processes. On the other hand, he gathered evidence that scientists who are well informed about such processes and are distinguished in their fields tend not to believe in a personal God or immortality.

Yet Leuba was not a thoroughgoing MATERIALIST insensitive to spiritual values. Indeed, he posited an inborn urge toward a higher moral good, a cosmic trend that he took to be human nature's most fundamental characteristic. Moreover, although he was convinced that traditional religious teachings and institutions have perpetrated momentous evils, he still believed that modified forms of confession, prayer, sacred art, and ceremony could help humanity to realize its ideals. Yet only scientific knowledge, he was quick to add, not naive interpretation of mystical experience, can effectively direct the search for ethical values and transforming inspiration.

William James and the Descriptive Tradition

From the outset there were exceptions to this trend. Best known among them was William James, who is still considered to be America's foremost psychologist. At the beginning of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), indisputably the one great classic of the psychology of religion, James labels and discredits MEDICAL MATERIALISM, the assumption that identifying the psychophysiological correlates of a religious phenomenon serves to invalidate it. All mental states, he points out, are dependent on bodily states; scientific theories or atheistic convictions are equally conditioned by organic causes. A final evaluation of an idea or experience, he argues, can be made only in the light of its fruitfulness in the individual life.

Although James drew on Starbuck's collection of questionnaire replies, his approach was radically different from the Clark school's. Rather than seeking a representative sample, James chose as his primary subjects the relatively rare cases in which the religious attitude is conspicuous. In place of laborious tabulation and statistical inference, James used his own exceptional capacity for empathic understanding. The few fundamental distinctions he makes are driven home not by the

authority of numbers but by compelling individual testimony, provided in lengthy quotations from the PERSONAL DOCUMENTS that James gathered from a variety of sources.

Yet James was more than a disinterested observer who rejected reductive explanation in favor of sympathetic description. The *Varieties* is shaped from start to finish by its author's long-standing concern with the philosophical justification of religious faith. By classifying religious states with similar nonreligious ones, James hoped to demonstrate that what distinguishes these states, beyond the objects they take, is their significance in the lives of the persons who experience them. Furthermore, he sought evidence of a reality corresponding to the "over-beliefs" of the religious person, whose right to affirm such beliefs he cautiously defended in an earlier essay. Although the evidence James was finally to admit is meager by any standards, he affirms unequivocally that religious experience can dramatically transform individual lives, and thus also the world at large.

In spite of widespread criticism—principally for the pathological extremity of its cases—the *Varieties* rapidly became known worldwide as the leading contribution to the field. Its influence was largely general, however, for in it James elaborated neither a specific theory nor a particular method, beyond the judicious use of personal documents. He provided instead the first clear example—albeit perhaps an imperfect one—of the descriptive approach to religious phenomena.

The stimulating influence of James's work is notable especially in the writings of James Pratt, who in 1905 completed a doctoral dissertation under James on the psychology of religion. Pratt's chief work in this field, *The Religious Consciousness* (1920), is a purely descriptive study of a broad range of religious phenomena, including many that, being less striking and more common, had been passed over by James. Furthermore, Pratt was an authority in the HISTORY OF RELIGIONS, especially in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Thus he brought to this work a breadth of perspective that is rare in the psychology of religion. Like James, Pratt is associated with no particular methods, apart from personal documents and the employment of a well-furnished mind.

Promise Unfulfilled

Pratt's highly regarded book marks the zenith of the inaugural period of the Anglo–American psychology of religion. The preceding decade had produced several original and provocative works, including Edward S. Ames's *The Psychology of Religious Experience* (1910), a social–psychological study that conceives of religion as the consciousness of the highest social values; George M. Stratton's *The Psychology of the Religious Life* (1911), in which the inner dynamic of conflicting opposites is found reflected in a great variety of sacred writings; and Coe's *The Psychology of Religion* (1916), a work centering in a psychology of personal and social self-realization. The decade following Pratt's book similarly yielded several influential works, notably British psychologist Robert Thouless's psychoanalytically influenced *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion* (1923) and Leuba's classic *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (1925). Yet no other work from this period was as inclusive and balanced as Pratt's, and only James's *Varieties* would exceed it in frequency of reprintings.

The standing of Pratt's book was to be preserved by the field's almost precipitous decline around 1930. Among psychologists, the subject had never achieved widespread popularity, as the failure in 1915 of Hall's erratically appearing journal testifies. Among scholars of religion, on the other hand, the psychology of religion "became so captivating during the first quarter of the twentieth century that it

almost eclipsed theology as an academic discipline in some divinity schools' Handy, and Loetscher, 1963, p. 429). Undergraduate courses in the sub were also commonplace. But between 1923 and 1933, such courses decrease to the vanishing point (Merriam, 1935), and there was so little original during this period, according to Starbuck (1937, p. 251), that Austrian his religion Karl Beth was unable to find enough participants to convene a on the psychology of religion at the time of the second world's fair in (1933–1934).

What had happened to this promising field? Its failure to thrive was t of a complex of factors. Two major elements were the waning of progressiv 1917 and the sharp decline of liberal evangelical theology. Their extra confidence had been dealt a heavy blow by the devastating war and the sul economic crises and resurgent FUNDAMENTALISM. The postliberal theologi that emerged under the influence of the DIALECTICAL THEOLOGY of Karl B Emil Brunner emphatically rejected the glorification of human capac achievements as well as the emphasis on the religious consciousness that l promoted by the psychology of religion. The Sovereign God and His reve the Bible, not the experiences and judgments of religious individuals, paramount concern. Viewed as offensively reductionistic, the psychology o was unequivocally rejected by this theocentric outlook as its mortal enem Handy, and Loetscher, 1963, pp. 426–429).

Within the field of psychology, on the other hand, the progression of p science set the stage for the explosive success of the BEHAVIORIST moveme 1920s. BEHAVIORISM, a deterministic and mechanistic science that limitec objectively observable behavior, was naturally inhospitable to the study of experience, among other subjective phenomena. Some commentators psychologists of religion themselves for failing in an increasingly scienti differentiate their work from the philosophy of religion, theology, and the concerns of religious institutions and to accommodate themselves to the entific demands (Douglas, 1963). The literature in the field was said t speculative and APOLOGETIC, too concerned for the safety of religion, tc cupied with giving religion a pseudoscientific dignity. At the same time, i nents were judged to be inadequately trained in scientific theories and to be impatient with the tedious work that must precede the larger co they were drawing, or to be preoccupied with the mere accumulatior without a guiding theoretical framework and adequate statistical analysis. the century-long indifference or even antipathy toward religion among gists, it is doubtful that more effort to meet the demands of objective p would have forestalled the field's decline.

That decline, it should be emphasized, stopped short of total demise. the psychology of religion had largely disappeared from the classroom, i in other settings, in both America and England. The growing enthu Freud's ideas among pastoral counselors and clinical psychologists was from time to time in articles or books on religion from a psychoanalytic view. Like Freud's own writings on religion, some of these works diverged predominantly Protestant–Christian preoccupations of the earlier psych religion. Furthermore, in accord with Freud's own contributions, they quently critical in attitude. Meanwhile, the older, more positive psycl religion found shelter in departments of religion and especially in se where it was typically transmuted into pastoral psychology. The intensely

orientation of psychology of religion in this setting was expressed in the rise of the clinical pastoral training movement, founded by Anton Boisen (1876–1965), a once-SCHIZOPHRENIC minister who came to view mental illness as an existential and thus religious crisis (Boisen, 1936; Pruyser, 1967). A practical approach to the field is also at the heart of Henry Wieman and Regina Westcott-Wieman's *Normative Psychology of Religion* (1935), a work by a Unitarian theologian and a clinical psychologist, respectively, in which criteria are systematically laid out for evaluating religious living and growth.

