

Lived Religion: Rethinking Human Nature in a Neoliberal Age

Beverley Clack, Professor in the Philosophy of Religion, Oxford Brookes University UK

Introduction

This article considers the relationship between philosophy of religion and an approach to the study of religion which prioritises the experience of *lived* religion. Considering how individuals and communities live out their faith challenges some of the assumptions of analytic philosophers of religion regarding the position the philosopher should adopt when approaching the investigation of religion. If philosophy is understood principally as a means for analysing belief, it will have little space for an engagement with what it feels like to live out one's faith.

In this paper I argue that, while the move towards an understanding of lived religion allows for a richer account of religion that gets beyond the abstractions (and prejudices) of mainstream philosophy of religion, there is a jewel at the heart of the analytic approach that should not be too quickly rejected. In seeking to address 'religion', rather than specific faith traditions, the philosopher of religion opens up an account of the religious which grounds it in the ordinary lives of all human beings, not just the ostensibly 'religious' ones. Reading religion in this way challenges a dismissive secularism which would see all forms of religious expression as childish aberrations, thus leaving no room for an engagement with what Paul Tillich calls 'the depths' of human existence. In order to combat reductionist accounts of what it is to be human, I shall contend that the fully human life re-quires an engagement with the depths, and thus cannot without cost ignore the religious. To make this move, I frame the religious as the desire to move outside the self in order to connect with others, and with the world. Under this account, 'the religious' indicates the attempt to *connect again* with the universe. In this way, the attempts of the analytic philosopher of religion to make generalised claims about religion complement an appreciation of what it means to live out one's faith.

The Problem with Analytic Philosophy of Religion

It is not a particularly original claim to argue that there is a problem with the way in which analytic philosophy of religion approaches the study of religion.ⁱ For its critics, the attempt to shape itself

around the analysis of religious beliefs leads to a reductionist account of religion; not least because such an approach fails to engage with the totality of what it means to hold a religious position. Ignoring the *experience* of religion (be that through an engagement with spirituality or through ritualistic practice) can only lead to a distorted account of what it is to hold a religious position. The philosopher of religion may respond by saying that the investigation of *religious experience* has long been a vital part of the subject; yet we should note that this engagement tends towards identifying religious experience with 'extraordinary' or mystical experiences.ⁱⁱ What is lacking is a grounding of religious experience in the ordinariness of the religious way of life: although Mark Wynnⁱⁱⁱ and Tasia Scrutton^{iv} have sought ways in which to widen the parameters of this aspect of philosophical work.

Notwithstanding such innovations, the commitment to the analysis of belief reveals much about the way in which the practice of philosophy is understood. For the analytic philosopher, it is principally a method for assessing and analysing. There is a neatness and a precision to the enquiries undertaken by the philosopher of religion who works in this way. Arguably, it makes philosophy of religion a relatively straightforward thing to practice. One can focus one's attention on written accounts, testimonies and credal confessions in order to reach one's conclusions. To consider the *lived experience* of religious practice requires a much more complex methodology. It might even require the kind of empirical research which underpins religious studies, particularly the interviewing of participants in order to come to an appreciation of what it means to practice a faith.

The limitations of analytic philosophy of religion for a sophisticated understanding of any religious position have long been acknowledged. Most pertinently, D Z Phillips applied his reading of Wittgenstein to the subject, arguing that the problem with analytic philosophy of religion was that it created a philosophical myth which had little to do with what, precisely, the believer thought they were doing when they practised their faith. Phillips is scathing about the habitual construction of the divine as 'an agent whose activities, like those of any other agent, are capable of being understood, assessed and judged'.^v Alluding to Richard Swinburne's depiction of God on the very first page of *The Coherence of Theism*, Phillips pulls apart the philosophical construction of God which emanates from Swinburne's claim that God is 'something like a person without a body'.^{vi} As Phillips

shows to devastating affect, this philosophical construct collapses when brought into conversation with Christian biblical texts: 'The Bible says that God is a spirit and those who worship him should worship him in spirit and in truth. Let's make the philosophical substitution: "God is a person without a body and they who..." On the other hand, let's forget it!'^{vii} The claim that God is a transcendent agent who is like us only greater falls at the first hurdle when confronted with the kind of religious practice which requires the believer to attempt to embody the divine perspective.

