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REFLECTIONS ON PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

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INTRODUCTION

The relations between psychology and religion are rather complex. Some of the most important work that was done when psychology emerged as a scientific field of study in the late 19th and early 20th centuries took as its topic of investigation religious phenomena and beliefs. We cannot properly understand the relations between psychology and religion unless we become familiar with this history. Fortunately, excellent work has been done with precisely this aim in mind, particularly with regard to the psychology of religion. Beyond any doubt, the best text book in the psychology of religion is David

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M. Wulff's *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary.*[1] However, the relations between psychology and religion are not exhausted by the psychology of religion, for religion is not merely a subject for psychological research. Among religious thinkers and writings, we often find reflections on psychological phenomena, so, just as we can discuss the psychological study of religious phenomena, we could also investigate the religious study of psychological phenomena.

The relations of religion and psychology are not limited, however, even to mutual study of relevant phenomena. Psychology is a scientific field of study with a wide variety of tendencies, schools of thought, and unique thinkers. Religion is not a science, but, divine guidance. Even for those who do not believe, religion is recognized as the basis for many dimensions of the lives of those who do: social, economic, political, psychological, moral, spiritual, philosophical, etc.. Hence, one of the most important aspects of the relation between religion and psychology is to be understood as a subdivision of the relation between religion and science.

This relation may itself be studied from various perspectives: psychological, social, anthropological, historical, theological and philosophical. In philosophy, the issue of the relation between psychology and religion may be considered from the point of view of the philosophy of science, more particularly the philosophy of psychology, or the philosophy of religion. The relation of philosophy to psychology should also be considered. Most of the sciences have roots in philosophy, and psychology is no exception. Indeed, although psychology was advanced considerably by those trained in medicine in the nineteenth century, early psychological studies were often carried out by philosophers, such as Franz Brentano (1838-1917) in Austria and William James (1842-1910) in the U.S.. Even non-philosophers who pioneered psychological theories often took a distinctive philosophical stance in their psychological theorizing. Thus, we could investigate how philosophical views have influenced the formation of psychological theories, but also how psychological issues have been treated by various philosophers in a broader philosophical context.

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1 David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary, 2nd ed.* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

When we discuss religion, often what is meant is not the divine guidance brought by the prophets, but the religious speculations and practices of various peoples, including their theologies, laws, books and symbols. Many of these have also been influenced by specific philosophical views or have given expression to such views. Hence, philosophy serves as a kind of bridge between some religious and psychological views. We find, for example, existentialist theologians and psychologists. A theological tradition itself can also provide a standpoint for the criticism of various psychological views, or for the elaboration of a general view of how psychological study should be conducted.[2]

Even before psychology was called by that name, psychological issues were discussed by philosophers, and one could write volumes to review the history of psychology in philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Jerry Fodor. In what follows, I propose a rather selective and very condensed review of the history of the relation between psychology and religion from a philosophical point of view and only starting from the 19th century, to be followed by some philosophical speculation about the relations between psychology and religion. In the 19th century the philosophical ground was prepared for what we may view as psychological interpretations of religion. In the twentieth century, psychology itself came under the shadow of such anti-religious thinkers as Freud, Jung, Leuba, and Skinner, and even those who expressed more friendly attitudes toward religion, such as James and Erikson, were careful to keep their scientific work free from religious assumptions. At the conclusion of this paper, I advocate a religiously transparent psychology in which assumptions for or against religion are explicitly stated and employed in psychological theorizing and practice.

Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Feuerbach

Hegel is a good place to begin to understand many things about the intellectual developments of the 19th century, not only because of the influence of those who took up his ideas, but because of those who reacted against them. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) engaged himself with the study of religion throughout his career, and repeatedly lectured on the philosophy of religion at the

2 See, for example, the article "Psychology" in the Catholic Encyclopedia.

University of Berlin. Also on the faculty at the University of Berlin was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the founder of liberal theology and proponent of a renewal of the study of hermeneutics. Hegel and Schleiermacher were bitter opponents, and the sharpest point of their conflict was about religion and psychology.[3]

After Kant had undermined the traditional metaphysical grounding for religious belief and transferred it to the moral realm, Schleiermacher sought to find a firmer footing for faith by arguing that religious experience provided sufficient justification for belief independent of science and morality.[4] Schleiermacher also argued that the essence of religion was to be understood precisely with reference to religious experience: "Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling."[5] In turning to religious experience, a psychological element was introduced into the discussion of the justification of religious belief. According to Ninian Smart,

> In drawing attention to the affective and experiential side of religion, usually neglected in preceding philosophical discussions, Schleiermacher set in motion the modern concern to explore the subjective or inner aspect of religion.[6]

Smart reports that Schleiermacher's views inspired New Testament historians to investigate the religious consciousness of Jesus ﷺ, again raising psychological issues to the fore. So, Schleiermacher's legacy was one that led to a focus on psychology as revealing the defining characteristic of religion, as providing a

3 See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 536f., 612f..

4 In his *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, Richard Crouter, tr., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), hereafter cited as Schleiermacher (1799).