The psychology of religion survived, then, as a means of criticizing or even discrediting religion, as in the instance of psychoanalysis, or as an adjunct for educational or pastoral work within a particular theological tradition. The ideal suggested by James and especially Pratt, of an essentially disinterested and scholarly approach founded in systematic description of a wide range of phenomena from diverse traditions, seemed to have become lost. Glimmerings of it reappeared with the revival of interest in the field after 1950, but this potential remains largely unrealized to this day.

THE GERMAN TRADITION

Whereas psychology of religion in America has been advanced primarily by psychologists, in Germany it has always been the province chiefly of philosophers and theologians. At first, as in the work of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, the psychological was subordinated to a particular theological position. Shortly before the beginning of the twentieth century, however, psychology was put forward as a fundamental element in the general theological enterprise, if not also in the study of religion as a whole (RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT). In a work on the psychology of faith, Gustav Vorbrodt (1895) characterizes the introduction of an essentially descriptive psychology into historical and systematic theology as both "beneficial and necessary" (p. 3). Emil Koch (1896) similarly advocates the introduction of a descriptive psychology into the study of religion, but in contrast to Vorbrodt, he said it must remain wholly independent of all metaphysical or theological discourse. For its data it would rely on the history of religions as well as the scholar's own religious experience.

The growing interest in developing a psychology of religion was given new force and direction with the appearance of the American works, especially the translations of James and Starbuck. The Clark school's questionnaire method was adopted by some in Germany but sharply criticized by others, who considered the technique applicable to a limited number of problems at best. James's method likewise faced a mixed reception, mainly because of its use of extreme, even pathological cases and its neglect of historical and institutional factors. While critical of the methods, many scholars nevertheless praised the Americans for putting forward a psychology of religion conceived as an independent and strictly empirical science of religious facts (Faber, 1913; Koepp, 1920). Consensus on the goals, methods, and limits of the psychology of religion was clearly not close at hand, yet the common interest was sufficient to spark a rapidly growing literature.

Wundt and the Folk Psychology of Religion

Further stimulus came from within German psychology. A singular contribution was made by Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), the son of a Lutheran pastor, a physi-

ologist by training, and the reputed founder of experimental psychology. Although a proponent of experimentally controlled self-observation, Wundt argued that the higher mental processes, objectified in such cultural manifestations as language, MYTH, and religion, could be understood only by means of the historical and ethnographic methods of FOLK PSYCHOLOGY. The techniques of individual psychology employed by the Americans struck Wundt as useless for any true psychology of religion. From a randomly selected individual, Wundt (1911) says, one will obtain nothing more than a traditional confession of faith or a solemn report of newly resolved piety. From exceptional instances such as those James selected, one gains at best an interesting case study of religious pathology. Neither approach, he adds, takes into account the religious context of the individual's faith.

Wundt sought to explain religion by laboriously reconstructing its distant past and postulating an evolutionary process originating in elementary and nonreligious subjective events (Wundt, 1905–1909). Myth, he said, is created by the projection of human feelings and desires into objects of the natural world. As the result of this animating process, these objects come to appear as living, personal beings. Associations of various kinds—of one object with another, for example, or of bodily processes with cosmic ones—broaden and elaborate these original creations of imagination. The complex whole that results is myth, which at first cannot be distinguished from religion. As myth evolves, however—and Wundt gives most of his attention to the chief phases of its hypothesized development—religion gradually emerges while yet retaining the mythic form. Religion, Wundt maintains, is the feeling that our world is part of a larger, supernatural one in which the highest goals of human striving are realized. Whereas myth in general is related to everyday experiences in a kind of protoscientific attitude, religious myth seeks to comprehend the meaning—the basis and the goal—of such experience. Even when religious ideas themselves are dark and fleeting, religious feeling may remain strong. Indeed, argues Wundt, it is a unique peculiarity of the religious consciousness that feeling itself may become a symbol.

Other scholars were impressed by the astonishing quantity of material that Wundt had gathered for analysis and the coherence that his standpoint provided, both to this material and to the many theories that came before his. Yet his emphasis on group processes, and the corresponding neglect of individual factors, placed his work outside the mainstream of the German psychology of religion. Furthermore, Wundt's limitation of the folk–psychological approach to the hypothetical stages of religion's evolution that preceded the influence of historical religious personalities led his critics to fault him for leaving out the contemporary and "highest forms" of religion's development. Above all, however, they took exception to his highly speculative efforts to account for religion in terms of its origins (see Faber, 1913; Koepp, 1920).

If the German scholars by and large agreed in their disagreement with Wundt, they remained divided on many other matters. The confusion that reigned during the first decades of this century is particularly evident both in the diverse content of the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie,* first published in 1907 under the editorship of Pastor Vorbrodt and Johannes Bresler, a psychiatrist, and in the fact of this journal's premature demise only six years later. Like its sister journal in America, it had failed to achieve a clearly defined and consistent direction, and it too lacked adequate scholarly support. Meanwhile, the debate over method and purpose continued in other journals.

The Dorpat School

Wundt's experimental psychology of immediate experience, although itself never applied to religion, is indirectly responsible for an alternative approach that is little known outside German-speaking circles. Wundt had limited his introspective science to the search for the elements that compose consciousness, such as images, sensations, and simple feelings, as well as for the laws of their combination. Both his exclusion of the higher mental processes from experimental investigation and his assumption of a "mental chemistry" were eventually challenged by one of his own students, Oswald Külpe. Subsequently, Külpe became famous as the leader of the WÜRZBURG SCHOOL, renowned for its research on imageless thought. Among Külpe's students, in turn, was Karl Girgensohn (1875–1925), a Protestant theologian who adopted the Würzburg school's systematic "experimental" INTROSPECTION to address the long-unresolved debate over the psychological nature of religion.

Girgensohn and his students, collectively known as the DORPAT SCHOOL of religious psychology, presented a series of religious stimuli—most often hymns, poems, or brief but striking sentences—to a variety of subjects. The subjects were asked to report as accurately as possible their experience of these materials. On the basis of the PROTOCOLS provided by his theologically sophisticated subjects, Girgensohn (1921) concluded that religious experience is not simply an inchoate or undefinable feeling, but a combination, rather, of two essential aspects: (1) intuitive thoughts of the divine, vaguely formulated at best, yet recognized or accepted as one's own, and (2) the conviction that the object of these thoughts constitutes an unquestionable reality to which one must make some response.

The prospect of a rigorously empirical psychology sensitive to the nuances of religious experience attracted an international group of scholars to the Külpe-inspired "experimental" approach. When the eclectic *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* ceased publication in 1913, an association of scholars hospitable to the experimental view, the Gesellschaft für Religionspsychologie, immediately established in its place the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie.* Its first editor, Wilhelm Stählin, contributed an experimental study of his own to the inaugural volume of 1914. Students and visiting scholars found their way to Dorpat and, after 1919, to Greifswald and then to Leipzig, in order to work with Girgensohn. Later they gathered in Berlin to study with Werner Gruehn, a student of Girgensohn who, after Girgensohn's untimely death in 1925, became the leader of this school as well as the editor, in 1927, of the *Archiv* (Wulff, 1985a).