What is particularly significant about Phillips' view is that he does not see these scriptural claims about the divine as irrational or lacking meaning. He does not prioritise the philosopher's concern for a coherent account of God. Quite the contrary. For Phillips, the problem is that the philosopher has started their investigations with assumptions about what God is firmly in place. These assumptions, when tried out in the arena of faith, bear little relationship to that faith's specific practices and texts. General philosophical claims fail to make sense when applied to the specifics of faith. What is most important in Phillips' critique, and what continues to make it pertinent, is that he argues that the divine is not an object that can be defined, but, rather, is something revealed in the practices of the religious life.

Phillips, then, poses a challenge to any philosopher of religion. If we truly want to understand what is involved in religion, we will need to pay close attention to what the believer thinks they are doing, rather than distorting religious practice through our own construction of what we think makes for a coherent account of the divine.

Swinburne's concept of God, which Phillips plunders to such stark effect, may date back to the 1970s, but the shaping of the subject around the coherence of theism remains a key part of the syllabus. There is something appealing about reducing the idea of God to something that reflects a set of rational arguments. In stripping out the complexity of the believer's encounter with that which they consider to be divine, the philosopher hopes to get at the simplicity of an idea. Not surprisingly, the concept of God ends up as something free-floating, detached from the tenets or practices

of any particular world faith. For the philosopher of religion, talk of 'God' in any of the Abrahamic faiths can be reduced to the attributes of 'the Omni-god'.

This reductionist approach is not just problematic for thinking seriously about the believer's God; it also spawns a whole set of other problems. Consider, for example, the problem of evil. For the analytic philosopher of religion, the problem of evil is shaped as a puzzle: can you find a way of holding God's omnipotence and omni-benevolence as Creator with the reality of evil and suffering?^{viii} When the religious person encounters suffering, they do not inevitably turn their attention to solving this puzzle intellectually. It is not something that necessarily leads to the end of faith, although we should be mindful that it might elicit just that response. For Elie Wiesel, his boyhood faith is destroyed by what he experiences in Auschwitz. But this loss of faith does not come about because Wiesel cannot square the philosophical circle. This is not some academic puzzle, but something that strikes at the very heart of his existence: 'Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.'^{ix}

This is more than the end of an idea. That not all people respond in the same way to being confronted with evil or suffering should give the philosopher pause. The problem of evil is not in the first instance an *intellectual* problem. It is something that affects the whole of one's life. Edith Stein's commentary on St John of the Cross' 'Dark Night of the Soul' reveals an entirely different response to Wiesel's. Stein, a German Jew, Catholic convert and nun, having escaped the Nazi persecution in Germany, finds sanctuary in a Dutch convent. As she writes her commentary on John's mystical text, the Nazis take over Holland. Eventually, as she finishes her commentary, the Nazis deport all Jewish Christian converts, including Stein and her sister Rosa. St John claims that is only through suffering, only through the experience of the loss of God, that one gets, paradoxically, closer to God. This is an idea that Stein, his commentator, embraces. 'Cross and night are the way to heavenly light: that is the joyful message of the cross.'^x Suffering is not so much a problem for God, as a mark of the God revealed in the suffering of the crucified Christ. Participating in these sufferings makes possible a 'richer participation in the divine life'.^{xi}

We are, I hope, getting a sense of the discrepancy between the philosopher's perspective and that of the religious believer. Philosophers of religion such as Philip Quinn and Charles Taliaferro have gone some way to recognising the problem of reducing religion to an abstract philosophical construct operating in glorious isolation from any specific faith tradition. In their *Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, they offer a section specifically on the philosophical issues which emerge in the world's religions. Their introduction notes the significance of considering the diversity of religious positions, given that we live in an increasingly global world. The philosopher needs to require a new 'sensitivity'^{xii} to the specificities of the different faiths.

That sensitivity is required should alert us to the problem of considering monotheism as a concept of God that transcends the world's faiths. Even the most superficial study of the three Abrahamic traditions reveals how differently each frames their account of the One God. The Christian doctrine of God as Trinity does not sit easily with the God revealed as Allah, or with Yahweh revealed in the Jewish scriptures. Indeed, if these accounts were so easily reduced to a shared concept, it would be difficult to account for the often traumatic history of their engagement with one another.