5 Schleiermacher (1799), 22.

6 Ninian Smart, "Religion, Study of, Basic aims and methods, Philosophy of religion, theoryies of Schleiermacher and Hegel." *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, CD 2002.

justification for religious belief, and as providing a method of understanding religious figures and texts.

Hegel understood the attempt to ground religion on a faith rooted in the inner self as a positive step toward autonomy, for to define faith as immediate intuition, as knowledge within, has the effect of removing all external authority, all alien confirmation. However, Hegel opposed the tendency to restrict religious knowledge to the psychologically immediate. Against this romantic tendency to make religion purely an affair of the heart, Hegel argued that we can't have mere consciousness that God exists without that consciousness being coupled with cognition about who God is. The consciousness and the content are inseparable:

> In fact it is this connection in general, this knowledge of God and the inseparability of consciousness from this content, that we call religion in general. But at the same time the implication in this assertion of immediate knowledge is that we ought to stop short with the consideration of religion as such—more precisely, with the consideration of this connection with God. There is to be no progressing to the cognitive knowledge of God, to the divine content as this content would be divinely, or essentially, in God himself. In this sense it is further declared that we can know only our relation to God, not what God himself is. "Only our relation" falls within what is meant by religion generally.[7]

Hegel does not deny the sort of innate direct consciousness of God posited by Schleiermacher, but he insists that it can have no content unless it is mediated. *What* is present to consciousness in knowledge by presence will remain unknown until it is subsumed under universals, and that means mediation. We can only know *what* we are thinking about when the thinking is accompanied by the mediation of concepts. Hegel's second point here is that if we can't get beyond the raw feels of religious experience to ground our

7 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, One-Volume Edition, the Lectures of 1827,* Peter C. Hodgson, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 88; hereafter cited as Hegel (1827).

religious life, our religion will be impoverished and limited to the bare fact of our immediate relation to God.

Hegel, however, is not pessimistic about the consequences of a theology of religious experience. Since this sort of theology has emptied itself of definite doctrinal content, the way is left open to the philosopher to explore issues of doctrine without fear of contradicting theology. The only contradiction that can arise is when the theologian insists that no such reflection is permissible, but Hegel considers this to be a mere polemical stance. Reason requires us to reflect further on divinity. There is no argument with religious experience, but reflection must go beyond it.

> Only slight experience is needed to see that where there is immediate knowledge there is also mediated knowledge, and vice versa. Immediate knowledge, like mediated knowledge, is by itself completely one-sided. *The true* is their unity, *an immediate knowledge that likewise mediates,* a mediated knowledge that is at the same time internally simple, or is immediate reference to itself. That one-sidedness makes these determinations finite. Inasmuch as it is sublated through such a connection, it is a relationship of infinity. It is the same with object and subject. In a subject that is internally objective the one-sidedness disappears; the difference emphatically does not disappear, for it belongs to the pulse of its vitality, to the impetus, motion, and restlessness of spiritual as well as of natural life. Here is a unification in which the difference is not extinguished but all the same it is sublated.[8]

Hegel does not completely reject the Kantian distinctions between noumena and phenomena or between intuitions and concepts, but he takes them to be impure, relative, and dynamic. In the study of religion, likewise, he does not deny the importance of the psychological element of feeling, but he sees this as intimately bound with cognition. Hegel's approach is *phenomenological*, which

8 Hegel (1827), 99.

means that he begins his treatment of a topic by examining the evolution of how something appears in consciousness. So, no less than Schleiermacher, Hegel focused attention on the psychological element of religion. However, he faults Schleiermacher for leaving faith at the level of feeling instead of following its evolution in thought.

According to Hegel, our consciousness of God begins with *faith*, which is a *feeling* of certainty. Second, there is the focus on the *object* of consciousness as representation. Third, there is thought. These stages are explained in turn, starting with immediate knowledge. By immediate knowledge, Hegel does not mean knowledge that is not mediated by representation or inference, but knowledge in which one does not focus on representation or inference, even if the knowledge actually did arise as mediated by concepts or deduction.

Hegel explains that faith begins as some sort of immediate knowledge accompanied by a feeling of certainty, and then turns to *feeling*. This is an important topic in Hegel's day as in our own, since many people hold that religion is purely a matter of feeling, and hence, that it is pointless to argue about it. Hegel thinks that this view arises from an inadequate analysis of *feeling*. The kinds of feelings relevant here are not purely sensory feelings, such as pains and pleasures; rather, at issue are feelings of awe, and feelings that something is so, feelings of God, the right, and religious feelings, for example. Hegel describes feeling as a subjective involvement with a content. The content might be fear, awe, or that such and such is right. The objective dimension of the content is vague, indeterminate, while the subjective dimension is more prominent and determinate. When we move from feeling to consciousness of something, there is a projection of the content from its subjective associations to an objective status independent of the knower. Rationality requires the determination of the content through thought. So, the way in which the content is in feeling is inadequate. Hegel presents the developmental idea of the relationship between feeling and thought with a metaphor: even if the seed of the concept of God, for example, is to be found in feeling, the soil in which it develops is thought.

Nothing is true or legitimate simply because it is found in feeling. If feeling were any sort of a criterion, there would be no way to judge between good and evil, for feelings inspire crimes as well as heroism.