Dissent in Vienna: Some scholars, however, were more impressed by the limitations of Girgensohn's work than by his achievements. Beyond criticisms of his particular application of Külpe's experimental techniques, doubts were expressed that anything new or useful might be learned by attempting to re-create religious experience in the laboratory. When Gruehn remained adamant about the superiority of the experimental method, Karl Beth and others formed in 1922 a rival, Vienna-based organization, the Internationale Religionspsychologische Gesellschaft, and established the Vienna Research Institute for the Psychology of Religion.[2] In 1928 they revived the methodologically more diverse *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie.*

[2] Gruehn and his associates responded by adding *Internationale* to the name of their own organization and appending in parentheses its founding date of 1914, thereby denying the implicit charge of parochialism and asserting their society's priority.

Whereas Girgensohn and Gruehn had pursued a largely descriptive psychology of adult religious experience within the framework of a carefully delimited methodology, Beth (1926) sought to construct a more inclusive developmental psychology of religion using diverse methods sensitive to individual differences. In such a way he hoped to explain the fundamental trends as well as the broad diversity evident in the history of religion, including its modern-day transformations. He assumed that the crucial factors lie below the threshold of consciousness and thus he was receptive in particular to the work of the depth psychologists.

The Psychoanalytic Critique of Religion

The first study of religion from the perspective of modern depth psychology—Freud's brief paper on "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices"—appeared in the 1907 inaugural issue of the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie,* among whose editorial consultants Freud had agreed to serve. Although he subsequently withdrew from the editorial board, religion remained one of his leading interests. Religious beliefs and practices, he argued in a series of publications, are rooted in the fears and wishes of childhood, especially those that constitute the OEDIPUS COMPLEX. God the father is a re-creation of the omniscient and omnipotent father of infancy, who first inspired the love and fear that characterize the religious devotee's attitude toward the divine. The irrationality of religion's motives and the repression that keeps hidden its all-too-human origins are signaled, Freud argued, by the air of inviolable sanctity that surrounds religious ideas and the compulsive qualities of sacred rites reminiscent of NEUROTIC "ritual."

The psychoanalytic interpretation of religion was pursued for the most part by practicing psychoanalysts, although it found advocates in theological circles as well. Beyond elaborating on Freud's own writings, his followers expanded the range of religious phenomena to which psychoanalysis was applied, in part by drawing more comprehensively on the basic theory. Prototypical in both regards is Harald and Kristian Schjelderup's (1932) study of three fundamental types of religious experience, said to correspond to the first three stages of psychosexual development. The Schjelderups illustrate the three types through a selection of contemporary case studies as well as three examples from the history of religions: Bodhidharma, who carried the Buddha's insight to China; Ramakrishna, the nineteenth-century Hindu mystic; and Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther.

The disposition of psychoanalysis to reduce religion to infantile or neurotic tendencies rapidly won for it the reputation of being unequivocally hostile and destructive. Some theologians, however, suggested that a more discriminating application of psychoanalytic insights could serve to purify religious faith and practice. Exemplary in this regard was Oskar Pfister (1873–1956), a Swiss pastor and psychoanalyst as well as one of Freud's few lifelong friends. To show how religion can go awry, Pfister undertook a series of studies in "religious pathology"—of the Moravian Count von Zinzendorf, of the cult of the Madonna, of mystic Margarete Ebner, and of GLOSSOLALIA and automatic writing. Drawing as well on his extensive work as pastoral counselor, Pfister developed a comprehensive "hygiene of religion." Neurotic trends in religion, Pfister (1944) maintained, whether on the individual or the group level, lead to an overemphasis on dogma and the replacement of love by hate. Only by returning love to the supreme position, he said, will Christianity regain the spirit of Jesus. We may employ the techniques and insights of psychoanalysis, Pfister adds in a methodological aside, without subscribing to its underlying philosophy or Freud's own views of religion.

Religion as Archetypal Process

Whether in the hands of a Freud or a Pfister, traditional psychoanalysis was mainly disposed to pointing out the weaknesses of religion. Jung's psychology, in contrast, offers a perspective for identifying its strengths. Attributing a fundamentally positive character to the unconscious forces said to underlie religious forms, Jung argued that religion is an essential psychological function. To neglect it, he said, is to risk serious disorder.

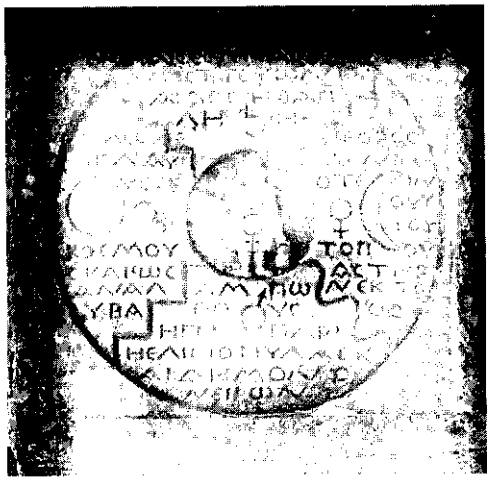
Although Jung accepted Freud's idea of an irrational personal unconscious, he also postulated the existence of a deeper-lying region, the COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS, out of whose depths arise the myths and symbols that constitute humanity's religious traditions. Over millennia of time, Jung hypothesizes, recurrent experiences have gradually formed the structural elements of the collective unconscious, the ARCHETYPES, which serve as the basis for recognizing and experiencing anew the persons and situations that compose human reality. In the individual psyche the archetypes are at first wholly unknown and undifferentiated. With time, however, as a result of external events as well as natural inner tendencies, the archetypes are projected into an indefinite variety of corresponding images, among the most important of which are the diverse symbols of religion. By means of these images, the individual gradually differentiates and relates to the archetypes, which represent both dangers and opportunities in his or her life situation. Complementing differentiation is the tendency toward the integration of psychic factors, toward the equilibrium and wholeness that is represented by the archetype of the self through diverse and fascinating images, including the Buddha and Christ.

In the past, says Jung, the process by which the SELF becomes actualized, the INDIVIDUATION process, was directed and promoted chiefly by the religious traditions. To understand the dynamics of this process, therefore, we must become intimately familiar with the traditions' contents. Criticized for treating religion as a source of psychological rather than theological or metaphysical insight, Jung countered by saying that religious teachings reveal to us only the workings of the human psyche. Of a reality independent of our minds, he said, we can know nothing.

To some scholars, accordingly, Jung's ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY seemed to constitute little more than a dogmatic psychologizing of religion that denied any place to METAPHYSICS and theology. For others, however, analytical psychology promised to provide a truly penetrating understanding of the religious life, without reducing it through causal explanation. If a genuinely comprehensive psychology of religion from an analytical view has yet to be attempted, there is no doubt that Jung's thought has inspired many European and American scholars of religion to find new meaning in ancient and often puzzling symbols.