If there are differences between the three monotheistic traditions when it comes to their respective theologies, how much more so is there a divergence between different ways of practising faith within any religious tradition.^{xiii} It would seem that the philosophical study of religion will be much more complex if we start from the position of faith, rather than the position of rational enquiry.

Lived Religion and the Philosophy of Religion

Faced with the problems detailed above, some philosophers of religion have sought to frame the subject against the backdrop of the experience of faith. For Amy Hollywood, this means starting one's philosophising from a broader recognition of the role of practice. It is impossible to understand 'religion' through the lens of belief alone. It is absolutely vital to engage with 'the bodily nature of ritual and other forms of religious practice'.^{xiv} For Tina Beattie, the problem is less philosophical and more institutional. In her analysis, Philosophy of Religion emerges from a Protestant context emphasising the importance of right words and right meaning. If one starts from a Catholic

perspective, Beattie argues, the understanding of 'religion' changes radically. It becomes something best understood through an exploration of what one does.^{xv}

Beattie's comments can be applied more broadly. This is not just about the role of ritual in the practice in a faith. What does it mean to live as a Christian, or as a Muslim, or as a Jew? What does holding a faith position mean for the whole of one's life? This can be seen in key practices in different religious traditions. In Christianity, the question of what it means to be a disciple requires more than either commitment to a credal confession or the practice of a particular set of rituals. If practiced seriously, the aim is to live out one's discipleship of Christ in the world.^{xvi} In Islam, similarly, the ritual of daily prayer shapes the lives of those who participate in it. To practice a faith fully involves engaging the totality of one's being: a manner of approach that is not reducible to conformity to a set of rationally supported beliefs. Faith involves commitment, a *living out* of how one sees the world. For Rowan Williams, this commitment is best understood as a form of connection. Faith is 'dependable relationship'; a form of confidence in 'an "other", who does not change or go away'.^{xvii} To understand the Christian life thus requires an engagement with what it means to practice one's faith. If we reduce religion to a set of beliefs to be scrutinised, something of the colours and tones of the faith that contextualise those beliefs will be lost.

Recognising the limitations of an approach focused on belief finds support in the feminist critique of reason. When reason has been defined in the Western tradition, it has invariably been at the expense of feeling and emotion.^{xviii} These excluded qualities have been associated with women, while reason has been associated with men. This has implications for who can do philosophy, but also for what is to be valued by the philosopher. Here is Immanuel Kant, concluding that women are incapable of deep thought because their very nature is based in sentiment:

Deep meditation, and a long-sustained reflection are noble but difficult, *and do not well*
befit a person in whom unconstrained charms should show nothing else than a
beautiful *nature*.^{xix}

Woe betide the woman who attempts this kind of thought: 'A woman who has her head full of Greek, like Madame Dacier, or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, like the Marquise de Châtelet, might as well even have a beard.'^{xx}

Kant is not alone in seeing female attributes as problematic for the life of thought. Jean-Paul Sartre associates the 'Other' from whom the nascent subject must escape with a variety of examples derived from the female body: the full breasts, flattened out, of a woman lying on her back;^{xxi} the 'moist and feminine sucking' that 'draws me as the bottom of a precipice might draw me';^{xxii} 'the obscenity of the feminine sex...which "gapes open"'.^{xxiii} To be a philosopher is to avoid succumbing to the attributes of the female. It should come as no surprise that the male comes to be seen as the model for the philosopher, or that women all too often feel that philosophy is something from which they are excluded.^{xxiv}

What gets lost when the emotions are hived off or seen as not properly philosophical? What makes religion powerful is its location in the desire - the yearning - to connect the self with the world outside the self.^{xxv} This theme is consistently expressed in the Psalms: 'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God' (Ps 42: 1); 'I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land, where there is no water' (Ps 63: 1). Desire for that which is divine is something felt in the guts and in the heart. It is fundamentally connected to the emotions: 'Every tree in the forest will sing for joy the the Lord arrives to rule the earth' (Ps 96: 12-13). To introduce these powerful religious texts is to challenge the idea that religion is an object which can be observed. Religious sensibility is something that emerges from the depths of experience, something that demands a connection with that which is other than the self.