The criteria for legitimacy and truth are to be found in representation and thought, Hegel argues.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) claimed that Hegel's philosophy of religion was the last refuge of orthodoxy. In response, Feuerbach attacked religion on the basis of an interpretation offered by means of a psychology of religion according to which religious ideas are interpreted as mere psychological projections. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach suggested that Hegel's speculative thought had turned in upon itself and had lost all contact with actuality. For Feuerbach, all religious ideas are modes of 'alienation' of man from himself, as he considers God to be nothing but the projection of man's own inner nature artificially taken to be external. So, Feuerbach's critique of Christianity was generalized as a critique of all religion, and at the same time it was a critique of metaphysics, and in particular of Hegelian speculative philosophy.[9] The same sorts of arguments used by Feuerbach against religion are taken to undermine the foundations of the Hegelian system. In a short essay on the nature of religion, *Das Wesen der Religion* (*The Essence of Religion*) (1845), Feuerbach identifies the fear of unknown natural elements as the main sources of religious projection. While Hegel based his philosophy on *spirit*, Feurerbach claims that "spirit" is merely a name used for things with which man is confronted but which he does not recognize as his own products, another collective name for which is "nature".[10] The manner in which Feuerbach confused spirit and nature is not our point here, rather, it is that the basis for the attack on religion and speculative philosophy was to be found in a psychology of religion.

Not only did Feuerbach mount a psychological critique of religion, his ideas were also influential in the subsequent development of the field of psychology. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) claimed to admire Feuerbach more than any other philosopher. Freud himself denied that Feuerbach had any lasting influence on his thought, but the parallels between them are sufficiently numerous

9 See Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 387.

10 See Hans-Martin Sass, "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge.

to refute this attempt to underscore his own originality.[11] Erich Fromm (1900-1980) also made use of Feuerbach's analysis in his own critique of what he called "authoritarian" religion.[12]

Jonathan Edwards and William James

It has been claimed that the first writer to make systematic empirical observations of the psychological states and processes involved in religious experience was Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). He wrote careful objective reports of the psychological phenomena of the religious revival called "The Great Awakening"—a movement in which he himself played a prominent role—in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) and *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). Of paramount interest to Edwards was the experience of "conversion", by which is meant a radical change from a life of sin to one of devotion to God, usually prompted by religious gatherings featuring evangelical preaching and what are believed to be influences of the Holy Spirit. Edwards' work was not continued until the nineteenth century.

The interest in conversion remained high in the first book written with the title *Psychology of Religion*, by E. D. Starbuck, published in 1900.[13] Starbuck distinguished three main types of conversion: (1) positive or volitional, (2) negative or self-surrender, and (3) spontaneous. Following Starbuck, G. A. Coe studied the influence of individual temperament and social forces on conversion. Elmer Clark made a statistical analysis of 2,174 cases of conversion, and found that 66.1% involve a gradual religious awakening while only 6.7% are clear examples of sudden crisis and conversion.

The Varieties of Religious Experience appeared in 1902, and here, too, the phenomenon of conversion is one to which William James (1842-1910) devotes considerable attention. James came to the conclusion that the "healthy-minded" soul experiences religion without a conversion crisis, while the "sick soul" is a divided self that needs a radical conversion crisis to achieve stability.

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11 See Wulff (1997), 263.

12 See Wulff (1997), 597.

13 Cf. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1947), 35.

James drew not only on the American research about the religious experience of conversion, but also on the work of Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), who is reputed to be the father of experimental psychology. In the psychology of religion, however, Wundt rejected the approach taken by James of gathering a large collection of cases of exceptional experience. Instead, Wundt advocated an analysis of myth and a developmental theory of how myth would evolve into religion. Wundt differed from James and from the German tradition of psychology in that he focused on social psychology. Other German researchers in the psychology of religion were concerned to plumb the depths of the religious feelings of individuals through intensive and probing questioning, while James collected and analyzed the reports given by various individuals of their religious experiences.

Even though James does not restrict experience to the inner states produced by sense perception, and seems skeptical of attempts to isolate the subjective or inward aspects of one's life from the rest of life, he does, finally, distinguish objective from subjective elements of experience, and he clearly champions the priority of the inward. James defends his individualism with the contention that it is only by living in the sphere of thought opened up by certain questions about destiny that one becomes profound; and that to live so, is to be religious.

> By being religious we establish ourselves in possession of ultimate reality at the only points at which reality is given us to guard. Our responsible concern is with our private destiny, after all.
>
> You see now why I have been so individualistic throughout these lectures, and why I have seemed so bent on rehabilitating the element of feeling in religion and subordinating its intellectual part. Individuality is founded in feeling; and the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how events happen, and how work is actually done. Compared with this world of living individualized feelings, the world of generalized objects

> which the intellect contemplates is without solidity or life.[14]

James' work influenced not only the psychology of religion, but also the philosophy of religion, and subsequently the study of religious experience has attained prominence in both fields. Ten years after the publication of James' *Varieties*, another major study of religious experience by one of James' former students at Harvard, W. E. Hocking, was published: *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*.[15] While this work was enormously influential in its day, it has been largely ignored by more recent writers, and is definitely more of a philosophical than a psychological work. Hocking, however, has also written on the relationship between psychology and religion, to which we will return below.