The German Descriptive Tradition

Although depth psychology rapidly won a permanent place in the psychology of religion, a majority of the German scholars committed to this field were advocates, like Girgensohn, of a more strictly descriptive approach. Unlike the Dorpat school's founder, however, most considered a variety of methods more or less equally valid, as long as religious experience remained well in view. Biographies, personal documents of various kinds—confessions, autobiographies, diaries, letters, or poems—as well as interviews, assigned essays, and other such means for eliciting individual



The front face of a stone carved by Jung and placed in the garden of his Tower (see page 418). The evocative Greek inscription reads "Time is a child—playing like a child—playing a board game—the kingdom of the child. This is TELESPHOROS, who roams through the dark regions of this cosmos and glows like a star out of the depths. He points the way to the gates of the sun and to the land of dreams" (Jung, 1963, p. 227).

expressions of religious experience have been employed in this descriptive tradition. The researcher's own religious life has also been considered a vital resource, not only because it provides direct access to the object of study, but also because it constitutes the basis for an empathic understanding of the experience of others.

Only after these materials have been gathered does the descriptive psychologist's real task begin. In place of the statistical evaluation and inference favored by American investigators, the Germans have employed qualitative description, analysis, and classification. The outcome is commonly a schema of "ideal" types, which, by throwing into relief the general character and dynamics of religious experience, serves as a basis for comprehending existing individual forms. Such an understanding, though inevitably imperfect, may be employed in a variety of contexts, from the study of the history of religions to religious education and counseling. As a strictly empirical science, however, the psychology of religion requires no such applications to justify its undertaking, nor, it is argued, should they be permitted to shape its conclusions. Nevertheless, the descriptive psychologists of religion have an obvious sympathy and respect for the religious life. They, of course, would say that such attitudes are required of any scholar who would genuinely understand religion.

Outside German-speaking circles probably the best known of the German descriptive studies are Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1917) and Friedrich Heiler's *Prayer* (1918). Well before these two works became classics, Wilhelm Koepp (1920) cited them as outstanding examples of the empirical–descriptive approach in the psychology of religion. In *The Idea of the Holy*—"one of the profoundest analyses of religious experience which have ever been made," according to Joachim Wach (1951, p. 217)—Otto undertakes to formulate the NONRATIONAL experience of the holy or the NUMINOUS, as he preferred to call it. Otto's analysis can be briefly summarized in the phrase MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM ET FASCINANS, a formula that underscores the bipolar character of the experience of the "Wholly Other." Frighteningly awesome and overpowering, on the one hand, the *mysterium* is alluring and fascinating on the other. Wherever it is found, says Otto, the experience is incomparable to any other and is thus irreducible.

Heiler's study on prayer examines in a similarly broad historical framework a complex phenomenon that he says lies at the heart of religion and is therefore a decisive measure of piety wherever it is found. Heiler's work provides a TYPOLOGY of the major varieties of prayer—from the nonliterate human being's spontaneous and passionate invocation of the god to the sublime variants of mystical contemplation—as well as a general characterization of prayer's essence. "It is always," says Heiler (1932, p. 355), "a great longing for life, for a more potent, a more blessed life." In its simplest and most spontaneous forms, which Heiler takes to be the most genuine, prayer consists of a living I—THOU RELATION of the individual with the divine personality. It is not self-chosen petition but living communion with God, Heiler concludes, that constitutes the essence of prayer.

In America, where "merely descriptive" psychology attracts far less interest than systematic measurement and causal explanation, the German descriptive psychology of religion has won little serious attention. Works readily available in translation such as Otto's and Heiler's are often cited but hardly ever imitated, much as is true of James's *Varieties*. From the German literature as a whole, only the works of Freud and Jung—an Austrian and a Swiss, respectively—have gained a genuine and sustained hearing from American psychologists of religion.

An Ill-Fated Enterprise

The fate of the German tradition paralleled in certain respects that of the Anglo–American. In each case early proponents failed to sustain a regularly appearing journal dedicated to the psychology of religion, in spite of widespread hope that the field would cast critical new light on perennial theological and pedagogical problems. In both traditions, the waning of liberalism in the 1920s and the ascendancy of Barth's dialectical theology intensified the fear of PSYCHOLOGISM and seriously eroded institutional support. In addition, in both the number of regular contributors remained surprisingly small, so that in its direction and course of development the field was exceptionally vulnerable to personal circumstances and private convictions.

The German tradition is distinguished from the American, however, by the profound disruption it suffered during the course of the two world wars. During these years of unprecedented destruction, research in the psychology of religion was seriously hampered if it could be carried out at all, and publications were either greatly delayed or foreclosed altogether. During the Nazi era, from 1933 to 1945, collaborative scholarly work of any kind was virtually impossible without governmental sanction, and by 1940, both the Vienna Research Institute and the Dorpat school had become defunct. Scholars such as Gruehn and Carl Schneider who did not follow Beth and Freud in fleeing the Nazi flood tide suffered grievous personal losses.

As in England and America, however, the end of World War II was soon followed by notable efforts to reclaim and build on the earlier work. The International Society for the Psychology of Religion that had been founded in 1914 was eventually revived, and issues of its irregularly appearing journal, the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, have been published every two or three years since 1962. As we will see in later chapters, a good number of informative studies representing a wide range of approaches has appeared in the more recent German literature.

Yet only a few German scholars have been drawn to the field, and the Society,

long dominated by Roman Catholic theologians, has remained small. The appointment in 1995 of Nils G. Holm—a professor of comparative religion at Åbo Akademi University, the Swedish university of Finland, and an active contributor to the psychology of religion (Holm, 1982, 1987a)—to both the presidency of the Society and the editorship of the *Archiv* suggests the possibility of a new era. For now, the center of gravity for international dialogue lies in the loosely organized European Psychologists of Religion, a group that in 1979 began meeting every three years for a formal conference (Belzen and Lans, 1986; Corveleyn and Hutsebaut, 1994; Lans, 1979, 1982).

THE FRENCH TRADITION

Like the Anglo–American and the German traditions, the French psychology of religion has grown out of major intellectual trends in the nineteenth century. Among the most notable of its immediate precursors were Maine de Biran (1766–1824), one of France's most important philosophers, and Auguste Sabatier (1839–1901), a liberal Protestant theologian influenced by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Biran argued, in opposition to the then-dominant SENSATIONALIST view of the mind, that human knowledge springs from the inner experience of the will's activity, especially as it encounters the resistance of both bodily conditions and the external world. Thus, although he gave priority to careful self-observation of immediate experience, he advocated supplementing it with studies of the physiology of the nervous system, comparative psychology, and psychopathology. In France contemporary psychology is customarily said to begin with Biran (Dwelshauvers, 1920, p. 1).

When Biran (1814–1824) became subject to mystical feelings late in his life, they too became content for introspective study. He wondered, however, if psychology could provide a complete account of their origins. Biran never fully developed his theory of the "third life," the life of the spirit, which he said lies beyond the "sensitive life" of awareness and the "reflective life" of self-contemplation. Nonetheless, his emphasis on inner experience, along with his own acutely sensitive self-observations, prepared the way for an enduring psychology of religious subjectivity (Lacroze, 1970; Voutsinas, 1975).

Whereas Maine de Biran began by laying the foundations of a psychology competent to consider religious experience, Auguste Sabatier started from the other end, seeking to loosen orthodoxy's inflexible grasp on religious doctrine in order to free it for historical and psychological understanding. Religion, according to Sabatier (1897), is first of all a matter of subjective piety, a product of the inner revelation of God. The human imagination spontaneously transforms this piety into a variety of mythic images and forms. The inevitable interpretation of these contents brings conflict and schism in turn. Dogma arises to restore unity to the community and to educate its members. Yet to serve these ends, dogma must be recognized for what it is: a living and changing historical phenomenon, a vital set of symbols that awakens and sets into motion the inner life of piety. By taking these symbols literally, as if they were themselves the objects of religion, or by substituting for them a simpler and more rational content, orthodoxy and rationalism alike have overlooked the psychological origins and nature of the religious life. In so doing, says Sabatier, they have threatened its very existence. Sabatier's theory of CRITICAL

SYMBOLISM dominated theological reflection, both Catholic and Protestant, for more than a generation.[3]

The French Psychopathological Tradition

It was Biran rather than Sabatier who influenced the first and most characteristic studies in the French psychology of religion. In this field as in psychology more generally, France made its chief contribution through work in psychopathology. Although interest in the relation of mental disorder and religion was not absent in the other two major traditions (cf. Cheyne, 1843, and Ideler, 1848–1850), in France it received sustained attention from some of the leading nineteenth-century psychopathologists.