Paul Tillich expresses this notion well when he grounds religion in the human longing for the depths. Forget the obsession with belief; or Tillich, it is the quest for a more fulfilling engagement with life that shapes the religious quest:

Look at the student who knows the content of the hundred most important books of world history, and yet whose spiritual life remains as shallow as it ever was, or perhaps becomes even more superficial. And then look at an uneducated worker who performs a mechanical task day by day, but who suddenly asks himself: "What does it *mean*, that I do this work? What does it mean for my life? What *is* the meaning of my life?"^{xxvi}

The work of the philosopher of religion is to address these existential questions. Here we encounter the force of religion. Here is what gives energy and direction to the formal structures of religion. Tillich's intervention challenges an academic philosophy which continues to bear the mark of 20th century logical positivism. The questions Tillich sees as vital for philosophers to engage with have largely been dumped as irrelevant. Reducing meaning to the analysis of language makes the investigation of religion colourless, precisely because to be engaged religiously is to be engaged with the great questions of existence: why am I here? what happens when we die? what gives meaning to life?

John Cottingham argues for a return to these questions. We are vulnerable, mutable beings, and this reality is reflected in religion. This is "what is universal to the human condition - the lonely voice of the human soul, crying out in direst need, calling to God because there is nowhere else to go, because the voice can and must be heard."^{xxvii} This is the experience that frames Augustine's understanding of the restlessness of the heart that can only find peace when it finds its home in the divine. The religious is grounded in this passionate longing for something beyond the human. Because Cottingham frames the discussion in this way, he has critical words for analytic philosophers of religion: 'Many analytic philosophers have signally failed to do justice to religion by treating it as an abstract set of intellectual doctrines to be dissected and evaluated in a detached and dispassionate way.'^{xxviii} Instead, religion needs to be seen as involving 'modes of engagement with, or connection with, reality as a whole.'^{xxix}

Recognising the passionate longings at the heart of the religious impulse is not to ignore the sometimes problematic character of religious claims or actions. Indeed, it may be that if we acknowledge

the role of emotion in shaping religiosity, we will be better placed to understand phenomena like religious terrorism. This cannot be explained *rationally*, but requires an understanding of the terrors and horrors of the human heart.^{xxx} Until we engage with the full range of experiences that make up the religious, our philosophical claims about it will lack legitimacy.

There are other ways of practising philosophy. Nick Trakakis' *The End of Philosophy of Religion* stands both as an indictment of the failings of analytic philosophy of religion, and as an appeal for philosophers to learn from the multiple methods of the Continental tradition. Indeed, the Western tradition on which analytic philosophy depends is not itself without compelling alternatives. Martha Nussbaum^{xxxi} and Pierre Hadot^{xxxii} argue that the Ancient Hellenistic Schools shaped the pursuit of philosophy around the question of how to live well in the world. Philosophy through is thus a practice for living, rather than a set of philosophical methods disconnected from one's lived experience of the world. The existential questions highlighted by Tillich and Cottingham resonate with this approach, for it is not just religion that needs to be connected to life, but philosophy too.

Remaking Human Nature: The Role of Philosophy and *Homo Religiosus*

Re-orientating philosophy of religion toward the existential shifts the ground of our investigation. It is not just that we need to consider religious practice through this lens; it is that a renewed focus on the existential locates 'the religious' in the experience of being human. As Tillich and Cottingham suggest, when the discussion of religion is connected to existential questions, the focus shifts to what is needed if we are to flourish as human beings. The question of religion is thus of importance to all human beings, not just those who practice a specific faith.

Here is the jewel that lies at the heart of the approach of the analytic philosopher of religion. For all the criticisms that can be made of the desire of philosophers to consider 'religion' apart from the practices of specific faiths, their methods open up the question of what it means to be human in a way that transcends the specificities of any faith tradition. By considering religion as something apart from the particularities of the world's religions, there is an opportunity to consider what it means to be human, and, crucially, what is needed in order to flourish as a human being.^{xxxiii} In the

remainder of this article, I suggest that this is vitally important for 21st century human beings.

