

ogy; Myers became a layman; and Flournoy and James were left in academic limbo. In adopting a *physiological* interpretation of the subconscious and relegating the *psychological* interpretation of the subconscious to physicians and laymen, Münsterberg accurately depicted the direction that most academic psychologists would take. Although Jungian psychology retained many of the features of the pre-Freudian subconscious, Jung's thought was marginalized by a Freudian emphasis on repression rather than dissociation. Across the spectrum, the proponents of the subconscious were marginalized within disciplines they helped to found. James and Flournoy were largely written out of the history of experimental psychology, Janet out of psychiatry, and Jung out of psychoanalysis, while Myers and psychical research never really gained a foothold in the academy.

In Part III, I explore the efforts of the mediators, armed with an open-ended concept of the subconscious, to secure a foothold in academic psychology and mainline Protestantism. Chapter Seven focuses on the flowering of the psychology of religion in the academy and Chapter Eight on movements of spiritual renewal within turn-of-the-century Protestantism. Within the academic psychology of religion, I focus on two figures—William James and George Albert Coe—whose psychologies of religion, while working with many of the same “pieces,” arranged them in sharply opposed configurations based on different understandings of the subconscious and of religion. In the final chapter, I contrast three renewal movements within turn-of-the-century Protestantism—the Emmanuel healing movement, Pentecostalism, and the religious education movement. While the mediating tradition flowered briefly within both the academy and the church during the first decade of the twentieth century, it was rapidly rebuffed by academics hostile to a religious interpretation of involuntary experiences within the universities and the theological schools. Nonetheless, religious interpretations of involuntary experiences remained very much in evidence at the popular level.

The Psychology of Religion

THE “NEW PSYCHOLOGY” emerged during the 1890s amidst a complex reshuffling of academic disciplines and medical specialties in Europe and the United States. The story of its emergence, as recounted in psychology textbooks, typically begins in Germany with Wilhelm Wünder and the founding of a laboratory for experimental psychological research in Leipzig in 1879. In his *History of Experimental Psychology* (1929), Edwin Boring credited James with recognizing “the significance of the new experimental physiological psychology” emanating from Germany. He gave G. Stanley Hall, who studied with Wünder, credit for pioneering everything new, from the psychological laboratory to educational psychology to the psychology of religion. During the 1890s, numerous professors, many of them students of Hall's at either Johns Hopkins or Clark University, were appointed to positions in psychology. The establishment of psychological laboratories, especially at the major universities, accompanied the appointment of faculty in the new discipline. Hall founded the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1887, initiated the formation of the American Psychological Association in 1892, and founded the *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* in 1904.¹

The “New Psychology,” in this reading of history, was part of the transformation of American higher education at the turn of the century. Prior to 1890, clergymen professors taught “mental and moral philosophy” as the capstone of the traditional liberal arts curriculum; after 1890, nonclergy taught “psychology” as part of the social science curriculum in the new secular university. Two features made psychology “new” in this telling of the tale: (1) its divorce from philosophy and, more broadly, from an academic curriculum in which all disciplines, including philosophy, were the handmaidens of theology; and (2) its embrace of the “laboratory,” emblem of the experimental sciences and sign of its new status as a university discipline.

Wünder and Hall played an equally prominent role in most accounts of the emergence of the subfield of the psychology of religion. In his textbook for theological students, W. B. Selbie credited Wünder with opening the first psychological laboratory and giving “a great impetus to the application of psychology to the study of religion by his own contributions to the psychology of early mythological and religious ideas.” But, he went on to say, “it is the Americans who are the real pioneers in the psychology of religion proper.” He described Stanley Hall as the first to write on the psychology of religion (1891) and as the founder of a school that focused particular attention on adolescence, especially in relation to “education both religious and general.” Hall was followed, according to Selbie, by “a brilliant succession of writers,” including James H. Leuba, Edwin Starbuck, Edward Scribner Ames, George A. Coe, George M. Stratton, William James, and

James Bissett Pratt. The "salient characteristic of this American school," he wrote, "is a careful study of the phenomena of religious experience derived mainly from biographies, introspection, and a systematic use of the questionnaire." The Americans, he added, are inclined to "emphasize the abnormal" and "obscure the line of demarkation (sic) between psychology and philosophy." Although he credited James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* with giving "a fresh stimulus to the study of the psychology of religion in Germany," he found some truth in Wünder's statement that the "*Varieties of Religious Experience* is not psychology at all, but rather an extract from a pragmatic philosophy of religion."²

In the most recent and most historically oriented of contemporary textbook introductions to the psychology of religion, David M. Wulff surveys the three main traditions in the modern psychology of religion—the Anglo-American, German, and French—and indicates that "it was in the United States that the psychology of religion first gained momentum." He notes the connections between it and the spirit of reform permeating both the social sciences and liberal Protestantism at the turn of the century. He cites George Coe, the Clark school (Stanley Hall and his students Edwin Starbuck and James Leuba), and William James and his student James Pratt as the leading figures. Wulff lifts up Starbuck's work as most characteristic of the Clark school, noting its focus on religious development and conversion, both interests of Hall's, and Starbuck's "commitment to gathering facts in the largest number possible and then to quantifying them in order to reveal general trends." This, he says, was "the distinguishing feature of both the Clark school and, to this day, of American psychology of religion."³ While recognizing that James drew upon Starbuck's questionnaires for the *Varieties*, Wulff notes that James selected out "relatively rare" and more extreme cases. He acknowledges that despite "widespread criticism—principally for the pathological extremity of its cases—the *Varieties* rapidly became known worldwide as the leading contribution to the field." Wulff concludes, however, that the influence of the *Varieties* was "largely general . . . 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."⁴

The flowering of the psychology of religion movement makes little theoretical or methodological sense when viewed in relation to the triumph of German laboratory science in psychology departments across America. Boring, however, provided the basis for an alternative reading when he noted that James not only baptized the German experimentalism, but also Americanized the new psychology by "emphasizing the functional meaning of the mind." To all appearances America was duplicating German laboratory psychology, but Boring indicated that under the surface and quite unrecognized at first, a distinctively American functional psychology began to emerge. It flowered, according to Boring, at the University of Chicago under the influence of John Dewey, "where philosophers and psychologists were working together."⁵ In contrast to the psychologists with a German orientation, Dewey, James, and most of the early American psychologists of religion taught not in freestanding psychology departments, but in philosophy de-

partments that included philosophy, psychology, and sometimes education.⁶ Methodologically, turn-of-the-century psychology of religion comes into focus only if situated in relation to this distinctively American functional psychology, broadly interpreted to include James, Dewey, and other lesser known figures, all of whom were linked by an outlook that was simultaneously empirical, functionalist, evolutionary, and pragmatic.⁷

Boring, as Eugene Taylor notes, left a great deal of the history of psychology out of his influential textbook. Among other things, he did not mention the contributions of the French clinical tradition of experimental psychology or of the impact of theories of the subconscious on developments in the United States. Nor, as Taylor points out, did he give any clues as to "why experimental psychology was equated with psychical research in the minds of the American public between 1880 and 1910." The psychology that Boring describes as distinctively American was not, as Taylor has cogently argued, simply a home-grown product, but must be viewed in relation to the French clinical tradition in experimental psychology and the British Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Theoretically, the emergence of the psychology of religion makes little sense unless viewed in relation to the experimental psychology of the subconscious.⁸

In short, I argue, contrary to Wulff, that James in fact had both a particular method and a specific theory and that the former cannot be understood apart from James's pragmatic functionalism or the latter apart from the experimental psychology of the subconscious. Indeed, I suggest that the psychology of the subconscious provided the theoretical underpinnings for most of the significant contributions to the psychology of religion during its most fertile period, although the contributors differed both in their understanding of the theory and its implications for religion. This approach foregrounds what I take to be the psychology of religion's most significant contribution to the study of religion, that is, the application of a dissociative model of consciousness to a wide range of religious phenomena, including possession, conversion, the bodily phenomena of revivals, visions, and mysticism. The dissociative psychology of religion of this era stands in evident continuity with the earlier mesmeric psychology of religion, both theoretically and with respect to the range of ways in which psychological explanation and religious faith were conjoined.

Within the academic psychology of religion, I focus on two figures—William James and George Albert Coe—who, while working with many of the same intellectual components, arranged them in sharply opposed configurations based on different understandings of the subconscious and of religion. Both their psychologies of religion provided implicit rereadings of the traditional Methodist understanding of religious experience. James explained it and religious experience in general as the result of incursions of the subliminal self into consciousness, whereas Coe cast it as an evolutionary precursor to a modernist understanding of Christianity. In keeping with the romantic tradition, James attempted to integrate religion, specifically religious experience, with an empirical approach to psychology. Although more theoretically sophisticated and academically respectable than the psychologies associated with the universalistic new religions—Spiritualism,

Theosophy, and New Thought—James's psychology of religion can be located in the same genre.⁹ Coe, like many rationalists before him, used the psychology of the subconscious to explain primitive (i.e., false) religion, while rooting his modernist theology in the psychology of consciousness.

EXPLAINING CONVERSION

Viewed from the perspective of the subconscious, two widely noted characteristics of the early-twentieth-century psychologists of religion still stand out: their notable interest in the psychology of conversion and their ties to liberal Protestantism. These common features, however, obscure important underlying differences. Indeed, the nature of their ties to liberal Protestantism might be examined as one context for understanding the differences between their psychologies of religion. Here I focus particularly on James and Coe, not because they represent the others, but because, through their lives and their writings, they exemplified two common strategies that liberal Protestants and former Protestants used to distance themselves from their evangelical heritage at the turn of the century.