As specialists in mental disease, these medically trained doctors, called *aliénistes* (from *aliéné*, "insane"), were intrigued by the various forms of "religious delirium" that they observed, each of which was found to reflect the peculiarities of the underlying disorder (Dupain, 1888). Furthermore, the numerous parallels between these symptoms and the traditional features of MYSTICAL and other forms of exceptional religious experience did not go unnoticed. Jean Martin Charcot (1825–1893), for example, whose work at the Salpêtrière, the famous neurological clinic in Paris, had made him the leading neurologist of his day, concluded that demoniacal POSSESSION was nothing but a particular form of HYSTERIA. Similarly, he thought that faith healing could be understood in terms of AUTOSUGGESTION and the contagion of mass psychology.

Pierre Janet: Among Charcot's French students and associates, Pierre Janet (1859–1947) is undoubtedly the best-known contributor to the psychology of religion. For a time the dean of French psychology, Janet was strongly influenced by Maine de Biran, indirectly through the midnineteenth-century *aliénistes* and directly through Biran's works (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 402). Although Janet himself undertook the development of a comprehensive theory of religion (see Horton, 1924), his case studies of exceptional religious states are far better known.

Preeminent among these studies is that of "Madeleine," a patient at the Salpêtrière between 1896 and 1904 and Janet's almost daily correspondent for 14 years after that. Madeleine exhibited a remarkable collection of symptoms. Most apparent was her unusual gait, the result of leg muscle contractures that forced her to walk on her toes. She was also subject to a variety of mysticlike states, ranging from ecstatic union with God, during which she remained immobilized in a position of crucifixion, to states of emptiness or even torture, when she felt herself abandoned by God and subject to evil forces. Several times a year Madeleine also exhibited STIGMATA, bleeding wounds corresponding to those ascribed by tradition to the crucified Christ. Through his extensive clinical and experimental investigations of Madeleine—he weighed her, for example, when she thought she was LEVITATING—and by comparing her outpourings with those of the great Christian mystics, especially those of Saint Teresa of Avila, Janet concluded that underneath the shifting states of mystical consciousness lies the disorder of PSYCHASTHENIA, a now-obsolete term for what today is called an obsessive–compulsive disorder (Janet, 1926–1928).

[3] James (1902) quotes Sabatier (1897) at length on the nature of religion and prayer, and then adds, "It seems to me that the entire series of our lectures proves the truth of M. Sabatier's contention" (p. 366).

Pierre Janet's patient, Madeleine, in a state of ecstasy.

Theodule Ribot: The identification of mysticism with some form of psychopathology was made by other French investigators as well. Among them is Theodule Ribot (1839–1916), to whom Janet was both pupil and successor. One of the initiators of the POSITIVISTIC movement in French psychology, Ribot (1884, 1896) argued that, of the various forms of emotion, the religious one is peculiarly dependent on physiological conditions. Ecstatic states—which at bottom, he says, are all the same—are most often the spontaneous outcome of individual constitution. Otherwise they may be sought by artificial means, all of which affect bodily conditions. At its extreme, religious passion may pass over into pathology, where, according to Ribot, it will take one of two general forms. In the *depressive,* or melancholic form, the individual becomes obsessed with feelings of guilt and fear; in the more transitory, *exalted* form, the person is overwhelmed by intense feelings of love. The extreme singlemindedness of the ecstatic, says Ribot, signals the annihilation of the will, the first stage of psychic dissolution.

Ernest Murisier: The PATHOLOGICAL METHOD was also employed by Ernest Murisier (1867–1903), a Swiss philosopher–psychologist who completed his theological studies with a thesis on Biran's psychology of religion (Murisier, 1892) and later studied for a year with Ribot in Paris. Murisier is best known for a work (1901) in which, like his famous mentor, he maintains that illness in effect decomposes a complex sentiment and exaggerates its constitutive elements.

The diseases of religious emotion, says Murisier (1901), show two fundamental tendencies corresponding to the individual and social elements in religion, which are ordinarily inseparable. When the *individual* element is isolated and exaggerated, we have the mystic, who seeks relief from severe psychological and physical disturbances by focusing on a single, leading idea. In this way, life is gradually simplified until nothing remains, for the moment, but the pure emotion of ECSTASY or even

unconscious RAPTURE. When the *social* element is exaggerated, we have the fanatic. Here the experience of unity is obtained by identifying with a group or community and obediently accepting its teaching and direction. The urgency of the need for stability that is met in this way is reflected in fanaticism's hostility toward dissidents and its energetic quest for converts. From these extremes, then, we gain an understanding of normal piety. It, too, seeks a guiding idea for the evolution of personality, although for the healthy person it is a progressive evolution, not a regressive one. Piety also provides the social stability necessary for individual adaptation as well as the growth and maintenance of culture and morality.

Apologists for the Religious Life

Whether the pathological hypothesis was applied only to exceptional religious types—mainly, the mystic—or was generalized to religion as a whole, some scholars vigorously objected to it. Psychologist Henri Delacroix (1873–1937), for one, argues in his classic study of mysticism that an understanding of what is essential in Christian mysticism requires close study of the great mystics themselves. On the basis of his own investigations of Saint Teresa, Madame Guyon, Saint Francis de Sales, John of the Cross, and Heinrich Suso, Delacroix (1908) concludes that the mystic possesses a peculiar aptitude that is founded in an unusually rich subconscious life. Although undoubtedly subject to exceptional and inescapable physiological and psychological processes, including the AUTOMATISMS and intuitions of the subconscious self, the mystic uses them toward a self-chosen end: the total transformation of the personality. Moreover, far from being instances of impoverishment, DISSOCIATION, or psychosis, the successive stages of the mystic's life represent a new and creative existence. The superior power of the subconscious, shaped and directed by traditional mystical teachings, gradually takes over and simplifies the mystic's life, bringing about a superior and selfless unification.

Even Delacroix's sympathetic and widely praised work, however, was not fully accepted in Roman Catholic circles. A succession of critical works by such scholars as Joseph Maréchal (1924), Jules Pacheu (1911), and Maxime de Montmarand (1920), among others, was published in reply to the diverse psychological studies we have sampled here. These Catholic writers took exception, first of all, to the grouping together of all persons subject to ecstatic or mystical experience. They argued that the great mystics must be carefully distinguished from the inferior ones, the Christian from the non-Christian, even the orthodox Catholic from all others. Underneath apparent similarities may lie profound differences—above all, in the harmony and productivity of individual lives. Furthermore, these critics challenged the adequacy of one or another theoretical explanation, maintaining in the end that psychology cannot hope to comprehend the whole of mystical experience. Room must be left, they argued, for the activity of God, which, they believed, only philosophy and theology are competent to discuss.