The religious experiences discussed by James and Hocking and others were not confined to experiences of conversion. Mystical experiences, by which is meant the direct experience of what is believed to be divine reality, have also been subject to considerable psychological study. James devotes much of his *Varieties* to mystical experiences, and the four traits of mystical experiences he identified have become the focus of much further research: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity. The *ineffable* is what cannot adequately be put into words, like the taste of sugar, or the way red looks. The *noetic*, as James uses the term, is what presents itself to the subject as knowledge. Mystical experiences are *transient:* they pass after a short time. The subject usually feels that he has no control of the experience and is *passive* through it.

While James took a favorable attitude toward mystical experience, other researchers in the psychology of religion have

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14 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), first published in 1902, 501-502.

15 William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912). The revised 1924 edition of this work has been reprinted in Whitefish, MT by Kessinger Publications, 2003. Although Hocking graduated from Harvard and spent most of his teaching career there, he taught at Yale and other institutions before joining the philosophy faculty at Harvard in 1914.

sought to show that mystical experiences are illusory. To this end James H. Leuba (1868-1946) sought to show that some drug induced states shared the same basic characteristics of mystical states. Leuba also published the first psychological study of conversion in 1896, but it is his *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* that won the most notoriety and became most controversial for the anti-religious stance of the author.

Religious experience generally, and mystical experience in particular, continue to be research topics for both the philosophy and psychology of religion. Psychologists have employed various methods to study religious and mystical experiences, including laboratory experimentation, correlational studies utilizing questionnaires and interviews, clinical case studies, introspection, historical and anthropological studies, the examination of personal documents, and there have even been studies of animal psychology that seek to find evidence of religious feelings in animals. Among the topics that have been researched in the psychology of religion the following should be mentioned in addition to religious and mystical experience: the stages of religious development in the individual, the social and physical factors that correlate with religiosity, types of religiosity, prayer and worship, religion and morality, religion and prejudice, religion and mental health, religion and sexual development, correlation of personality types with types of religiosity, the power of religious symbols, and near-death experiences.

DAVID M. WULFF

Let this much suffice for our historical discussion of the relations between psychology and religion. This gives us a glimpse at the beginnings of the sorts of philosophical and theological discussions that would later become more important in the development of the complex relations between psychology and religion. Anyone who wishes to pursue this history in more detail should read Wulff's book. Despite its detail, however, Wulff's work is also a condensation. It is to be recommended for its fairness, and for the fact that it takes into account French and German writings on the topic in addition to English works. Wulff generalizes that there were two tendencies in early writings about psychology and religion,

descriptive and explanatory. Those scholars who sought to explain religious beliefs and phenomena with reference to psychology tended to have a negative view of religion. The view of the descriptivists was less hostile.[16] Without disagreeing, we should point out that there are many exceptions. It is not difficult to find descriptivists who were anti-religious (such as Leuba). Likewise, one may accept that there are psychological explanations for various religious beliefs and phenomena without denying the validity of their religious explanations.

Wulff concludes from his survey of the field that research in the psychology of religion "inevitably entails taking a fundamental stance in relation to religious content."[17] Not only bias in favor of naturalism, materialism or empiricism can color the interpretation of research findings, religious literalism also can limit the interpretation of such research. Wulff places psychologists on a scale according to the extent to which they are fundamentally opposed to the recognition of any transcendent reality. At the bottom end of the scale there is Freud, who explicitly denounced religion and sought to provide psychological explanation of the deluded state of believers. However, at the high end of the scale Wulff does not list psychologists whose research is explicitly based on their religious beliefs, but those who are willing, for the sake of understanding their subjects, to assume a transcendent reality. Wulff adds another dimension to his scale by considering the extent to which researchers take religious expressions literally. In the end, however, he admits that many psychologists will be difficult to classify in this way, and as an example of one whose views are exceptionally difficult to categorize, he mentions James.

Wulff reports that even today, there is still no consensus about what the aims of the psychology of religion should be or the methods it should employ. In fact, there is no hope that this "crisis" will be overcome, and it seems to be a permanent feature of the field.

The attitudes of psychologists to religion also are expressed in political positions. Some psychologists have claimed that the environmental crisis and the population explosion are exacerbated by a certain type of religiosity. Some recommend the abandonment

16 Wulff (1997), 21ff.

17 Wulff (1997), 638.

of religion and propose that we should be guided in such matters by science. Others have argued that a more mystically oriented religious attitude is needed for an adequate response to such issues. What is taken to be the correct response to these issues is assumed, and religion as a whole or in some forms is then evaluated on the basis of whether religious persons or groups tend to take the "correct" sort of position. All of this is done without ethical argumentation and with the authority of psychological expertise. Wulff advises that the psychology of religion should be studied with caution, and that the reader should be cognizant of the prejudices that often come into play. I am led to more radical doubts about the field. Much of what has been published as psychology of religion tells us more about the mind set of the psychologists than it does about religion, and these psychologists themselves have reported results that indicate that hostility toward religion is more frequently encountered among psychologists than among natural scientists.