Neither had a traditional Christian conversion experience. Coe (to borrow James's language) was a classic healthy-minded, once-born soul, who discounted the need for a distinct experience of conversion; James, although not exactly "twice-born," clearly placed himself among the "sick souls" of the world. He saw transformative value in the traditional Protestant conversion experience and abstracted from it to create a generic, universal understanding of the process. In formulating their understanding of conversion, both James and Coe drew upon a dissociative model of consciousness and both built upon the work of Edwin Starbuck.

Edwin Starbuck

Historians usually describe Starbuck as Hall's student, since he earned his Ph.D. under Hall at Clark. In terms of his formation as a psychologist of religion and in terms of his life-long orientation toward the psychology of religion, however, Starbuck might better be understood as a student of William James. A more accurate understanding of Starbuck's relationship to his teachers—James, Hall, and Münsterberg—illuminates both the rivalries among the leading figures in psychology and the role that James and the subconscious played in the development of the psychology of religion beginning in the early 1890s.

Starbuck's graduate career began at Harvard in 1893, when he enrolled as a student in the philosophy department. He chose Harvard because its courses in religion seemed the "most dispassionate" and because of the "great constellation of outstanding men in philosophy and psychology." James had begun teaching the "new psychology" in the philosophy department in 1874, while still holding an appointment in physiology. His graduate course, "The Relations between Physiology and Psychology," marked the first shift away from a strictly philosophical

approach to the study of psychology. James was allowed to teach his first purely philosophical course in 1879, and his appointment was formally changed from physiology to philosophy in 1880. During the 1890s, faculty taught courses in philosophy, sociology, experimental laboratory psychology, and comparative religions under the auspices of the philosophy department. Münsterberg took over the teaching of experimental laboratory psychology from James when he was appointed in 1892, freeing James to teach courses in philosophy, philosophical psychology, and psychopathology. James offered a course in the psychology of religion only once, in 1902.¹⁰

Starbuck took three psychology courses at Harvard, two with Münsterberg and one with James. As there were no courses in the psychology of religion at that time, he pursued what was to become his central interest outside of his course work. "The central guiding principle was that the study must deal *primarily with the first-hand religious experience of individuals*, not so much with their theories about religion as with their actual experiences" (emphasis in original). In order to get at first-hand experience, Starbuck developed a series of questionnaires on conversion, the breaking of habits, and religious development, which he began circulating in 1893. James took an interest in his work and, given the controversial nature of the research, signed a copy of the questionnaire to indicate that it was being circulated with his approval. Münsterberg, according to Starbuck, was "moderately impatient" with the whole idea of the psychology of religion. Although Starbuck found him helpful in relation to his laboratory research, "when it came to seeking some suggestions about the study of religion he was antagonistic and finally explosive. He declared that his problems were those of psychology, while mine belonged to theology, and that they had nothing to do with each other."¹¹

When it became clear that he could not complete a doctorate in the psychology of religion at Harvard owing to the lack of courses, Starbuck transferred to Clark. Although he did so specifically to continue his research in the psychology of religion, he reported that Hall "made vigorous and persistent efforts to draft me off into some other area of interest," saying "that orange I had sucked dry." At the same time, Starbuck said, Hall was "assembling periodically a half-dozen students . . . picturing the possibilities of the application of psychology to religion and saying that the next ten years at Clark University might well be devoted to studies in that field." He also indicated that on his first visit to Clark, he learned that "a Clark student had issued without acknowledgement a syllabus which was almost a reproduction of [his] original one on conversion." He learned, too, that Hall himself "had prepared a revision of [Starbuck's] . . . four-page questionnaire [on religious development] which he was about to issue."¹² Although Starbuck expressed his appreciation for Hall in a number of instances, he described him as "hungry . . . for prestiges and priorities." According to Starbuck, "[h]e never ceased to claim precedence in the psychology of religion or imply it in writing."¹³

Although Hall made a number of dubious claims, he is rightfully known for his work on adolescence, and research on the links between adolescence and conversion were central to the work of Hall and his students at Clark. Hall claimed

priority in the psychology of religion based on an 1881 lecture series, which, in his words, "attempt[ed] to demonstrate that adolescence was the age of religious impressibility in general, and of conversion in particular."¹⁴ Starbuck's work on conversion, as Hall probably recognized, was only partially encompassed under this rubric, however. In discouraging Starbuck from continuing the research he had begun at Harvard, Hall probably sought to bring Starbuck more fully into his orbit and to undercut the influence of William James. James's interests in psychopathology and psychical research, already apparent in the 1890s, foreshadowed an entirely different starting point for the psychological study of religion.

The theoretical and methodological ties between James and Starbuck were readily acknowledged by both. First, both agreed that "the [psychological] study [of religion] must deal primarily with the first-hand religious experience of individuals, not so much with their theories about religion as with their actual experiences" (emphasis in original). Starbuck did not indicate whether this was his idea or James's (or one presupposed by a number of faculty in the department), but it certainly sounds like the approach James would have promoted. Second, James not only supported Starbuck's use of questionnaires as a research tool, Starbuck shared his questionnaires with James and James drew upon them in writing the *Varieties*. James wrote a preface for Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion* (1900), in which he acknowledged that his reading of Starbuck's manuscript and "a large proportion of his raw material" had allayed his skepticism regarding the use of questionnaires and amply justified Starbuck's own confidence in his methods. Third, Starbuck described three sets of "consistencies" that he saw emerging from his questionnaire data before he left Harvard for Clark: "the piling up of age frequencies near pubescence; likeness of the phenomena of conversion and those attending the breaking of habits; the signs of the dissociation of personality and its recentering, not unlike the split-personality experiences described by James, Prince, and Janet."¹⁵ In his *Psychology of Religion*, Starbuck used "subliminal" and "subconscious" interchangeably and drew on James's *Principles of Psychology* to argue that "spontaneous awakenings [i.e., conversions] are . . . the fructification of that which has been ripening within the subliminal consciousness" (PR, 107-8).

George Coe

The son of a Methodist minister, George Coe spent his childhood in parsonages in the small towns of upstate New York and attended the University of Rochester. He then pursued his graduate studies at Boston University, initially intending to follow his father into the ministry, only to be told by three different professors during his first year that he was "cut out for" a professor, specifically a professor of systematic theology. During his four years of study in Boston, he gradually turned from theology to philosophy, rejecting what he viewed as the apologetic presuppositions of theology for science and historical criticism. Toward the end, he worked most closely with the Methodist philosopher Borden Parker Bowne, concluding in the end that Bowne's philosophy was "in reality theological apologetics" as well. Through further study in Germany and unnamed contacts in the

U.S., Coe pondered the challenge that Herbert Spencer's theory of social evolution posed for the religious understanding of human nature, a challenge that preoccupied Bowne (and James). Coe ultimately parted company with Bowne over the issue of empirical research. Bowne, in Coe's words, "treated as superfluous or worse the endeavours, then beginning, to develop a scientific psychology." Soon after Coe was hired to teach philosophy at Northwestern in 1891, he introduced a course in "physiological psychology" and established a psychological laboratory.¹⁶

Coe, like Starbuck, published an important empirical study of conversion in the late 1890s, which was shortly thereafter incorporated into a book-length study. Coe's article, an empirical study of the conversion experiences of 74 predominantly Methodist college students (50 male and 24 female), appeared in 1899, two years after Starbuck's. Their books—Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion* and Coe's *The Spiritual Life*—both appeared in 1900 and were frequently reviewed together as the leading examples of the new psychology of religion. Coe built explicitly on Starbuck's work, using questionnaires not only to elicit information about conversion but also about the student's personality. The questionnaires were supplemented with personal interviews, observation by Coe and others, interviews with friends and acquaintances of the students, and, "in order to get at the facts of suggestibility, hypnotic experiments . . . upon all the important cases that were accessible."¹⁷ Over half the students in Coe's sample had had a dramatic conversion experience and more than a quarter experienced "mental and motor automatisms," i.e., the striking dreams, visions, or involuntary bodily movements associated with old-time Methodism. When the study appeared as a chapter in *The Spiritual Life*, Coe added that he had found "the same general results in an examination of scores of cases of seeking for the experience commonly called 'entire sanctification'" (SL, 105).

In the book, Coe also explained the "striking psychic manifestations which reach their climax among us in emotional revivals, camp meetings, and negro services," describing them as "essentially hypnotic and hallucinatory." Various referred to in Methodist circles as "trances, visions, [and] the 'Power [of the Spirit]'," such experiences were common, he indicated, albeit in different forms, throughout the history of religion. He gave a number of examples, adding that "all these and a multitude of similar phenomena were produced by processes easily recognized by any modern psychologist as automatic and suggestive" (SL, 141). These were not new explanations, as we have seen, and although they located him within a tradition of psychological interpretation that went back to the animal magnetizers, they were not what set his book apart.