The Catholic response to the efforts to develop a psychopathology of religion was not limited to criticism. Long sensitive to the subtleties of the spiritual life, the complications that can distort it, and the difficult task of directing it, Catholic scholars undertook a variety of positive investigations that belong to the psychology of religion. Particularly noteworthy is the series *Études Carmélitaines,* founded in 1911 as a serial and reconstituted in 1936 as a succession of monographs. Most of these publications record the proceedings of a series of conferences on psychology of religion sponsored by the Discalced Carmelites, a religious order founded by

Saint Teresa. With contributions from philosophers, theologians, historians of religion, psychologists, and medical specialists, these volumes explore such themes as stigmatization, mysticism, Satan, contemplation, the boundaries of human capacity, the role of sensation in religious experience, and the relation of liberty and structure (e.g., Jésus-Marie, 1948, 1954). Interrupted during the war, this series of monographs came to an end in 1960 with the retirement of its longtime editor, Father Bruno de Jésus-Marie.[4]

Theodore Flournoy

The interest in exceptional mental states for which the French were famous is also apparent in the work of the eminent Swiss psychologist Theodore Flournoy (1854–1920). Like his friend William James, who considered him a deeply kindred spirit, Flournoy was educated as a physician but never practiced. Instead, he studied with Wundt and eventually was appointed to a chair of experimental psychology that was established at the University of Geneva expressly for him (Le Clair, 1966, pp. xvii, xix). Like James, too, Flournoy had an abiding interest in PARAPSYCHOLOGY, a subject he approached with scientific rigor and exemplary fairness. He carried out detailed studies of mediums in Geneva, including one of "Hélène Smith," who thought herself to be a reincarnation of both a fifteenth-century Indian princess and Marie Antoinette and claimed to have traveled to the planet Mars (Flournoy, 1899). These studies added significantly to the growing understanding of the activity of the unconscious (Ellenberger, 1970, pp. 315–318). It was mainly Flournoy and James, Jung (1954b) remarks, who helped him to understand psychological disturbance in the context of individual lives (p. 55).

Two Principles: Flournoy, who shared James's sympathetic interest in religion, had studied for a semester in the School of Theology at Geneva. He withdrew, however, because theology seemed to him full of unnecessary difficulties (Le Clair, 1966, p. xvii). His religious interest found expression instead in a series of contributions to the psychology of religion. He is particularly well known for identifying two fundamental principles—one negative, the other positive—that provide the foundations for a genuine psychology of religion. According to the PRINCIPLE OF THE EXCLUSION OF THE TRANSCENDENT, psychologists of religion should neither reject nor affirm the independent existence of the religious object, a philosophical matter that lies outside their domain of competence. It is within their province, on the other hand, to acknowledge the *feeling* of transcendence and to observe its nuances and variations with the greatest possible fidelity (Flournoy, 1903a, pp. 38–40, 57).

According to the PRINCIPLE OF BIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION, the psychology of religion is (1) *physiological* in its seeking out wherever possible the organic conditions of religious phenomena; (2) *genetic* or *evolutionary* in its attentiveness to both internal and external factors in their development; (3) *comparative* in its sensitivity

[4] The volumes in the *Études Carmélitaines* reveal a tendency among Catholic psychiatrists and psychologists to retain supernatural causes among their diagnostic categories. Accordingly, unlike Charcot, Ribot, and Janet, they are inclined to distinguish "true" and "false" religious occurrences, including conversion, mystical experience, miraculous cures, and possession (e.g., Lhermitte, 1956). Yet at least a few have been reluctant to employ supernatural explanation, as Paul Siwek (1950), a Jesuit who studied with both Janet and Delacroix, demonstrates in his study of the twentieth-century stigmatist Theresa Neumann of Konnersreuth.

to individual differences; and (4) *dynamic* in its recognition that the religious life is a living and enormously complex process involving the interplay of many factors (pp. 42–45). The names of these two principles are somewhat misleading, for the psychology of religion that Flournoy describes is neither so exclusive of the transcendent nor so thoroughly biological as these phrases suggest. Still, they have served as valuable reminders of the complex agenda that challenges scholars in this field.

Like James once again, Flournoy relied on personal documents in his investigations of religious experience. In the first of his published studies, a collection of six brief religious autobiographies accompanied by his commentary, Flournoy (1903b), too, underscores the diversity of such experience, even in the unexceptional lives he presents.[5] Indeed, he ventures to draw but a single generalization from these cases. The relation between articulate belief and deeper-lying emotional and VOLITIONAL processes, he says, is entirely idiosyncratic. For some people, the personal religious life is fundamentally dependent on the wholesale adoption of traditional beliefs. For others, such beliefs are not only superfluous but also hindrances to the development of the inner life. For these persons, Flournoy remarks, religious growth consists mainly in freeing themselves from the intellectual overlays imposed by education and other environmental influences. By this means, such individuals strive to attain and preserve direct access to inner experience, unfettered by an interpretive framework.

A Modern Mystic: Whereas Flournoy thought psychology and its application should be concerned chiefly with ordinary lives, he himself is best known for his investigations of exceptional cases. Most famous in the psychology of religion is his long and complex case study of "Cécile Vé." The unmarried directress of a Protestant school for girls, Mlle Vé came to Flournoy (1915) in her early fifties with the hope that hypnotic suggestion might promote the healing of a deeply disturbing split in her personality: on the one side, her true self, oriented toward God; on the other, a recurrently intrusive second self, ruled by the demon of sensuality (pp. 24–25). She wanted help, too, in breaking off an intense and morally compromising relation with a married man. A highly intelligent and articulate woman with a rare capacity for introspection, Mlle Vé kept a diary, at Flournoy's suggestion, throughout the years she worked with him. Flournoy's study includes lengthy excerpts from this extraordinarily revealing document, which Leuba (1925, p. 226) says is unequaled in scientific value by any other account of mystical experience.

In the course of her treatment, while feeling desolate after having renounced the troubling liaison, Mlle Vé found herself visited in the moments before sleep by an invisible PRESENCE. A "virile personality," yet neither male nor female, this spiritual friend appeared to her intermittently, a calming presence to whom she could freely pour out her heart (Flournoy, 1915, p. 42). A few months later, she had a still more extraordinary experience: a state of mystical trance in which she felt the overpowering and impersonal presence of the divine. Recurring 31 times during the next 17 months, this frustratingly ineffable experience of "the Life of God" brought home to her how severely limited—"cut and dried"—her

[5] In his commentary on the German translation of these case studies, Vorbrodt (1911, p. 36) notes with Flournoy's permission that the fourth document was written by Flournoy's wife Marie, who died in 1909.

conception of divinity had once been (pp. 63, 147). These remarkable experiences were brought to an end, it seemed, by certain inner realizations and outer events. There were continuing effects, however: on the one hand, a depreciation of traditional religious forms; and on the other, a renewed, Christ-centered search for a personal God, "of love and of pity," in the midst of an active life animated by a deeper sense of vitality and interest (pp. 186, 159, 208).

In his commentary on this case, Flournoy identifies several factors that seem to have played a role in Mlle Vé's experience: her unusual tendency toward mental dissociation, most obvious in the oscillation between two opposing states; a strict Protestant upbringing and enduring Christian faith; a deep attachment to her father, a highly cultured schoolmaster of rare moral character; a brutal sexual assault that she suffered as an exceptionally naive 17-year-old, a horrifying occurrence that was engraved in her memory and awakened in her the disturbingly passionate side of her personality; and the suggestions of serenity, courage, and self-control that Flournoy had made, in conversation and hypnotic sessions, in relation to her sexual obsessions. Scrupulously avoiding any simple reduction of Mlle Vé's mystical states to erotic experience, Flournoy concludes that the outcome for her was a personal liberation, an impressive enlargement of personality that was foreshadowed not only in her first descriptions of the experience of the divine, but also in the earlier manifestations of the spiritual friend.