Wulff notes that Theodore Flournoy (1854-1920) had proposed as a methodological principle for the psychology of religion the *exclusion of the transcendent*, by which he meant the psychologist should neither affirm nor deny the existence of the entities posited by religion (God, angels, immortal souls, devils). Wulff suggests that in addition to this principle, and in order to achieve some balance with it, a new principle should be introduced, the principle of the *inclusion of the transcendent*, by which he means that psychologists must take into account the *experience* of the transcendent. Wulff still aspires to an objective psychology of religion that maintains neutrality with regard to the existence of God, but recognizes that no headway can be made in understanding religious believers without a recognition of the experience of God or of "transcendent objects".

With all due respect to Wulff, I would suggest an explicitly committed psychology of religion. Atheist psychologists should state their anti-religious positions explicitly, admit that argument for this position is beyond the scope of psychology, and confess that their findings are based on their presumption of atheism. The way would also be open to explicitly committed psychology of religion that starts from the hypothesis that various religious beliefs are true. What is essential to science is exactitude and the explicit statement

of one's assumptions to the extent one is able, not the removal of assumptions. Transparency is not only necessary for good government, but for good science, too. The ideal of a neutral psychology that can offer authoritative conclusions about religion independent of philosophical or theological argumentation is deceptive and should be given up. The process of making gains in precision and in recognizing and making transparent one's assumptions is never ending, and should be taken up with humility.

Religiously transparent psychology (RTP) would make it easier to evaluate exactly how assumptions about religious truths and the transcendent shape the psychological study of religious phenomena. This would facilitate the evaluation of such assumptions as methodological principles. At the same time RTP would provide valuable data for philosophical reflection. We should examine what sorts of phenomena are better explained in which frameworks of assumptions, which frameworks lead to more fruitful research programs, and which seem to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena they seek to explain.

Philosophical Problems with the Psychology of Religion

Often times psychologists have used the mantel of science to justify attacks on religion in the name of psychology. This phenomenon is discussed in detail by Wulff and was recognized much earlier by Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1884-1952). Brightman criticizes Leuba for smuggling a philosophical stance antagonistic to religion under the cover of psychology. With regard to subconscious factors that influence piety, Brightman writes:

> It is one thing to say that there is a subconscious relation between love to God and love to one's father; it is quite another to say that belief in God is only a father-complex and hence is false. The latter statement is an evaluation, a purely philosophical theory having no place in psychology.... The tendency of this psychology [that of Freud and Jung] is to reduce all religious thinking to rationalizing; that is, it often regards religious beliefs as consisting of arguments devised to support the fulfillment of our subconscious wishes rather than as honest objective thinking about reality. But after all, no

> thinking can be judged to be objectively true or false on purely psychological grounds. Here is another confusion between psychology and philosophy. Psychology cannot usurp the place of logic or philosophy of religion any more than it can usurp the place of physics by its study of sensations.[18]

Once the assumptions for or against religion on the part of psychologists is made explicit in accordance with what I am calling RTP, the work of evaluating these assumptions remains to be addressed. The psychology of religion thus provides a treasury of issues that need to be examined philosophically.

Here we confine ourselves to some philosophical reflections on psychology along the lines of those made by William Ernest Hocking (1873-1966) more than half a century ago,[19] in the course of which occasion will be found to plug RTP. In the past, psychology and religion have most often come into conflict when the psychologist suggests that there is nothing more to religious belief or religious experience than what goes on in the mind. It is the "nothing more" clause that causes the problems. In the psychology of sensory perception, no one would suggest that all there is to seeing a tree or a mountain is a mental state. No one would suggest that perceptual psychology should be neutral with regard to the existence of the external world and confine itself to the nature of mental representations. If our perception of a tree depends to some extent on the accidents of our constitution and training, that does not mean that it has no validity of its own. It would be the most elementary fallacy to think that knowledge of what is real should in no way depend upon the nature of the knower as well as the known.

Without God, meaning and purpose are human artifacts; the vast universe is devoid of meaning. With God, meaning descends from the transcendent to the mundane. For behavioral psychologists, meaning is a function of a stimulus-response arc. Yet man seeks a meaning in life beyond what is susceptible to such explanations.

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18 Brightman (1947), 73-74.

19 William Ernest Hocking, *Science and the Idea of God* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

Religious writers have concluded that we can never be satisfied with psychological explanations of religious phenomena. But would we also say that we would never be satisfied with psychological explanations of the phenomena of sensory perception? I think not, and the reason for this is that we assume that a psychological explanation of sensory perception is not one that denies or in anyway undermines the reality of what is perceived. The difference between the cases is that while doubts about the external world are confined to philosophical discussions, doubts about religion have risen to epidemic proportions. So, there is no need for the psychologist of perception to explicitly state that he is operating on the hypothesis that there is an external world, but for the psychological study of religious phenomena explicit avowal or denial is demanded to avoid begging questions.

Some psychologists have also argued that religion is harmful. Instead of thinking directly about what produces the most utility, the religious person seeks to conform his actions to the will of God. If there is no God, such deliberation would seem besides the point at best, while given that God, the Mighty and Magnificent, exists, such deliberation is wise and prudent. Some have argued that religion is harmful because it leads to psychological imbalance. Against this idea, James argued that there were both sick-minded and healthy-minded ways of being religious. However, exactly what counts as being healthy or sick will also depend in some cases on ones religious beliefs. For many people in Western society, a normal healthy adolescence involves dating. A young person who refrains from dating because of moral or religious scruples is considered a bit maladjusted. Yet for many religious people, the healthy person is the one who refrains from dating and it is those who engage in premarital sex who are maladjusted or in an old-fashioned phrase "living in sin."