Coe's concern was less with those who had had traditional conversion experiences than those who expected to have such experiences and did not. As he put it, "why is it that of two persons who have had the same bringing up, and who seek conversion [or sanctification] with equal earnestness, one is ushered into the new life with shoutings and blowing of trumpets, as it were, while the other, however earnestly he may seek such experiences, never attains them at all[?]" (SL, 104). This was, of course, Coe's own question. Coe grew up with a traditional Methodist understanding of the importance of religious experience. When he was

young, he said, Methodists "laid great store by 'testimony' to a 'personal experience' of 'conversion' and 'witness of the Spirit' or 'assurance' that one had been pardoned and 'accepted' of God." Like many of his modernist peers, he never had a conversion experience.¹⁸ This absence provoked considerable distress and he turned without success to his father's library in search of answers. While an undergraduate at the University of Rochester, he finally "cut the knot by a rational and ethical act." Convinced, like Phoebe Palmer, that it was his duty to "commit [himself] to the Christian way of life" by an act of will, whether or not he received the "internal 'witness' or 'assurance,'" he did so. Although he never received the "internal witness," this act brought an end to his emotional turmoil. It also, in his words, "started a habit of looking for the core of religious experience in the ethical will; moreover, it led on towards endeavours to explain the experiences that some had while I did not have them."¹⁹

Coe's distinctive contribution and the "chief interest of the volume," as Starbuck noted in his review, was its focus on "temperament, both as a factor in the variety of religious experiences and in the determination of the peculiar types of religious expression."²⁰ Actually, Coe argued that there were "three sets of factors [that] favor the attainment of a striking religious transformation—the temperament factor, the factor of expectation, and the tendency to automatism and passive suggestibility" (SL, 504). Coe used two different schemas for describing temperament: division according to the predominant faculty (i.e., sensibility [emotion], intellect, and will) and division according to the promptness and intensity of mental processes (i.e., rapid-strong [choleric], rapid-weak [sanguine], slow-strong [melancholic], and slow-weak [phlegmatic]). He found that those for whom emotion was the predominant faculty and those whose mental processes were melancholic or sanguine were likely to have dramatic conversion experiences. Those for whom intellect was the predominant faculty and those whose mental processes were choleric (i.e., oriented toward practical action) were not. Those least likely to experience a sudden conversion, in other words, were intellectuals with an orientation toward practical action, that is, people like Coe himself.

Although this was the first empirical study that attempted to demonstrate a correlation between temperament and religious experience, temperamental differences had not gone unnoticed even in holiness circles. Coe quoted a Methodist minister who told him that there were "two distinct classes of members" in his church, "a group of substantial persons of high character and agreeable conduct, who support the enterprises of the church with their money, but are rarely or never seen at prayer meeting . . . [and] a class of members who can be relied upon to be present at the prayer meeting, who would rush to the altar to pray with a sinner, and who, if he should rise shouting, would scarcely know whether they were in the body or out of the body" (SL, 216). Coe commented that, without being aware of it, the minister had made a clear distinction between two temperamental groups. "On the one side he ranged the members of his flock who manifest either the melancholic or the sanguine characteristics in excess, and confessed that the spiritual exercises of his church appealed almost exclusively to them. On the other side he ranged the more choleric and more balanced characters, against

whom, it appears, there lies a suspicion of defective spirituality" (SL, 216–17). This temperamental difference, Coe claimed, was what "distinguishes holiness movements from the ordinary life of the churches. A holiness band or sect that separates itself from the general life of the church is organized and held together chiefly by temperamental affinities. . . . It is no more possible for the generality of Christians to attain the ecstasy or maintain the exalted serenity often proclaimed as their privilege than it is for them all to feel drawn toward the life of monks, nuns, and hermits" (SL, 217).

Coe articulated a conclusion that was to become a commonplace in the psychology of religion. In everyday language, it would find a place in (usually disparaging) references to "emotional religion" and "emotional" experiences, where what was coded as "emotional" was the traditional sort of Methodist conversion experience. Coe's use of the term "emotional" was evaluative rather than descriptive. As he acknowledged, he used the word not to refer to the emotional coloring that accompanied all aspects of life, but to refer to what he took to be "feeling for its own sake." Thus, he says, "when we speak of emotional temperament, emotional novels, emotional religious meetings, and the like, what we really have in mind is not merely the abundance of emotion, but also the quality." In analyzing the hymns and prayer-meeting songs associated with Methodism, he was concerned to identify those that promoted "introspection, subjectivity, [and] self-consciousness," on the one hand, and those that promoted "practical activities and interests and facts," on the other (SL, 219–21). When he described traditional Methodism as "emotional," he targeted its alleged one-sided emphasis on subjective experience. Coe's research thus recast the traditional Methodist understanding of religious experience, such that signs of "the power of God" or "the witness of the Holy Spirit" became mere manifestations of a particular temperament.

William James

James devoted seven of the *Varieties'* twenty lectures to the subject of conversion. In Lectures 4–7, he introduced the distinction between the religion of the "healthy-minded" and "sick-souls," the former undergoing the gradual conversion associated with the "once-born" and the latter the sudden conversion of the "twice-born." He then elaborated on the process of sudden conversion in his lectures on "The Divided Self, and the Process of Unification" and "Conversion." In the lecture on Conversion, he referred extensively to the work of Starbuck and Coe, building on Starbuck's discussion of the subliminal and Coe's correlations between sudden conversion, suggestibility, and automatisms (195–96). Like Coe, James associated sudden conversion experiences particularly, but not exclusively, with Methodism. He thought that most Protestants set little store by "instantaneous conversion," allowing "ordinary religious duties . . . to suffice for his salvation." For Methodists, he said, this was not enough. For them, there must be an "acute crisis of self-despair and surrender followed by relief." Without this, "salvation is only offered, not effectively received, and Christ's sacrifice in so far forth is incomplete" (186).

Although James acknowledged Coe's findings on temperament, he nonetheless found psychological value in sudden conversion experiences that Coe did not. In emphasizing sudden conversion, "Methodism," he stated, "surely here follows, if not the healthier-minded, yet on the whole the profounder instinct. The individual models which it has set up as typical and worthy of imitation are not only the more interesting dramatically, but psychologically they have been the more complete" (186). James even went so far as to lift up Borden Parker Bowne, the well-known liberal Methodist philosopher under whom Coe had studied, to illustrate the "shallowing effects" of the intellect on religion. In a line quoted enthusiastically by holiness theologians, James encouraged his readers to "[s]ee how the ancient spirit of Methodism evaporates under those wonderfully able rationalistic booklets of a philosopher like Professor Bowne."²¹

In an exchange of letters written while he was writing the *Varieties*, James chided Bowne saying, "I myself have enough of old Lutheran sentiment in my bones to believe that you are too unsympathetic with the mystical needs of man in making as light as you do of the theological symbols in which they have clothed themselves. It seems to me that extravagance of some sort is essential to the direct religious life."²² In his manuscript notes, he came back to Bowne as he struggled to clarify his aim in writing the *Varieties*. "Bowne's attitude," he noted, "is sensible and prosaic. The more original religious life is always lyric . . . and its essence is . . . to feel an invisible order . . . [wherein] the common sense values really vanish." There is, he concluded, "[a] genuine antagonism between commonsense religion like Bowne's and that of the more extravagant prophets of whatever kind. Each is foolish to the other, for each lives in the light of a different world."²³ The religion that interested James, as Ralph Barton Perry observed, "was closer to the simple piety of the evangelical sects than to that of modern religious liberalism."²⁴

From James's perspective, Coe was clearly a healthy-minded, once-born soul, who, like his former teacher, had distanced himself in a sensible and prosaic way from the religion of his childhood and not, like James, a one-time "sick soul" with a vicarious attraction to old-time Methodism. James, of course, was not and never had been a Methodist. His family, at least on his father's side, were Scots-Irish Presbyterians. James's father, whose enormous influence on his son has been analyzed at length, dropped out of Princeton Theological Seminary and had a dramatic and ostensibly sudden conversion to Swedenborgianism in 1844. Although James rejected his father's Swedenborgianism, most James scholars agree that William's struggle to find his vocation during the 1870s and 1880s involved a complex process of accommodation to and differentiation from his father. Intellectually, as Mark Schwehn has argued, that involved developing a view of consciousness that, counter to the materialistic science of his day, had a legitimate place for religious experiences such as his father's. James's more or less playful identification with Methodism may well have been a stand-in for what surely would have been a far more problematic identification with his father's Swedenborgianism.²⁵

In a letter to James Leuba, written in 1904, James claimed that he had "no living sense of commerce with a God" and envied those who did. "The Divine,"

he said, "is limited to impersonal and abstract concepts which, as ideals, interest and determine me, but do so but faintly in comparison with what a feeling of God might effect, if I had one." At most, he was willing to describe himself as having a "mystical germ" of experience, the embryonic form but not the fully realized thing. The key to his disclaimer lies, I think, in his sense of his own experience as "impersonal and abstract" and thus as a faint version of what he took to be the real "feeling of God." This sense of distance was rooted, I suspect, in his own ambivalence toward Christianity (and his father's Swedenborgianism). As he said to Leuba: "I have grown so out of Christianity that entanglement therewith on the part of a mystical utterance has to be *abstracted from and overcome* before I can listen."²⁶ This sense that the mystical utterance had to be abstracted and disentangled from the tradition before it could "speak" to him points to the strategic alternative represented by the *Varieties*. Whereas Coe distanced himself from the traditional Methodist understanding of conversion altogether, James sought to abstract what he took to be its mystical core in order that it might continue to engage him.

MAKING RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The *Varieties* as a whole has been read in any number of ways. Here I interpret it as the quintessential theoretical expression of the mediating tradition between psychology and religion. With the publication of the *Varieties*, William James constituted "religious experience" in a technical sense as an object of study, defining it as a generic "something" that informed "religion-in-general" apart from any tradition in particular.²⁷ He did so empirically, abstracting that which he identified as religious experience from the particular contexts in which it had been embedded and linking these diverse experiences together theoretically by means of the experimental psychology of the subconscious. To do this, James drew on first-person accounts from a variety of traditions, although the majority of his selections were from Protestant evangelicals. James's efforts can be located in relation to the philosophy of religion, particularly the phenomenology of religion; Protestant supernaturalism; and secular scientific (positivist) understandings of religion.