When secularism and materialism are being shaped by crudely economic accounts of what it is to be human, philosophers have an important role to play in offering models that resist reductionist accounts, and which open up, instead, the possibility of more fulfilling forms of life.

For nearly forty years, Western politics has been dominated by what Michel Foucault called '*homo economicus*', or 'economic man'.^{.xxxiv} This vision of human being emanates from what commentators term 'neoliberalism'.^{.xxxv} Philip Mirowski locates the origin of this way of conceiving politics and society in the ideas of the Mont Pelèrin Society that grouped around the economist Friedrich von Hayek in the late 1940s. Disturbed by the triumph of interventionist Keynesianism in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Society sought to promote the importance of individualism and free market capitalism. The ideas of the Society came into their own in the aftermath of the political crises of the 1970s when they 'captured the ears and minds of politicians'.^{.xxxvi} In the 1980s, their ideas shaped the governments of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the UK. These ideas have not disappeared in the years that followed, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 doing little to dislodge this way of conceiving society. David Harvey's description of neoliberalism shows something of its ideological range:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.^{.xxxvii}

Harvey highlights the way in which a set of economic policies - private property rights, free market, free trade - shape the very understanding of what it is to be human. Individuals are to be freed as 'entrepreneurs of the self', encouraged to shape their subjectivity as a kind of mini-business. A whole host of 'virtues' stem from this central idea: the individual is more important than the social; to be successful is to be materially wealthy; competition not cooperation is at the heart of human life.^{.xxxviii}

The critics of neoliberalism argue that we are so conditioned to think of the economic as the principal way for shaping our lives and our world that we have stopped recognising how strange this shift is. Areas of life previously valued apart from the economic - education, health, relationship - are now increasingly shaped by economic considerations. Consider the use of league tables to direct resources; or the way in which economic questions - what will it cost? how much is it worth? - have become the bottom line for any discussion. We have been rendered incapable of seeing the strangeness of the values which shape our environment; they have become as natural to us as the air that we breathe.^{.xxxix}

In a context where the preeminence of the economic is naturalised, we need something to shock us out of our complacency. Here, the religious gains traction. When religion is encountered in the 21st century world, it is invariably identified with violence, fundamentalism, nostalgia, or conservatism. And there is some truth in each of these negative categorisations. Yet because religious practice is something countercultural in Western society, the very shock of its application makes possible new ways of thinking. To talk of 'the value of the religious' acts as a provocation in a world where 'value' is always to be read through an economic lens, and helps us to think again about what it means to be human. Here, the investigation of 'religion' as something general rather than particular, opens up, rather than closes down, reflection.

What does it mean to encounter the world religiously? There is a term that appears and reappears in the history and philosophy of religion that gets us closer to an answer. It also allows for a very different account of what it is to be human than that offered under neoliberalism. The term *homo religiosus* is used in a number of ways.^{.xi} Sometimes it is used positively as denoting the human desire for the sacred.^{.xii} We have seen one version of this rendition in Tillich's claim that all human beings need to align themselves with the deepest aspects of their being if they are to live well.^{.xiii} At other times it is used negatively as part of the challenge to false or superstitious ways of thinking. So Karl Barth in his argument with Emil Br nner claims that, in order for the revealed truth of the Christian God to be realised, beliefs that God can be found in nature must be resisted.^{.xiiii} There is

nothing 'natural', for Barth, about the practice of 'religion'. This criticism reflects his battle against forms of religion based in land and race advocated by the Nazis. In similar vein, his contemporary Dietrich Bonhoeffer argues against grounding Christian belief in religious attitudes, advocating, instead, a 'religionless' form of Christianity which embraces human maturity and accepts the secular world.^{xiv}

So much for the history. An etymological analysis presents the potential of this image, for it allows a move away from habitual notions of what it is to be religious. To be religious need not mean that one has succumbed to unscientific accounts of the world or human beings; it need not mean that one is hiding behind a set of practices that allow hate and bigotry to be directed at those who are not like us, or who do not share our way of life. Far from seeing religion through such a narrow lens, an etymological reading *opens up* possibilities for our relationships to, and dependence upon, the world and others. It also makes possible a break with the claim that only in the economic is meaning to be found.