Not only has religion been attacked by some psychologists, psychology has also been viewed with suspicion by some religious thinkers. Human self-knowledge and a fascination with the inner or mental life began long before the science of psychology. The difference between past reflections on the topic and modern psychology is the aspiration that states of mind are phenomena that can be studied on the model of the way in which natural sciences study natural phenomena. The aspiration is thwarted because

mental states are notoriously private, while natural science depends on publicly observable and repeatable phenomena. For this reason, psychology is sometimes defined as the science of human behavior rather than the science of the mind and mental phenomena. Psychology attempts to follow the natural sciences in the aim at prediction and control, and here too, it has met with obstacles. Psychologists seek to find laws to predict events, such as, to quote Hocking (who was writing during World War II):

> "Bombing a civilian population from the air will intimidate them, and bring about speedy surrender" (unless it has the opposite effect of stirring them to more determined resistance. The provisos do seem at times to nullify the value of the prediction...[20]

Psychology has met with more success in the advice it provides for education and industry than for the conduct of war. But its failures with regard to war are not merely an inability to predict, but its willingness to propose the immoral under the guise of its pretended neutrality. A transparent psychology should make explicit the moral principles or lack thereof that inform its advice. In doing so, we should remove the gloss of expertise that is used to sanitize horrors committed during war.

Another area where religion and psychology seem to conflict is with regard to the cure of souls. Traditionally, this has been the province of religious counseling. In modernized societies, this task has been taken up by psychiatry and psychotherapy. The conflict is not a mere turf war. Hocking observes:

> There is this difference, that religion enlarges the scope of the soul's suffering. It declares the soul most in need of healing when it is most satisfied with itself, and is likely to regard the beginning of anxiety as the first stage toward a recovery from mortal danger.[21]

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20 Hocking (1944), 29.

21 Hocking (1944), 30.

The point is not that religion favors anxiety while psychology seeks to cure it, but that from a religious point of view, not all anxiety is undesirable. Anxiety caused by sympathy for others or by one's own sinfulness is religiously healthy, even if it is psychologically abnormal.

Hocking mentions three advantages for psychiatry over religious counseling: first, the objectivity of the scientific approach to the patient which diminishes guilt feelings; second, the rationality of the treatment that focuses on causes of the malady rather than culpability; and third, the mercy of the cure: medicines, socialization, integration and sublimation instead of conversion, repentance and penance. The difference between the religious approach to the self and the psychological one is that the former is essentially moral and spiritual while the latter pretends to be factual and value free.

Among the disadvantages pointed out by Hocking, he considers the practical to be the most important. Socialization, sublimation and integration cannot be achieved at will, and psychotherapy offers little practical advice on how to achieve the desired results. This criticism of psychoanalysis has been often discussed. Freud seems to have thought that the knowledge of self brought about through analysis would be sufficient to enable desired change to take place. What Hocking adds to this discussion is the claim that the required motivation for change cannot be supplied by psychotherapy, but requires a consideration of the entire meaning of life as understood by the patient. The weakness of Hocking's argument is that he seems to think that all psychological problems require a proper perspective on global meaning and not much else. The progress of psychiatry since the publication of Hocking's book tells a different story. Many psychological problems can be effectively treated by appropriate medication without any recourse to any sort theory, psychological or religious, and without the need for any greater self-understanding on the part of the patients than that they have to take their pills on time.

Despite this flaw, there remain cases in which Hocking's points are still well taken. There is a conflict between psychology and religion over the grey area between sin and behavioral disorder. There are cases of mental anguish that require spiritual and moral consideration rather than psychological analysis or medication. We

are still able to see the truth in Hocking's endorsement of Plato's claim that sanity requires the proper ordering of desires and faculties. Plato, as well as traditional religious counseling, advises a weaning away of the soul from personal loves and physical pleasures and a redirection of attention toward the transcendent. Psychoanalysis, to the contrary, dismisses the transcendent and remains mired in the particularities of the individual psyche. The motivation for the needed reordering of this psyche, Hocking claims, can only be effectively grounded in a relation with the transcendent. This relation can be initiated through the arts or some forms of music to the extent that they direct one to an ideal of beauty beyond the objects of base desires; but the ultimate beauty is presented as the object of religious rather than artistic devotion.