Ernst Troeltsch, who described James as having made "the first thorough-going contribution from America to the philosophy of religion," pointed out that James had much in common with his European counterparts. Both were committed, Troeltsch said, to "a true *philosophy* of religion, that is to say not a one sided sectarian or theological treatment of the subject." Contrasting the philosophy of religion with "the theology of the churches," he said that the former sets out "from the whole wide field of religious phenomena," whereas the latter begins "from a given theological norm." The goal of the theologian is set by "outside authority or dogma," but the philosopher of religion "compares and appraises the phenomena with entire freedom, according to a standard which the philosopher himself has first to discover and justify." Although the philosopher of religion, according to Troeltsch, did not assume the "supernaturalism of the church," he was quick to point out, in light of James's professed "piecemeal supernaturalism," that his was

not the supernaturalism of the churches. "Supernaturalism is for him . . . no exclusive attribute of Christianity, but pertains to every religion, and simply means the repudiation of rationalism and monism with their faith in law."²⁸

The chief difference between James and the Europeans, according to Troeltsch, lay in the latter's commitment to Platonic or Neoplatonic rationalism and the former's commitment to an anti-Platonic radical empiricism. Both, he said, understood religion in relation to consciousness, but they understood consciousness in very different ways. The Europeans, according to Troeltsch, presupposed an "a priori unity of consciousness" and a "connection between contingent individual consciousness and consciousness in general." They understood that which approximated this universal consciousness in the individual as the "essence of religion." James began with a psychological understanding of consciousness as "a stream of psychophysical occurrences, not to be limited and not to be resolved, a bundle of continuous experience in constant motion, which, starting from some physical stimulus, pass on through mental activity, and are discharged in action." In this conception, consciousness was not necessarily unified and there was no essence of religion.²⁹ This meant, Troeltsch said, that "James is more than the religious psychologist who has added a new field to the philosophy of religion. He is, by the very act of making the philosophy of religion into a psychology of religion, the representative of an altogether opposite type of the philosophy of religion." Starting from the premise of a unitary essence, the European philosophy of religion, according to Troeltsch, "seeks to comprehend the historical stages of evolution as teleological, James knows the varieties only as psychological variations, in every case dependent on general psychical condition and nervous constitution."³⁰

While James, like other philosophers of religion, was oriented toward the "whole wide field of religious phenomena," his primary concern was not with the comparative study of religion, but with the relationship between religion and science and, more narrowly, religion and psychology. James viewed the *Varieties* as a contribution to the "Science of Religion," but he rejected what he described as "the sectarian scientist's attitude," rooted, he believed, in their secularized Platonism.³¹ Although James, like they, sought to explain the origins of religion, he resisted, like most of the philosophers of religion of his day, the social scientists' efforts to do so in strictly secular terms. Thus, while James was, among other things, a psychologist and described his approach to the varieties of religious experience as psychological, he is not easily classed with either his contemporary social scientists or philosophers of religion, although he shared some characteristics with both. In his effort to mediate between religion and psychology, James shared much with new religious movements, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and, especially New Thought. His metaphysically informed efforts at mediation were vastly more sophisticated than theirs, however, and brought a new legitimacy and prestige to these popular movements. While the explicitness of James's metaphysical commitments was unusual in a social scientist (and led many to claim that he was *really* a philosopher), it was the nature rather than the fact of such commitments, as Troeltsch clearly recognized, that set the *Varieties* apart

from other scientific studies of religion. These metaphysical presuppositions informed his most important innovations in theory and method in the study of religion: his comparative method, his psychological theory of religious experience, and his distinction between the "science of religion" and "living religion."

This reading of the *Varieties* proceeds in a more or less linear fashion attending most closely to the preliminary material concerning his approach and method in lectures 1-3, the theoretical material in lectures 8-10, 19-20, and the discussion of living religion in lectures 20-21.

Method in the Science of Religion

James made it clear at the outset that his subjects would be persons of the sort that have filled the pages of this book. He was interested, he said, in first-hand experience, that is, in "the original experiences which were the pattern-setters" for the "ordinary religious believer." He was interested, in other words, in "'geniuses' in the religious line," persons who, like other geniuses, have "often shown symptoms of nervous instability." Perhaps more than other kinds of genius, he said, "religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations." He described them as "creatures of exalted emotional sensibility," often subject to "melancholy" and liable to "obsessions and fixed ideas" and other evidences of "a discordant inner life." "Frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological." He cited George Fox, who was for many the quintessential enthusiast, as an exemplar of the type of religious figure he had in mind (15-16). He did so, however, knowing that Fox was well-tarred with the brush of enthusiasm and, indeed, he acknowledged toward the end of his lectures, that "if any of you are enemies of what our ancestors used to brand as enthusiasm, and are, nevertheless, still listening to me now, you have probably felt my selection to have been sometimes almost perverse, and have wished I might have stuck to soberer examples" (383).

James structured the *Varieties* around two questions relating to this sort of religious experience, one of "fact" and one of "value." The first was a question about "the religious propensities" and the second, a question about their "philosophic significance." The first asked about the nature and origins of such experiences; the second asked about their meaning and significance. The first was a historical question; the second was a question of value. The latter depended, according to James, on "some sort of general theory as to what the peculiarities in a thing should be which give it value." He stressed that the answer to one question could not "be deduced immediately from the other" (13-14). On the basis of this distinction, James made three significant methodological moves: (1) he rejected a quest for origins in which origins were equated with meaning or significance, i.e. value; (2) he maintained that the value of a thing should be assessed in light of the thing's distinctive function; and (3) he adopted a comparative methodology in order to (a) lay bare the causes in which a thing originates and (b) establish the thing's unique function (on the basis of which it could then be judged).

James devoted much of his first lecture (10–21) to a long digression designed to assure his audience that “explaining [the] origin [of the soul’s secrets] would [not] simultaneously explain away their significance” (17). In what Mark Micale has described as “the most thoroughgoing critique of the practice of rediagnosing religious phenomena in neuropathological terms,”³² James argued that the “medical materialists,” like religious dogmatists, took origins as their sole criterion of truth. Where medical materials located the origins of religious phenomena in pathology (epilepsy, hysteria, hereditary degeneration, etc.), religious dogmatists located it in such things as immediate intuition, pontifical authority, supernatural revelation, direct possession, and automatic utterance. “The medical materialists are therefore only so many belated dogmatists, neatly turning the tables on their predecessors by using the criterion of origin in a destructive instead of an accretive way. They are effective with their talk of pathological origins only so long as supernatural origin is pleaded by the other side, and nothing but the argument from origin is under discussion” (24).³³

James’s little-noted discussion of his comparative method framed his excursus on medical materialism. The primary locus of comparison for James was between religious and nonreligious phenomena, including psychopathological ones. In pursuing the nature of the religious propensities in terms of their “history and natural antecedents,” he said, “we cannot possibly ignore [the] pathological aspects of the subject. We must describe and name them just as if they occurred in non-religious men.” To describe and name is, in effect, to classify, and doing so, as he acknowledged, requires comparison. “The first thing the intellect does with an object is to class it along with something else. . . . The next thing the intellect does is lay bare the causes in which the thing originates” (17). Mention of this second step then precipitated his excursus on medical materialism and his extended attack on the fallacy of equating the explanation of origins with the “explaining away” of significance.

When he surfaced many pages later, he took up the question of why, if the religious life was to be judged by its results and not its origins, he must “threaten [his listeners] . . . at all with so much existential study of its conditions?” In short, he asked rhetorically, “why not simply leave the pathological questions out?” He gave two answers: “First, I say, irrepressible curiosity imperiously leads one on; and I say, secondly, that it always leads to a better understanding of a thing’s significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions, its equivalents and substitutes and nearest relatives elsewhere.” His point was not to equate the object of study and its comparates or “to swamp the thing in the wholesale condemnation” associated with the “inferior” things to which it is compared, but rather to contrast them, so that “we may . . . ascertain the more precisely in what its [the object of study’s] merits consist” (26). Comparison thus not only laid bare the “causes in which the thing originates,” it also provided the basis for “understanding a thing’s significance.” Comparison, in short, provided a means of answering the first question and at least laid the groundwork for answering the second.

He illustrated his point with respect to religious phenomena by pointing out that melancholy, happiness, and the trancelike states associated with religion were

“special cases of kinds of human experience of much wider scope.” Whatever else they might be by virtue of being religious, he said, “religious melancholy . . . is at any rate melancholy. Religious happiness is happiness. Religious trance is trance.” Are we not, he asked, more “likely to ascertain the distinctive significance of religious melancholy and happiness, or of religious trances, . . . by comparing them as conscientiously as we can with other varieties of melancholy, happiness, or trance, than by refusing to consider their place in any more general series, and treating them as if they were outside of nature altogether?” (28). This, at any rate, was the supposition he hoped his lectures would confirm. Indeed, he concluded his first lecture with the statement that “the only novelty” he could imagine his lectures to possess lay in the breadth of the phenomena “morbid or healthy” to which he would compare the “religious phenomena . . . in order to understand them better” (29).

In his second lecture, James circumscribed his topic by offering a definition of religion and then formulated a preliminary answer to the second of his two questions. He began by rejecting an essentialist definition of religion, arguing that there was no “simple abstract ‘religious emotion’ . . . present in every religious experience without exception” (31). There was, in other words, no one elementary religious emotion (or, he suspected, any one object or act), only a common storehouse of emotions (or objects or acts) upon which to draw. In the absence of such an essence, and in keeping with his interest in examining “first-hand” religion, he stipulated a definition that privileged “*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude . . . in relation to whatever they may consider divine*” and discounted “second-hand” religion, i.e., institutions, ecclesiastical organizations, and systematic theology (31–32, 34, emphasis in original). He understood the divine, practically speaking, as extreme and unmistakable instances of a solemn, serious, and tender attitude toward what a person holds to be the primal truth (34–40).