A French Eclectic Tradition

Although his work provided impetus for additional studies of exceptional religious states (e.g., Morel, 1918), Flournoy was also recognized as the "venerable master," "the great and legitimate authority" of an eclectic Protestant tradition mainly concerned with normal expressions of human piety (Bovet, 1951, pp. 19–20). Centered in Geneva, this tradition comprises the work of scholars at both the University of Geneva and the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, a private educational research center with which the eminent developmental psychologist Jean Piaget was long associated. These scholars were particularly influenced by the emerging depth psychologies and the new research on COGNITIVE development, though they drew on the earlier American and French literatures as well.

Georges Berguer: The leading figure in this tradition was Georges Berguer (1873–1945), an intimate friend of Flournoy. Berguer was long the only scholar in the world to occupy a chair in the psychology of religion, first at the school of theology of the Free Church of Geneva and later in the theological faculty of the University. Earlier he had served as a pastor in several parishes in Geneva and France (Godin, 1961, p. 9n; Rochedieu, in Berguer, 1946, p. v).

The advocate of a "scientific theology" as early as 1903, Berguer proposed in his doctoral dissertation an axiom complementary to Flournoy's principle of the exclusion of the transcendent. According to the PRINCIPLE OF PSYCHORELIGIOUS PARALLELISM, a religious phenomenon always possesses two corresponding aspects: a psychological state and an impression of value and objective significance. Neither, Berguer says, is reducible to the other. The psychology of religion is competent to address only the first of these factors, he argues, and thus it cannot account for the religious phenomenon as a whole. Rather, it must be augmented by a theology of faith and moral obligation (Berguer, 1908, pp. 283–284, 350). Thus although conversion—Berguer's case in point—can be understood from the psychological side

as the outcome of subliminal forces and concomitant neural processes that yield observable and classifiable phases and types, something yet remains that is accessible only to intuitive and philosophic study: the action of God.

Whereas his thesis on value seems to focus on preserving a domain for "extrascientific theology" (p. 289), Berguer's later writings feature the positive role that the psychology of religion can play. Perhaps the most accessible and interesting of these works is his study of the life of Jesus (Berguer, 1920). Faithful to his principle of psychoreligious parallelism, Berguer emphasizes that the unique and imponderable qualities of Jesus, "perceptible only to the moral sense" and conferring on him "a value, a significance, a place quite apart from that of other human beings," cannot be isolated and analyzed through scientific effort. Just as certainly, however, they will not be injured by a study of the many points of resemblance between Jesus' states of consciousness and our own. Moreover, the insights of dynamic psychology, in making apparent the ends toward which Jesus was striving, may underscore what separates him from the rest of humanity (pp. 14–15).

Much like Jung, Berguer postulates a universal tendency to form representations of divinity and of salvation, "the life with God," that are ever more adequate to the deepest human needs. This "immense task," which engages the polarized subconscious energies and harmonizes all the human capacities, gives rise to a double symbolism: one seeking to represent the attributes of the gods themselves and another providing the means for participating in the divine life, the symbolism of sacred ceremony. Inevitably, humankind has chosen symbols from its own elemental experience, symbols that range from the grossly materialistic to the highly sublimated and spiritualized. Berguer traces this progressive development both in the mystery cults of the Hellenistic period (300 to 100 B.C.E.) and in later Christian developments.

The Christian tradition triumphed, Berguer says, because it centers on the personal life of a being who actually lived through the inner drama of transformation that had been symbolized, but not successfully fostered, by a succession of mythic savior–gods who died and were then reborn. Yet the spiritual victory of Christ, he adds, did not magically transform human nature. To this day, "the Christian struggle consists in a constant effort towards an always more complete SUBLIMATION" of the baser instinctual tendencies, prevalent in the mystery cults, that have regrettably made "a mythical figure of Jesus, a Mystery-god like the others" (pp. 63–64). Through biblical criticism and psychological analysis, Berguer seeks to uncover the psychological truth that underlies the engaging yet falsifying mythic elaborations of the life of Jesus. That life, he concludes, calls a person not to dutiful belief in certain extraordinary historical events but to the profound experience of dying to the self and then returning more fully to life, "the new life of the Spirit" (p. 294).

Like Pfister, then, who was one of his sources, Berguer employs psychology as a means of promoting what he saw as a deeper and truer faith. That same liberal piety is evident in his posthumously published treatise on the psychology of religion (Berguer, 1946), which, like his earlier review and bibliography (Berguer, 1914), shows the strong influence of Flournoy, the early American investigators, especially James, and the European depth psychologists. A similar focus on the psychological value of Christian faith can be found in an early work of Berguer's immediate successor, Edmond Rochedieu (1948).

Pierre Bovet: At the Rousseau Institute, founded in 1912, the best-known contributions to the psychology of religion were made by its longtime director, Pierre Bovet (1878–1965). A disciple of Flournoy who was initiated into psychoanalysis by Pfister, Bovet employed personal documents and a psychodynamic perspective to clarify the course of religious development. The religious sentiment, Bovet (1925) writes, is an extension of the sentiment of filial love, and it is naturally first directed toward the parents. The father and mother, he declares, are the child's first gods, the revered objects of tender love and wondering awe. When experience inevitably proves the parents unworthy of divine attributes, thus precipitating the "first religious crisis," the child spontaneously transfers these qualities to an unseen and wholly spiritual power that is experienced as manifest in the world of nature. In adolescence we meet a second, intellectual and moral crisis, when traditional ideas of an all-powerful and morally perfect God are called into question by scientific knowledge and everyday experience. From a perspective informed both by the Freudian doctrine of emotional ambivalence and by the research of Piaget and others on cognitive development, Bovet concludes that the primary task of religious education is not the inculcation of doctrine but the transmission and evocation of love (p. 138).

Jean Piaget: Piaget (1896–1980) was himself a direct contributor to this French eclectic tradition. Piaget had grown up in a home divided on the matter of religious faith. His kindly but neurotic mother was a devout Protestant, whereas his scholarly father thought conventional piety incompatible with historical criticism. When as a youth Piaget acceded to his mother's wishes that he take a course on Christian doctrine, he was disturbed by the recurring conflict with biology and the weakness of the traditional arguments for the existence of God. It had not occurred to him to doubt God's existence, he says, but it seemed extraordinary to him that persons as intelligent as his pastor took such weak arguments seriously. It was his good luck, Piaget (1952) writes, to discover at this time in his father's library Auguste Sabatier's (1897) influential book, which he "devoured . . . with immense delight." One evening some time later, after his godfather had introduced him to Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution,* Piaget experienced a profound revelation: "The identification of God with life itself was an idea that stirred me almost to ecstasy," for it suggested to him that biology could explain all things, including the mind itself. The problem of knowing suddenly appeared to him in a new light, and he decided to dedicate his life to "the biological explanation of knowledge" (p. 240). He eventually completed a doctorate in the sciences, and then for three years he studied psychology and philosophy in Zurich and at the Sorbonne.