Objectifying psychology seeks to remain neutral as to where ultimate reality is to be found, and so it cannot direct its patients to any transcendent reality. Hocking argues, however, that the motivation for radical change can only be found through one's relation to this divine reality and a recognition of meaning acquired for one's own life when seen as derived from the meaning bestowed on all existence through the divine plan. RTP would be able to overcome this problem of motivation without any sacrifice to its scientific integrity. A transparent psychology does not posit the existence of God as a working hypothesis, but explicitly affirms the assumptions of its living and working faith. It is only by doing such that it can elicit the motivation needed for its prescriptions to be successful. Of course, others may propose explicitly atheistic psychologies, but if Hocking is right, they will not be very effective. In order for a program for psychological change to be practical, it must provide the patient with sufficient motivation for change. Motivation for change occurs when one's feelings are drawn toward the transcendent. Hocking writes:

> Psychology in particular must recognize that feeling is essentially metaphysical, and that the whole emotional life of man is affected by that restlessness of which

> Augustine spoke until it has established its relations with the Most Real.[22]

Hocking rejects the definition (by the German idealist Fichte) of God as the moral order of the world, and proposes instead that God acts in the world without disturbing the physical order of efficient causation, through what he calls "*the law of normal mental life*."

> We would mean by this that a life lived on the plan of getting along without God, without a sense of the cosmic demand, is already, whether it knows it or not, sick, off from normal, its values infected with the dry rot of mortality, intrinsically unhappy because unreal, driven subconsciously by a need which some day it is bound to recognize and define. This drive, which can be called psychologically the self-assertion of normal human nature, is in its true nature, the working of a law which is God. If this is the case, we may say of God that he is an unceasing activity, one which interferes in no way with scientific observation, but which is nevertheless indispensable to any complete psychological statement of what the life of man is.[23]

Hocking stresses the need for a metaphysical underpinning to provide motivation for psychological change, and he finds it in the idea of the meaning that God gives to our lives that is recognized when we orient ourselves toward Him. In the context of Islam, further elaboration on this theme can be drawn from the metaphysics of Mulla Sadra (1571/2-1640). According to him, all of existence can be seen as a graduated spectrum that increases in intensity from the basest existence to the most brilliant, pure, and noble. Mulla Sadra also held that in addition to changes in the accidents of an entity, there was also change in substance. More controversially, he held that such substantial motion was always in the direction of more intense existence, toward abstract existence and away from material existence. This has given rise to theological

22 Hocking (1944), 48.

23 Hocking (1944), 49.

controversies about how to reconcile his views with the doctrine of the corporeal resurrection. One way to solve this problem would be to suggest that substantial motion may be both upward and downward, so to speak.[24] However, it should be pointed out that even if we accept that substantial motion can be in the direction of greater or lesser intensity, we need not consider the bodily resurrection a retreat from perfection. Corporeality should not be seen as in every case indicating more base existence. Of course, this is to deny a strong tendency in the history of neo-Platonism and its legacy in Islamic philosophy. However, my purpose here is not to discuss the theological issues of the gradation of existence or substantial motion, but to suggest how these notions can illuminate a transparently Islamic psychology.

Along with many Muslim philosophers, we may posit that there is a natural attraction of the more noble that draws the less noble toward itself. In terms of graduated existence, we could say that the spectrum of existence is dynamic, each higher level drawing the lower levels toward itself. The natural order is such that entities need not move constantly and consistently in the direction of more intense existence, but human nature (*fitrah*) is such that man feels a need, awe, attraction and reverence toward what is more intense in existence. We could express this by saying that there is a natural current in existence in the direction of greater intensity. This is manifested in what Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) has called the *mysterium fascinans*.[25] When one sins, one intentionally moves against this current. When one moves with the current, one is in harmony with divine law. The motivation provided for spiritual reform, of which Hocking speaks, can thus be explained as deriving from this basic existential drift. Man is motivated to reform not merely because of the meaning found in a religious life, but because man is naturally

24 See the discussion by Ayatullah Miæbàå in his *Philosophical Instructions* (Binghamton: Global Publications, 1999), 482ff.

25 One should also recall that Otto characterizes the holy by a *mysterium tremendum* as well as the *mysterium fascinans*. Here I am focusing on divine attraction, which is typically accompanied by awe. See Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige,* 9th ed. (Breslau: 1922), translated by John W. Harvey as The Idea of the Holy (1923; 2d ed., Oxford, 1950).

drawn to a life in harmony with the divine will, and is attracted toward more noble manifestations of existence.

Some people are naturally so attuned to the divine current that they are caught in it and carried away, while others first must take slow and deliberate steps to bring themselves into harmony with the existential drift.

> In Sufi books, it is said that the friends (*awliyà'*) of God are of two sorts: first, the *sàlik-e majdhêb* (the attracted wayfarer), and second, the *majdhêb-e sàlik* (the wayfaring attracted one). By definition, the *sàlik-e majdhêb* is one who first begins to travel the path, i.e., is a wayfarer (*sàlik*), and is then captured by God, while the *majdhêb-e sàlik* is one who is captured (*majdhêb*) by God prior to his travelling the path (*sulêk*). Both are in love with God, but for the *sàlik-e majdhêb,* love increases along the path, while for the *majdhêb-e sàlik,* the intensity of love carries him along the path.[26]

In fact, there can be many kinds of attraction or motivating force or charisma felt by different individuals to orient them toward a more intense existence. What is important psychologically for our discussion is that this motivating attraction of more intense existence can provide the kind of metaphysical basis for spiritual change toward which Hocking seems to be groping. For Hocking, it is the need to find meaning that ultimately motivates moral effort. The need for meaning certainly seems to be an important factor; and Hocking also seems to be right about thinking that understanding and feeling should not be considered as independent elements of our relation to what provides our lives with meaning. Finally, he also correctly identifies metaphysics (in a broad sense) as a requirement for the understanding of this meaning. However, consistent with all of this is a recognition that the motivation for the spiritual and moral life is stronger that that given solely by the search for meaning and aversion of meaninglessness. There is also an

26.Shahram Pazouki, "In Memory of the Beloved Master: Åaèrat Maåbêb 'Alíshàh," in *The Sufi Path: An Introduction to the Ni'matullàhí Sulìàn 'Alíshàhí Order*, ed. Shahram Pazouki, (Tehran: Haqiqat Publications, 2002), 118.

attraction toward the more noble, the more perfect, that can only be called love.