Next he turned to the meaning and significance of this attitude, which for James, had to do with its function, i.e., what it did. He sought the function of a religious attitude or experience much as he would seek the function of a bodily organ, that is, by asking “after its most peculiar and characteristic sort of performance.” James insisted that we must judge religious experiences by the “element or quality in them which we can meet nowhere else” (44). He argued that the “state of mind, known to religious men, but to no others” is one “in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God.” In such states of mind, “[t]he time for tension in our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, of calm deep breathing, of an eternal present, with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived” (46). He claimed that this sort of happiness was found “nowhere but in religion” (47).

Religions, he argued, encourage this attitude. In the religious life, he said, “surrender and sacrifice are positively espoused: even unnecessary givings-up are added in order that the happiness may increase.” This paradoxical combination of sacrifice/surrender and happiness allowed James to pinpoint what he took to be the distinctive function of religion:

Religion thus makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary; and if it be the only agency that can accomplish this result, its vital importance as a human faculty stands vindicated beyond dispute. It becomes an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so successfully fulfill. . . . Of the farther office of religion as a metaphysical revelation I will say nothing now. (49, emphasis in original)

Here he hinted at two answers to his question regarding the significance of religious propensities, to wit: "Religion makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary" and "Religion gives access to metaphysical revelation."

In the second lecture, James moved from defining religion as the the inner experience of believers in relation to what they took as primal truth to a consideration of the significance of that relationship, considered functionally. In other words, given a stipulated relationship, James then asked *what* it accomplished. In lecture three, James asked *how* this relationship accomplished this distinctive function. He did so by lifting up what he took to be another central characteristic of the religious life, specifically, "the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto." He described "this belief and this adjustment . . . [as] the religious attitude in the soul."

Such an attitude, he said, entailed certain "psychological peculiarities" (51), to wit, a sense of the "real presence" of that which the believer considers divine. Psychologically speaking, he said, "it is as if there were in the human consciousness a *sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception* of what we may call '*something there*,' more deep and more general than any of the special and particular '*senses*' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed" (55, emphasis in original). Many religious persons, in other words, "possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended." They have "a sense of the real presence of these objects" (59).

The relationship of believers with what they took to be primal truth was not an intellectual one, but rather a direct engagement with something that seemed real, i.e., seemed to be objectively present. Intellectual reflection, James contended, followed from such "inarticulate feelings of reality," but the "inarticulate feelings" were foundational. In the religious realm, he claimed "the subconscious and non-rational . . . thus hold primacy" (67-68). Here James prefigured his answer to his question regarding the *origins* of the religious propensities. For it was the experienced quality of the relationship as a direct engagement, rooted in the subconscious and nonrational, that accounted, in James's view, for *how* religion was able to accomplish what it did.

In his approach to a psychological science of religion, James shared much in common with other social scientists of his era. If we compare, for example, James's *Varieties* and Durkheim's *Elementary Forms*, we can see that both were constructed in relation to three interconnected attributes of religion: definition, origin, and function. Both James and Durkheim were interested in the origin and function of

religion. Both presupposed that, behind the diversity of forms that it assumed, religion (to quote Durkheim) "universally fulfil[s] the same functions." They identified, of course, different origins and functions. Where Durkheim located the origins or causes of religion in "collective realities" (i.e. society), James located them (as a psychologist) in individual realities (i.e., the subconscious). Where Durkheim understood the function of religion in relation to the unification of society (i.e., the obligations of the individual to the group), James understood the function of religion in relation to the transformation of the self (i.e. the harmonious adjustment of the individual to an experienced, yet unseen, order). In each case, their conclusions followed (circularly) from an appropriately chosen definition of religion. Thus, where James defined religion in terms of the individual's relationship to what s/he considered divine, Durkheim defined religion in terms of "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things . . . which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them."³⁴ James defined religion in terms of the individual and discovered its origin and function in the individual. Durkheim defined religion in terms of the social (i.e., the moral community called a church) and found its origin and function in society.³⁵

They differ most significantly in terms of method, and this, I think, is where James's contributions to the study of religion have been overlooked. To discover the origin of religion Durkheim turned to what he took to be its simplest and most primitive form. In doing so, he set up a tacit comparison between "civilized" and "primitive" religion, in which he sought to discover the origin and function of religion in the presumed simplicity of the primitive. James, by way of contrast, set up and defended an explicit comparison between religious and nonreligious forms of experience, in which origins and functional significance were linked, but not equated. Thus, for James religious and nonreligious experiences, including pathological ones, had their proximate or mundane origins in the subconscious. Nonetheless, these experiences served different functions and thereby had different value for human life.

Their differences in method were connected to different views of psychopathology, evolutionary theory, and ultimately metaphysics. Where James was able to make fruitful comparisons between religion and psychopathology, Durkheim was not. In fact, Durkheim's argument was premised on the rejection of psychopathology as an explanation of the origins of religion. Thus, when he sought to identify the most elementary form of religion from among what he took to be the three basic contenders, he rejected animism and naturism because, in his view, they necessitated regarding "religion as the product of a delirious imagination," in short, as products of psychopathology. Because he equated origin and function, Durkheim identified what he took to be pathologically rooted phenomena (animism and naturism) as secondary elaborations on something more fundamental and primitive, i.e. totemism, which, according to Durkheim, was social rather than psychological in its origins.³⁶

James, by way of contrast, not only lifted up George Fox as an exemplar of the sort of religious experience he wanted to consider, he acknowledged at the outset

that, "from the point of view of his nervous constitution, Fox was a psychopath or *détraqué* of the deepest dye" (7). Contrary to today's usage, James did not mean to suggest that Fox was amoral or antisocial. Rather James used "psychopath" or "psychopathic temperament" to refer to a mind that was to some degree "unbalanced" or "unintegrated." In his Lowell Lecture on degeneration, he defined the "neurotic constitution" and the "psychopathic temperament" as "a mind discordant with itself that doesn't keep together," subject to "impulses and obsessive ideas."³⁷ From the *Varieties*, we learn that James thought that religious biographies often depicted persons with psychopathic temperaments accompanied by automatisms, such as the sense of being the instrument of a higher power (inspiration), sudden perceptions or convictions of new truth, and/or obsessive impulses to action (142, 376-81).

James's ability to make fruitful comparisons between religious and pathological experiences was rooted, as we have seen, in his insistence on the distinction between function and origin. This distinction, indeed his whole methodology, was rooted in his understanding of evolution. Although as an adolescent he was initially attracted to the evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer, James later forcefully rejected Spencer for Darwin and extended a Darwinian understanding of evolution to the realm of consciousness and ideas. As James read him, Spencer, like the medical materialists, equated origin with function in a circular fashion, such that the environment caused adaptations whose function was the adaptation of the organism to its environment. Darwin, in what James viewed as his crucial theoretical move, separated causal origin from function. In Darwin's theory, variations arose *spontaneously* by means of causal mechanisms (e.g., random genetic mutations) that were independent of their outward relations. The variations best fitted to the outward environment (i.e., most functional) were then selected for survival.³⁸

James extended Darwin's logic to argue, *contra* Spencer (and Lamarck), that "the novel ideas produced by men of genius . . . were not due to direct adaptations, to immediate environmental coercion." Rather, James contended, "new modes of thought and conceptual innovations sprang up in the mind as spontaneous mental variations" and were only accepted if they continued to meet the test of survival. Both Spencer and James held to theories of social evolution, but in James's theory geniuses or "great men" played a pivotal role. The ideas of geniuses were in effect spontaneous variations in the social organism, which if adapted to the needs of their environment would be selected for survival and provide the basis for new developments.³⁹ James's critique of Spencer and his critique of medical materialism, thus, were intimately connected. Both Spencerian evolution and medical materialism equated origins and function. In the former case, this meant that consciousness had no role in the process of social evolution, and in the latter, that genius was equated with insanity and ecstasy with hysteria.

Darwin, so understood, provided the basis for James's attack on medical materialism, his comparative methodology, and his focus on religious geniuses. Myers and the work of the SPR provided the basis for an alternative understanding of the subconscious as a potential source of spontaneous variations that might fur-

ther the development of the individual and the social evolution of the whole. As we have seen, Pierre Janet viewed the healthy mind as unified and the dissociation of consciousness as inherently pathological and thus always devolutionary. Myers, by way of contrast, viewed the mind as multiplex. His understanding of the relationship between evolution and consciousness was consequently more complex. As summarized by James:

The cornerstone of his [Myers's] conception was the fact that consciousness has no essential unity. . . . Myers therefore makes the suggestion that the whole system of consciousness studied by the classic psychology is only an extract from a larger total, being a part told-off, as it were, to do service in the adjustments of our physical organism to the world of nature. This extract, aggregated and personified for this particular purpose, has, like all evolving things, a variety of peculiarities. Having evolved, it may also dissolve, and in dreams, hysteria, and divers forms of degeneration it seems to do so. This is a retrograde process of separation in a consciousness of which the unity was once effected. But again the consciousness may follow the opposite course and integrate still farther, or evolve by growing into yet untried directions.⁴⁰

Consciousness in this view "aggregates and dissipates" and in doing so may evolve or degenerate. Dissociation, although generally linked with degeneration, may simply prefigure a reaggregation of the personality and growth in new and untried directions. James thought that "Myers's general evolutionary conception . . . [was] a hypothesis of first-rate philosophic importance," and we find it presupposed in the *Varieties*.⁴¹ Its most startling feature, and one in keeping with James's metaphysical view of the universe as "unfinished, growing in all sorts of places where thinking beings are at work," was its indeterminacy and open-endedness.⁴²

The Darwinian model of social evolution that James brought to thinking about religious experience, thus, presupposed (1) the importance of religious geniuses who would (2) produce spontaneous mental variations that would (3) be tested in the environment such that the fittest would survive. In James's psychological theory of religion, the subconscious was the well from which these new variations sprung. By interpreting the subconscious in terms of Myers's theory of the subliminal, James replicated on the level of theory that which he presupposed in terms of method, i.e. the idea that origins and functional value could not be equated. The subconscious, as understood by Myers, provided a conceptual place from which both psychopathology and religious genius might emerge, while saying nothing, as James repeated over and over again, about value.