After Piaget arrived in Geneva in 1921 to become the director of studies at the Rousseau Institute, he and some other members of the Student Christian Association of French Switzerland organized a group for research on the psychology of religion. He presented his own reflections at several of the annual meetings of the association at Sainte-Croix, where Flournoy had earlier been an extraordinarily vivid presence (Piaget, 1922, pp. 42–43). Affirming Flournoy's principles, Piaget acknowledges that psychology cannot render judgment on religious values per se, but it can evaluate whether or not the deduction of a certain value from a particular experience accords with the laws of logic (p. 55), the child's understanding of which he was then researching. Psychology may also help to explain the surprising variety of deductions from more or less the same experience.

In a succession of writings on religious attitudes,[6] Piaget distinguishes two fundamental types, corresponding to two seemingly contradictory qualities attributed to God: TRANSCENDENCE and IMMANENCE. Contrasting notions of causality best distinguish these types. The transcendent God is a God of causes, implicitly divine causes that lie beyond our understanding. By contrast, the immanent God is a God not of causes but of values, a God that lies within us rather than outside the world (Piaget, 1930, pp. 9–10). Piaget reports that the research carried out by his group indicates that, in accord with Bovet's thesis, individuals are inclined toward one or the other of these attitudes by the relation they have had with their parents. People are predisposed toward transcendence and a morality of obedience, he says, when as children they are taught *unilateral respect* for adults, particularly those with authority and prestige. An inclination toward immanence and a morality of autonomy follows, on the other hand, when the attitude is one of *mutual respect,* founded on equality and reciprocity. An entire society and its educational system may be inclined in one direction or the other (Piaget and de la Harpe, 1928, pp. 18–24).

Whereas Flournoy considers transcendence to be a matter about which psychology must remain agnostic, Piaget boldly subjects it to psychological analysis. He judges the transcendent God of classical theology to be no more than a symbol of "the mythological and infantile imagination," and the morality of sin and expiation to be a product of social constraint. Entirely opposed to such MORAL REALISM, he says, is the spirit of Jesus, who offers instead a morality and God of love (pp. 26–29). Troubled by the logic of the hypothesis of transcendence, Piaget opts for immanentism, which, he says, recognizes evil for the mystery it is and reduces revelation to the prescriptions of individual conscience (Piaget and de la Harpe, 1928, p. 37). Berguer (1946), in contrast, maintains that both tendencies reflect essential religious needs and, like liberalism and orthodoxy, are finally reconciled in the figure of Christ (p. 339). Flournoy (1904), too, shared this view. No other religious genius, he once said of Jesus to a Sainte-Croix audience, has so perfectly fused the moral and mystical elements.

A Neglected Literature

Like the Anglo–American and German literatures, the French psychology of religion counts among its earliest contributors several of the century's most eminent psychologists. Yet today none of them retains a position of prominence in this field. When Villiam Grønbaek (1970) surveyed 24 major works on the psychology of religion published in America and Europe between 1950 and 1967, he found that, among the ten most frequently cited names, seven came from the field's inaugural period, including two from the American literature (James and Starbuck) and five from the German (Freud, Gruehn, Jung, Girgensohn, and Otto). Only among the three more recent contributors do we find one from the French literature—André Godin, the Belgian Jesuit psychologist of religion who edited the "Lumen Vitae" series of studies in religious psychology (Godin, 1957–1972). Even in French works of the current revival, the early literature is largely ignored.

[6] Copies of these scarce monographs, virtually unknown in America, can be obtained from the Piaget Archives in Geneva. Illuminating discussions of Piaget's writings on religion can be found in a small monograph by Mary Vander Goot (1985), who emphasizes the process of secularization in Piaget's thought by comparing these early works with four much later ones, and in a chapter by Fernando Vidal (1987), who places Piaget's early writings in the context of liberal Protestant thought and the challenge to it of Barthian neo-orthodoxy.

The French tradition, it may be said, did not undergo a sustained development comparable to the other two. It apparently has never had a journal of its own, equivalent to the short-lived *Journal of Religious Psychology* or the similarly ill-fated *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie.*[7] Nor, it appears, has it ever been the subject of systematic review and analysis, in a manner akin to Klaas Cremer's (1934) exhaustively comprehensive doctoral dissertation on the German tradition. Even so, in its totality the French literature is surprisingly large, especially if we include the more general works on such topics as belief or doubt (see Berguer, 1914).

THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL

Grønbaek's survey suggests that contemporary psychologists of religion are highly dependent on major portions of the early work we have just reviewed. Yet there is much that is new in our own day, both in terms of interpretive frameworks and in methods of research. In addition, new journals, organizations, and centers of graduate study and research activity have been established and internationally recognized. Although the number of scholars actively engaged in this field continues to be relatively small, they now represent a much wider geographic and linguistic range. Given especially the work being carried out in Scandinavia, Belgium, and the Netherlands, among other European countries, we can no longer represent the field's activities in terms of three major traditions.

For English speakers, the international scene today can be most readily accessed by consulting the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion,* which was founded in 1990, and the collections of papers from the triennial meetings of the European Psychologists of Religion (Belzen and Lans, 1986; Corveleyn and Hutsebaut, 1994; Lans, 1979, 1982). Both of these resources bring together the research and reflections of an international array of psychologists of religion. In addition, the *Journal* provides reviews of books published both in English and in various European languages and offers occasional reviews of the psychology of religion as it has developed in particular countries, including Australia (O'Connor, 1991), Canada (Hunsberger, 1992), Italy (Aletti, 1992), The Netherlands (Belzen, 1994), Poland (Grzymala-Moszczynska, 1991), and Scandinavia (Wikström, 1993; see also Holm, 1987).

As one reads these national overviews, one appreciates anew the difficulties of generalizing about the psychology of religion. In whatever country, however, it is apparent that a variety of political, religious, and intellectual forces have profoundly affected the course of the field's development—if indeed a word implying a progressive unfolding is appropriate here. Such factors remain significant today. Everywhere, moreover, the field has been dependent on the efforts of a small number of people. Some of them have become highly influential, establishing the tone or framework for much subsequent work in their own countries if not abroad as well; other scholars have worked in relative isolation. For some, the psychology of religion is positioned mainly within psychology, academic or clinical, whereas others

[7] This conclusion is qualified because of a single citation in Berguer's (1914) bibliography, probably taken from a monograph by L. Perrier, *Le sentiment religieux* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1912), p. 17, in which reference is made to an article by a Monsieur Jœger in the *Revue de la psychologie des religions et des questions médico-théologiques.* No publication of this title is listed in the standard serial catalogues, and Jean-Pierre Deconchy (personal communication, October 8, 1979) reports that the conservatrix of the Bibliothèque Nationale was also unable to find any trace of it.

place it within the history of religions or theology. Some have pursued the psychology of religion as a strictly academic or scientific undertaking aimed at accumulating a body of knowledge or creating an interpretive framework. Others come to it with distinctly practical questions and an expectation that it will be helpful in religious education or pastoral care.

In the chapters ahead, we will see more closely how these various factors and trends have shaped the field. As we proceed, the reader is encouraged to keep in mind Flournoy's two principles: the psychology of religion should avoid making any judgment, one way or the other, about the reality of religious content, and it should be conceived as the comprehensive exploration of the diverse biological and psychological processes governing the development and dynamics of religious phenomena in individual lives. None of the perspectives we consider in this book wholly fulfills these principles. But in combination, these views provide a clear sense of what an adequate psychology of religion should be able to do.