When Hocking turns to the question of how God acts to give motivation to the soul to change, Hocking compares the confession of sins with the descriptions of their mental conditions patients give to a therapist. Perhaps there is in this an indication of the extent to which psychotherapy is rooted in Christian culture, for in Islam, not only is there no confession of sins, such confession is expressly condemned.

The absence of confession, however, does not put Islam at any disadvantage regarding guidance of the soul to effective change. Indeed, one of the most notable features of the Islamic spiritual tradition is the detailed expositions of how the soul is to be reoriented and perfected. This is particularly well documented in the writings of the Sufis. In this regard the examination of conscience is especially important. In both Christianity and Islam, the examination of conscience is a prerequisite to repentance. In Sufi writings, this self examination is called *muraqabat. Muraqabat* has many different levels, and practical guides have been written to assist the novice in developing this skill.[27]

The implications of Sufi writings for psychology are so striking that a number of books have been written on Sufi psychology and there are also active practitioners of clinical psychology who take Sufi texts as a source for their theoretical grounding. In this we find a perfect example of an explicitly religiously committed, in particular Islamically committed, transparent psychology.

The need for this sort of transparent psychology has been recognized by a number of practicing psychotherapists.[28] In this regard we should mention the work of Sayid Muhammad-Muhsin Jalali-Tehrani, Ph.D.,[29] the founder of the Islamic Association for

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27 See, for example, the essay by Ayatullah Åàjj Mírzà Javàd Malikí Tabrízí, *Al-Muràqabàt*.

28 We should also mention the Sufi Psychology Association (US) and its journal, *The Science of the Soul (Sufism)*; the Society for the Advancement of Muslim Psychology in Pakistan, and the fact that Islamic psychology is being studied at universities in Nigeria, Malaysia, and, of course, in Iran.

29 http://www.ahpweb.org/involve/prison.html.

Humanistic Psychology; Laleh Bakhtiar,[30] A. H. Almaas (A. Hameed Ali) and his *Ridhwan Foundation*,[31] the psychologists working in the California *Community Healing Centers*;[32] and Salma Yaqoob, with whose words it seems fitting to close:

> As a Muslim woman, born, brought up and educated in England, I have sometimes experienced some discomfort in practicing Western psychology as a psychotherapist. Many times I see patients who I believe would benefit from a more holistic approach, taking into account their spiritual needs as well as their emotional and physical needs, but it is as if there is a taboo in mixing faith with treatment – it is not "acceptable" or considered "professional". In our training as psychologists, spirituality is hardly even mentioned, and if it is, it is done so usually in a very negative way.... From an Islamic perspective, any truly comprehensive psychology can only develop out of a very different set of assumptions. In effect a different paradigm of knowledge is required, so that a genuine 'study of the soul' can take place and a 'genuine psychology', (remember the word psychology means study of the soul), which addresses all aspects of the self can emerge. This is why I believe that it is very important that Muslims define and develop Islamic psychology... I cannot stress enough the importance of developing Islamic psychology—because psychological assumptions about the nature of the self and what it means to be human—underlie not only psychological therapies but the approach of governments to social welfare and education.... We need to consciously develop a new field of study—Islamic Psychology—involving theoretical integration of Islamic notions of the self with current western models of psychology. This theoretical

30 See Laleh Bakhtiar, *God's Will Be Done: Traditional Psychoethics And Personality Paradigm,* 3 vols., (Chicago: The Institute of Traditional Psychoethics and Guidance, 1993). See her site: http://www.sufienneagram.com/.

31 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._H._Almaas.

32 http://www.communityhealingcenters.org/.

> framework should be applied in developing a practical "Islamic Counseling" approach with its own distinct processes and techniques. I am confident that such research will benefit not only Muslims but all people – Islam came as a mercy to the whole of mankind.[33]

While most of the psychological work that explicitly draws from Islamic sources, and particularly from Sufi traditions, has been clinically oriented, this work itself and the experience of Muslim clinical psychologists demonstrates the need for a transparent religious psychology in which modern psychology and texts from Islamic philosophy and *'irfàn* are not merely drawn upon as independent sources but are integrated into an explicitly Islamic psychology.

33 Salma Yaqoob, "Towards Islamic Psychology," Presented at International Conference on 'Muslim Women in Science : A Better Future' Fez, Morocco, 22-24 March 2000 ; organized by The Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) and The Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), the text of which was found 9 April 2006 at:
http://www.crescentlife.com/articles/islamic%20psych/toward_islamic_psychology.htm; also at:
http://www.quranicstudies.com/article42.html