Indeed, for James the real beauty of Myers's understanding of the subconscious was that it ultimately said very little about origins. In adopting Myers's conception, James left open the question of where the subconscious ended, whether in the personal self or beyond it, and thus placed *ultimate* questions about origins outside the purview of the science of religions. This maneuver allowed him to engage the question of origins in a proximate sense as a scientist of religion while deferring consideration of its origin in the ultimate sense. Given the ambiguity of subconscious origins, James emphasized that all that emerged from (or through) the subconscious had to be tested in terms of "the way in which it works on the

whole." This James said was his "empiricist criterion; and this criterion the stoutest insists on supernatural origin have also been forced to use in the end." When he alluded to Jonathan Edwards's principle of discernment, saying "by their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots," we should hear it as simply another way of stating his claims about functions and origins (24–25).

A Psychological Theory of Religion

In his concluding lecture, James provided a concise statement of the function of religion, a statement that Henry Samuel Levinson has referred to as James's theory of religion.⁴³ Religion, James there stated, consists in an uneasiness, i.e., "a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand," and its solution, i.e., "a sense that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers" (400). It would more accurately, in my view, to say that this is a statement of the *first half* of James's theory of religion. As a theoretical statement of what religion *does*, that is its function, it provides (at least) a partial answer to the question of value that he posed at the outset.

In the paragraph that follows, he elaborated on what religion does from the standpoint of the religious individual. The individual, "so far as he suffers from his wrongness and criticizes it," experiences within himself a division between the "wrong part" and something higher. At the moment of salvation, the individual "*becomes conscious that this higher part [of himself] is conterminous with and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck*" (400, emphasis in original).

The second half of James's theory of religion consisted in an explanation of *how* religion performed its function, that is, an explanation of its (proximate) origins and, thus, an answer to the first of his two questions. Specifically, James sought to explain, theoretically, the "more" referred to in the previous paragraph. In keeping with others we have examined who sought to mediate between science and religion, James wanted to account for *how* religion does this in a way that would allow both psychologists and religious believers to acknowledge such experiences as in some sense real. According to James, "the *subconscious self* is nowadays a well accredited psychological entity; and I believe that in it we have exactly the mediating term required" (402). For James, the subconscious, which he also referred to as "consciousness beyond the margin" or the "subliminal," was both a mediating term and a proximate, if not ultimate, explanation of the origins of religion. The subconscious thus played the role in his theory that animal magnetism, trance, or conscious clairvoyance/suggestion played in earlier theories. James developed his argument for the subconscious self as mediating term in relation to three religious phenomena: conversion, mysticism, and prayer. I will consider each in turn.

CONVERSION

Taken most generally, James understood conversion psychologically in terms of a field theory of consciousness. In the field theory, the "mental field," rather than the "idea," is the basic unit of mental life. Mental fields succeed one another and in so doing constitute a stream of consciousness. Each field has a center or focus and a margin. Objects of attention are clustered at the center and as the attention shifts elsewhere they fade to the margin. The margin of the field is indeterminate and "our whole past store of memories floats beyond this margin, ready at a touch to come in; and the entire mass of residual powers, impulses, and knowledges that constitute our empirical self stretches continuously beyond it" (188–89). In terms of field theory, "To say that a man is 'converted' means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy" (162).

The field theory, however, was not enough for James. Immediately, he criticized it on two counts. First, "ordinary psychology" assumed that "all the consciousness a person now has . . . is there in the 'field' of the moment." Second, it assumed that "what is absolutely extra-marginal" does not exist and "cannot be a fact of consciousness at all" (190). Thereupon followed his reference to the discovery of 1886, which demonstrated "that, in certain subjects at least, there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto . . . which are extra-marginal and outside of the primary consciousness altogether." This discovery of "a consciousness existing beyond the field, or subliminally as Mr. Myers terms it, casts light on many phenomena of religious biography" (190).⁴⁴

In retrospect anyway, the shift from field theory, with its center and margin, to consciousness *beyond* the margin proved to be the crucial divide across which even the most sympathetic psychologists and psychologists of religion had difficulty following James. Knowing that, it behooves us to pause to consider exactly why James himself considered this move so crucial. According to James, "[t]he most important consequence of having a strongly developed ultra-marginal life . . . is that one's ordinary fields of consciousness are liable to incursions from it of which the subject does not guess the source." Myers, noted James, refers to these incursions from "the subliminal parts of the mind" as automatisms, whether sensory or motor, emotional or intellectual (191). James, in short, moved to a theory of consciousness beyond the margins because it did a better job of explaining automatisms and the phenomena associated with them, i.e. religious genius, the psychopathic temperament, and, as he suggested in this lecture, instantaneous conversions (the "type by self surrender").

Again, since so many who succeeded James marginalized automatisms as either psychopathological or primitive or both, we need to focus on why James did not. The reasons, in my view, are simultaneously methodological, empirical, personal, and metaphysical. Methodologically, James believed, as we have seen, that extreme examples give the clearest evidence of a thing's distinctive function. Empiri-

cally, James thought that the psychopathic temperament shed light on what he took to be the "normal evolution of character." To some degree for all and "to the greatest possible degree if we are decidedly psychopathic, . . . the normal evolution of character chiefly consists in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self" (142). Instantaneous conversions, i.e., those involving self-surrender, were but one instance of this larger psychological process. Such conversions were, in his view, central to the development of religion in the West. Indeed, he claimed that the "whole development of Christianity in inwardness has consisted in little more than the greater and greater emphasis attached to this crisis of self-surrender." He traced this line of development running from Catholicism to Lutheranism to Calvinism to Wesleyanism and then, beyond technical Christianity altogether, into "transcendental idealism, whether or not of the mind-cure type" (173).

We know also that James inserted his own experience into his lecture on the sick soul as a further example of the sort of psychopathic temperament exemplified by John Bunyan. In light of his own personal experience, he undoubtedly had a stake in finding value in, rather than simply writing off, the more extreme forms of experience. Beyond his half-serious defense of traditional Methodism, we know that he struggled mightily to differentiate himself from his father, while at the same time honoring the legitimacy of his father's religious commitments. While some scholars have denied any connection between James and his father's Swedenborgianism, Eugene Taylor has suggested that the *Varieties* can be read as "describing the process of religious transformation that Swedenborg experienced from the standpoint of a psychology of religion."⁴⁵ While it contains remarkably few direct references to Swedenborg or Swedenborgians, there are several passages that bear out Taylor's suggestion. The passage just quoted, for example, referring to the importance of a crisis of self-surrender in "transcendental idealism," could well be construed as a reference to Swedenborg, locating him at the apex of a line of development that began within Christianity. James's comment that "Swedenborg's case is of course the palmary one of *audita et visa*, serving as a basis of religious revelation" (379, n. 27) is more definitive. Were James to dismiss automatism, i.e. voices and visions, he would have had to write off Swedenborg's revelations as well. Pointing to more subtle lines of influence, Paul Croce roots James's mediating impulse in his father's Swedenborgianism. He adds that "the tug from his spiritual heritage was not just a lure to mediate, but it also provided him with an outline of how to do so in a specific way," that is, through "a spirituality that was set in nature and . . . empirical in character."⁴⁶ This was an orientation that James shared, not just with his father, but with the popular mediating tradition more generally.

Metaphysically, we know that James was moving toward a philosophically defensible, pluralistic, panpsychic, radical empiricism that came to full fruition in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1907). Given the direction he was headed and given that many of the key points of his more fully realized metaphysic were already in place when he was writing the *Varieties*, it is hard to avoid a sense that James's metaphysical preferences were playing a role in his choices as well.⁴⁷ This seems most evident in his rather muddled discussion of the competing explanations of

incursions from beyond the margins. Thus, on the one hand, he indicated that new research had made Carpenter's older, purely physiological concept of "unconscious cerebration . . . almost certainly a misnomer, . . . better replaced by the vaguer term 'subconscious' or 'subliminal'" (170). A bit further on, he indicated that "psychology, defining these forces as 'subconscious,' and speaking of their effects as due to 'incubation,' or 'cerebration,' implied that they do not transcend the individual's personality" (174). Finally, in a note, he candidly confessed "that there are occasional bursts into consciousness of results of which it is not too easy to demonstrate any prolonged subconscious incubation." These "bursts," he said, "would have to be ascribed either to a merely physiological nerve storm, a 'discharging lesion' like that of epilepsy; or, in case it was useful and rational, . . . to some more mystical or theological hypothesis" (192, n. 4). Although he made this last remark to warn his readers that "subconscious incubation" would not be sufficient to account for all the facts, he pointed beyond its insufficiency to two explanatory alternatives: a physiological nerve storm or a more mystical hypothesis. That James did not simply retreat, as would virtually all his psychological colleagues, back to the physiological explanation suggests the role that his metaphysical choices played alongside, and indeed interwoven with, his empirical observations and personal commitments. His decision to stick "as far as possible to the more 'scientific' view" and to defer for the time being "the question of its absolute sufficiency" reflected his interest in building a case for the "subconscious" as a mediating term amenable to both secular psychologists and religious believers.

MYSTICISM

James's understanding of mysticism was conceptually parallel to his understanding of the subconscious, although the tendency to focus on the famous four marks of mysticism (ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity) has obscured this parallelism. Few who cite James as an authority on mysticism note that midway through the lecture, he admitted that "in characterizing mystic states as pantheistic, optimistic, etc., I am afraid I have over-simplified the truth." He did so he said in order to "keep closer to the classic mystical tradition." But, he confessed, "classic religious mysticism . . . is only a 'privileged case.'" It is, he said, "an *extract*, . . . carved out from a much larger mass . . . and kept true to type by the selection of the fittest specimens and their preservation in 'schools'" (336; emphasis in original). Not only was religious mysticism taken as a whole "much less unanimous" than he had allowed, *religious* mysticism was only half the story. "The other half [of mysticism] has no accumulated traditions except those which the text-books on insanity supply." From the point of view of "their psychological mechanism," he said, it was evident that "the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from that great subliminal or trans-marginal region of which so little is really known" (336-38).

Here James made explicit the role of the subconscious in his evolutionary psychology of religion. The subconscious was the source of a great variety of mystical productions (a veritable hodge-podge of the religious, the psychopathological,

and much else besides) from which the "fittest specimens" were selected and preserved in "schools" by means of "traditions." The value of the mystical variations was determined, in other words, by the schools in keeping with their traditions. In doing so, they were able to ensure that mystical experience within their tradition stayed "true to type." Thus when we read James's statement that "personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness," we should not assume that "its root and centre" was anything other than the subconscious (ambiguously construed). Also, when he added that "for us . . . such states of consciousness ought to form the vital chapter from which the other chapters get their light," we should not assume that this light was, for James, unambiguously positive (301). Indeed, if we consider the whole of mysticism as he presented it, we are thrown back, as he repeatedly insisted, on the equivocal origins of mysticism (and religious experience) and the ever-present need not only for discernment, but perhaps even for *schools* and *traditions* of discernment. His mention here of schools and traditions will prove instructive when we turn from James's theory of origins to his discussion of "living religion" and consider the role of living traditions in assessing the value of experiences for life.

PRAYER

In its widest sense, prayer, for James, signified "every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine." As such, and in keeping with his stipulated definition of religion, it was, he said, "the very soul and essence of religion" (365). Studied as an "inner fact, . . . apart from ecclesiastical or theological considerations," religion, he said, "has shown itself to consist everywhere, and at all its stages, in the consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between themselves and higher powers with which they feel themselves to be related." If prayer in this sense was not effective, if nothing was really transacted, if the world was "in no whit different for its having taken place," then, James said, prayer as a "sense that *something is transacting*" was "illusory" and religion "rooted in delusion." In his discussion of prayer the question of authenticity, thus, was central (367). He quoted Myers to the effect that "in prayer, spiritual energy, which otherwise would slumber, does become active, and spiritual work of some kind is effected really [whether its immediate effects are subjective or objective]" (376, 367-77). Here we have intimations of the role that the subconscious played, for James, in establishing the truth of religious experience.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS

At the end of his penultimate lecture, James provided a summary answer to his question about origins. Looking back over the ground he had covered, to the phenomena of inspiration, religious mysticism, the striking and sudden unifications of the self in conversion, and the extravagant obsessions associated with saintliness, he said, "we cannot, I think, avoid the conclusion that in religion we have a department of human nature with unusually close relations to the transmarginal or subliminal region." The transmarginal or subliminal was, for

James, the source of a whole variety of phenomena, including our dreams, mystical experiences, sensory and motor automatisms, hypnotic and hypnoid phenomena, delusions and hysteria, and super-normal cognitions. "It is also the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life, as we have not abundantly seen,—and this is my conclusion,—the door to this region is unusually wide open" (380-81).

Having arrived at this conclusion, James began his last lecture by summarizing the characteristics of the religious life (382-84). This summing up concluded with his statement of the "common nucleus" of all religions, quoted above. It was interrupted by a long excursus (383-397) on the distinction between the "science of religion" and "living religion," which I take up in the next section.⁴⁸ Having established what he took to be the common nucleus of religion (400), he then asked about "the objective 'truth' of its content" (401). This critical assessment, he had already suggested, was the final task that a science of religion must perform, "in the light of other sciences and in that of general philosophy" (386).

It was at this point in the discussion that he introduced the "subconscious self" as "the mediating term required" to fulfil the duty of "the science of religions . . . to keep religion in connection with the rest of science" (402). He then proposed his famous hypothesis:

Whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life. Starting thus with a recognized psychological fact [the subconscious defined in terms of Myers's subliminal consciousness (402-3)] as our basis, we seem to preserve a contact with 'science' which the ordinary theologian lacks. At the same time the theologian's contention that the religious man is moved by an external power is vindicated, for it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as 'higher'; but since on our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true. This doorway into the subject seems to me the best one for a science of religions, for it mediates between a number of different points of view (403-4).

The subconscious not only mediated between science and religion, it also provided the common ground wherein those with different theological and philosophical "over-beliefs" could come together. James's notion of "over-beliefs" rested on his functionalist understanding of religion, that is, on the idea that beneath its diversity of forms religion filled a common, albeit stipulated and thus provisional, function that both the scientist and the believer could recognize. The task of the science of religion was to identify the common feature or features empirically and explain their origin and function. Beliefs, theological or metaphysical, that fell outside this nucleus counted in James's view as "over-beliefs." The subconscious, thus, marked the boundary (or doorway) between a science of religion and over-beliefs about religion. James stressed, however, that "it is only a doorway, and

difficulties present themselves as soon as we step through it." For here, as he said, "the over-beliefs begin" (404). If we ask where the subconscious ends, whether in the personal self or beyond it, we are, according to James, in the realm of over-beliefs. If we conceptualize the "more" in theological terms as God or gods or in metaphysical terms as monist, dualist, or pluralist, we are in the realm of over-beliefs. The subconscious thus served not only as a mediating term between science and religion, but also as a mediating term between divergent theological and metaphysical views. Use of the term, with its deliberate ambiguities, allowed James to argue, as a scientist of religion, that religious experience had a "positive content . . . which . . . is literally and objectively true as far as it goes" (405).

James, thus, constituted religious experience both in terms of its common function (saving the individual from a designated wrongness via a felt connection to a higher power) and its origins in the subconscious or consciousness beyond the margins. James defined religion by abstracting what he took to be common features from the particular traditions. He did so not only as a means of mediating between religions but also as a means of mediating between religion and the secular social sciences. Like the more secular social scientists, James sought to explain the origins and function of religion. Because he, like the phenomenologists, resisted the tendency to secularize religion, he sought a way to explain the origins of religion without explaining religion away. He proposed the subconscious as the mediating term that could keep "religion in connection with the rest of science." As such, its job was to mediate between a variety of explanations of the origins of religion—natural and supernatural, as well as secular and religious—and, in doing so, to establish the truth of religion in a limited sense ("as far as it goes"). When discussing the subconscious as a scientist of religion, James bracketed or suspended his own "over-beliefs" in order to constitute a theoretically grounded concept of religious experience that, he hoped, would appeal to both secular scientists and religious believers.

The image James most often used to depict the "more" in the *Varieties*—that of "a larger power which is friendly to [us] and [our] ideals"—did not, in his view, necessarily transgress the requirements of the science of religion. While meeting the practical needs of religion, such a belief required metaphysically only that "the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves" (413). The image of a higher power thus fully exploited the ambiguities inherent in the idea of the subconscious. In saying that the power must be understood only as "both other and larger than our conscious selves," he positioned it on the boundary between religious and secular, natural and supernatural conceptions of religious experience. A higher power could be no more than an upwelling from the personal subconscious (i.e., naturalistically religious or secular in origin) or it could be an upwelling through the personal subconscious (i.e., supernaturally or naturally religious in origin). Where one stood on these metaphysical questions was, for James, a matter of over-belief. Only in the conclusion and postscript, did James explicitly address his own over-beliefs regarding the subconscious and the more.

Living Religion

This analysis has so far left unaddressed the question of how far a science of religion could go, in James's view, toward answering his second question, i.e., the question of the importance, meaning, or significance of religion. Clearly, in James's view, the science of religion had a role to play in answering this question. As we have seen, James stated that comparison provides the basis for "a better understanding a thing's significance" (26) and allows us to establish a thing's unique function or essence which is "the thing by which we finally must judge them" (44). Although comparison was, in James's view, necessary, neither passage suggested that it was sufficient for determining the value of a thing. Ultimately, James insisted "we are thrown back upon the general principles by which empirical philosophy has always contended that we must be guided in our search for truth," to wit: "immediate luminousness, in short, philosophical reasonableness and moral helpfulness are the only available criteria" (23). In order to understand the limits of the scientific understanding of the value of religion, we need to understand James's distinction between the science of religion and living religion. A science of religion could recognize the theoretical value of religion, but only in the context of living religion could individuals actually judge religion's value for life and test the way it "worked upon the whole."

James discussed the distinction between the science of religion and living religion in Lecture 20 in an excursus defending the validity of the "religious man's experience" as legitimate evidence of "experimental converse with the divine" (383–84). He structured his defense around two "vexing questions" that he used to argue for the value of diversity and particularity. The first had to do with whether the existence of a diversity of religious dispositions, beliefs, and practices in the world was regrettable. James answered with an emphatic "no," insisting that the elimination of such diversity was neither practical nor desirable and that we must recognize that "we live in partial systems, and that parts are not interchangeable in the spiritual life." His hypothetical questioner then asked if "this one-sidedness [would not] be cured if we should all espouse the science of religions as our own religion?" The answer to this question was "no" as well, setting up James's reflections on the relationship between "the theoretic and the active life" (384–85).

James's distinction between the theoretical and the active life was premised on the idea that "knowledge about a thing is not the thing itself." The scientist might "understand everything about the causes and elements of religion, and might even decide which elements were qualified, by their general harmony with other branches of knowledge to be considered true," and still find it hard "to be personally devout" (385). "Knowledge about life," he insisted, is not the same as the "effective occupation of a place in life, with its dynamic currents passing through your being" (386).

The chief characteristic of living religion, and what made it so problematic for scientists, was that it revolved, according to James, around the individual's interest

"in his private destiny." The one fundamental fact of religious thought, he said, is that "it is carried on in terms of personality" (387). Science, however, repudiated the personal point of view, maintaining, according to James, that "[t]he less we mix the private with the cosmic, the more we dwell in universal and impersonal terms, the truer heirs of Science we become." James believed that the impersonality of the scientific attitude was shallow. "The reason is that, so long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term" (393). The science of religion dealt with the cosmic and the general, living religion included the private and personal. The former dealt with symbols of reality, the latter with reality itself.

James's understanding of "reality in the completest sense of the term" was grounded in his metaphysical understanding of experience.⁴⁹ Experience, like the subconscious, functioned as a mediating category for James. A "full fact" of experience, he said, consisted of "[a] conscious field plus its object as felt or thought of plus an attitude towards the object plus the sense of self to whom the attitude belongs." He added that "such a concrete bit of personal experience may be a small bit, [but] it is a solid bit as long as it lasts; not hollow, not a mere abstract element of experience, such as the 'object' is when taken all alone. It is a full fact, even though it be an insignificant fact; it is of the kind to which all realities whatsoever must belong; the motor currents of the world run through the like of it; it is on the line connecting real events with real events" (393). He graphically illustrated this distinction by pointing out that a meal composed of "one real raisin . . . instead of the word 'raisin' . . . might be an inadequate meal, but it would at least be a commencement of reality" (394). It is only at the level of the individual, James argued, that this reality commences. There, he said, "we [can] catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen, and how work is actually done." By comparison, "the world of generalized objects which the intellect contemplates is without solidity and life" (395).

The distinction between living religion and the science of religion paralleled and was premised upon the distinction between the full fact of experience and generalized objects abstracted from experience. Living religion, like the former, consisted of an object as felt or thought ("the More with which we feel ourselves connected") plus an attitude toward the object (an "over-belief" about "the More" as it relates to "me"). The science of religion, in so far as it was, in James's view, premised on an abstraction from experience (the universal idea of the More independent of a felt relationship to "me"), was "hollow," i.e., merely theoretical. When we pass from the realm of theory into a felt connection with a higher power, we pass, James thought, from the realm of theory into the realm of living religion. This felt connection was a full fact of existence consisting of an object as felt or thought plus an attitude toward the object. As such, it was inescapably particular, and personal. Living religion or, as I have called it, religion in practice was embodied; it occupied, as James said, a particular "place in life." Over-beliefs, as the theoretical manifestation of the particular and the personal, reflected the "the varied world of concrete religious constructions" (397). Over-beliefs, James said,

are "essential to that individual's religion," which means, he added, that they "are absolutely indispensable" (405).

James's distinction between the science of religion and living religion suggests that he could have answered the question of value either at the level of theory or at the level of lived religion. Theoretically, we know that James would have us finally judge a thing in light of its unique function. Functionally, we know that for James religion moves us from "an uneasiness" to "its solution," i.e., to "a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers." This suggests that at the level of the science of religion, he would have us judge religions on the basis of how well they actually accomplished what they set out to do. He would have us judge them, I would infer, in terms of how effectively a religion saves its practitioners from "wrongness," as they understand it.

What this might entail in academic (as opposed to religious) practice becomes apparent if we think about James's relation to the mental healing movements, i.e., Christian Science and New Thought. In March 1898, in one of his few overtly political acts, James testified against a medical licensing bill that would have barred uncredentialed healers from practicing without a license in Massachusetts. James argued against the bill because "there can be no doubt that if the proposed law were really enforced it would stamp out and arrest the acquisition of that whole branch of medical experience" that was emerging from the mental healing movement. In the area of mental healing, where the state of expert knowledge was so imperfect, "it is enough," James said, "for you as legislators to ascertain that a large number of our citizens, persons as intelligent and well educated as yourself or I, persons whose numbers seem daily to increase, are convinced that they do achieve them [the successes that are claimed]."⁵⁰ James argued, in short, that these movements should be evaluated in terms of their actual ability to heal as evidenced by the testimony of those who claimed they had been cured. James argued not from first-hand knowledge, although he may have had some, but rather on the wider scientific grounds of "logic and experiment" (23). If expert knowledge was manifestly imperfect, logic suggested that the experiments with mental healing should be allowed to continue.

Within the realm of living religion, James located judgments made by practitioners within a world of concrete religious constructions. At this level, questions of value would be decided, at the more conservative end of the spectrum, by "schools" on the basis of "traditions" that included within them criteria for ensuring that their tradition stayed true to type. At the more innovative end of the spectrum, questions of value would be decided in a more open-ended evolutionary marketplace, that is, based on whether people identified with any given "uneasiness" and found themselves "saved" from it in the actual practice of the religion. It is on the level of living religion that he would have held that judgments should be "based on our own immediate feeling primarily; and secondarily on what we can ascertain of their experiential relations to our moral needs and to the rest of what we hold true" (23).

These were the criteria that James brought to his own over-beliefs. Subjectively and objectively James found value in the over-belief "that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist." "Those other worlds," he said, "must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and . . . although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in." He said that he could, of course, put himself into "the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imagine vividly that the world of sensations and of scientific laws and objects may be all," but he found that "by being faithful" to this over-belief, he seemed "to keep more sane and true." Not only was he subjectively happier, but, he said, viewed objectively, "the total expression of human experience . . . invincibly [urged him] beyond the narrow 'scientific' bounds" (408).

In his private correspondence and in later writings, James drew on Fechner's image of "the mother-sea" to depict the relationship between this world and those other worlds. In an essay on psychical research published toward the end of his life, he wrote:

Out of my experience, such as it is (and it is limited enough) one fixed conclusion dogmatically emerges, and it is this, that we with our lives are like islands in the sea, or trees in the forest. The maple and pine may whisper to each other with their leaves, and Conanicut and Newport hear each other's fog-horns. But the trees also commingle their roots in the darkness underground, and the islands also hang together through the ocean's bottom. Just so there is a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir. Our 'normal' consciousness is circumscribed for adaptation to our external earthly environment, but the fence is weak in spots, and fitful influences from beyond leak in, showing the otherwise unverifiable common connexion.⁵¹

In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James brought the analogy of dissociation and co-consciousness to this Fechnerian image of the "mother-sea" or "world-soul." The analogy was initially proposed by F.C.S. Schiller, following the publication of Morton Prince's *Dissociation of a Personality* (1905), in a (presumably) tongue-in-check essay, titled "Idealism and the Dissociation of a Personality." There Schiller suggested that concepts borrowed from empirical psychology, specifically the dissociation of personality, might offer a cure for the philosophical ills facing idealist monism. James took the idea of thinking of "the absolute as morbidly dissociated, or even as downright mad" with considerable seriousness, suggesting the "the path that Mr. Schiller and [Mr. Gore] have struck into is likely to prove a most important lead."⁵² In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James indicated that "the evidence [of ordinary psychology, psychopathology, psychical research, and religious experience] . . . sweep[s] us very strongly toward the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves be co-conscious. . . . The outlines of the superhuman consciousness thus made probable must remain, however, very vague, and the number of functionally distinct 'selves' it comports and carries has to be left entirely problematic" (PU, 140).

Much to the consternation of James's colleagues in psychology and the psychology of religion these images were widely popularized during the early twentieth century. The widespread dissemination of supposedly scientific images had an impact on the response of James's colleagues to his work. James recognized the problem but, in keeping with his evolutionary views, was not troubled by it.

It is true that superstitions and wild-growing over-beliefs of all sorts will undoubtedly begin to abound if the notion of higher consciousness enveloping ours, of fechnerian earth-souls and the like, grows orthodox and fashionable; still more will they superabound if science ever puts her approving stamp on the phenomena of which Frederic Myers so earnestly advocated the scientific recognition, the phenomena of psychic research so called—and I myself firmly believe that most of these phenomena are rooted in reality. (PU, 142)

The religious "gems," James maintained, must be extricated from this mass of "superstitions and wild-growing over-beliefs" through a "competition for survival." To short-circuit this evolutionary process would simply reproduce "the hollow unreal god of scholastic theology, or the unintelligible pantheistic monster, instead of the *more living divine reality* with which it appears certain that empirical methods tend to connect men in imagination" (PU, 143, emphasis added).

EXPLAINING THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Psychologists on the Subconscious

In early 1903, James wrote Theodore Flournoy that "the book has sold extraordinarily well in English, for a book that costs over three dollars. The tenth thousand is already being printed; I get enthusiastic letters from strangers; and the reviewers, although, *without a single exception*, they all use the word 'unsatisfactory,' having eased their conscience by that term, they proceed to handle me with sympathy and praise." James had anticipated this response believing "it will doubtless be a popular book,—too biological for the religious, too religious for the biologists."⁵³ The academic psychologists reacted as James had predicted. Virtually all rejected Myers's theory of the subliminal mind outright. A few were open to a psychological interpretation of dissociation, but typically associated dissociation with psychopathology. Most, however, rejected a psychological interpretation of dissociation altogether, preferring instead to resuscitate Carpenter's physiologically based theory of unconscious cerebration. In doing so, they eliminated the idea of co-consciousness and rejected the theoretical foundations of the subconscious developed by Janet.

Two points seem evident in these discussions. First, the impetus to discuss the subconscious arose outside the German laboratory tradition. The discussion was a response to the publications of James and other more clinically oriented experimental psychologists of the subconscious and did not reflect an inherent interest in the subject on the part of psychologists trained in the German laboratory tradition. Second, the critics' repeated references to popular religion suggest that the