The Latin 'homo' for 'man' is connected to the word 'humus', meaning earth. This suggests humans are earthly beings. Humans are, literally, 'beings born from the earth'. It is not difficult to see the promise of this idea when it is considered against the increasingly atomised subject promoted by neoliberal market economics. Faced with the ecological catastrophe of climate change, claiming that the individual is somehow separate from others and the world fails to take seriously the importance of the world on which we depend for our existence.^{xiv} 'Homo religiosus' suggests, by way of contrast, that we are, first and foremost, of this earth, that it is our home, and that it makes no sense to define ourselves as fundamentally separate from the physical processes that have brought us into being. Rather than strive to distinguish ourselves from the world, there is in the first part of this formulation an acknowledgement that we are fundamentally dependent on the earth. We are 'earthly beings'. To live well, we must acknowledge our dependence on this fragile and vulnerable world.

In the formulation *homo religiosus*, these earthly beings are then described as 'religious'. The attempts of scholars to define what, precisely, religion means have been long and tortuous.^{xlvi} For E B Tylor's substantive account, to be religious is to believe 'in Spiritual Beings'.^{xlvii} For Emil Durkheim, religion is a function of human society.^{xlviii} While not denying the importance of either approach, I want to suggest an alternative way of thinking about religion that draws again upon its etymology. There is a much-disputed, but highly evocative, definition that identifies the word 'religion' with the Latin 'religare', meaning, literally, 'to bind'. What we have in religion is the attempt to bind oneself or to connect oneself - to bind oneself *again* - to the world and to others. Under this reading, when we think of religion - its rites and practices, its beliefs and ideas - we are emphasising the way such actions attempt to *reconnect* human beings with the world beyond themselves. If we consider the practices of the world's faith traditions, we see this process at work. We must *unbind* ourselves from attitudes which deny a rich engagement with our world, in order to *rebind* ourselves to others and the world in ways which enable us to flourish.

This is about more than what it means to practice a religious faith. The desire for connection is the very thing that what makes us human. As hostile a figure to religion as Sigmund Freud is helpful for developing this idea. According to Freud, the human animal is not entirely at home in their world. We might be born of earthly processes, but the experience of consciousness - the ability to reflect on life in a mutable world - brings with it anxiety about our fragility in the face of natural forces that do not conform to our wishes. In order to overcome their feelings of vulnerability and alienation - in order to feel 'at home' in the world^{xlix} - humans develop ritualistic and repetitive behaviours. The desire to connect with others - to make relationship - is at the heart of the move towards civilisation that protects us from having to face the terrors of nature alone. And yet these human connections are not in themselves enough for feeling grounded in this world. We desire to connect with something much more fundamental to our being: the world itself.

Now, Freud is a master at revealing the problematic ways in which human beings attempt such connections. In his famous case study of the Rat Man, he describes a patient who has set in place a series of rituals which have to be performed in order to provide some kind of certainty about what

would happen during his day. His attempt to exert control over a frightening and unpredictable world may be doomed to failure, but his rituals by no means lack power. Indeed, they are so entrenched in his life that he is unable to function in the world: hence his presence on Freud's therapeutic couch.ⁱ

While we might dismiss such actions as relating only to the experience of 'sick' human beings in need of therapeutic cure, Freud suggests a connection between such behaviours and the way in which 'healthy' people live.ⁱⁱ Think of the prevalence of superstitions. Even Freud, the arch advocate of the methods of science, was not immune to the pull of such practices. In an addition to *the Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, he tells how he greeted the news that one of his daughters had recovered from a life-threatening illness. Walking through his study he 'yielded to a sudden impulse and hurled one of my slippers from my foot at the wall, causing a beautiful little marble Venus to fall down from its bracket'.ⁱⁱⁱ Finding himself strangely unmoved, he sees his 'attack of destructive fury' as serving 'to express a feeling of gratitude to fate and allowed me to perform a 'sacrificial act' - rather as if I had made a vow to sacrifice something or other as a thank-offering if she recovered her health!'ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The presence of the exclamation mark suggests Freud is somewhat embarrassed by this action. Yet it bears witness to the understandable and very human desire to *reach out* to something other than the human in order to express his thanks for his daughter's recovery. It is not difficult to think of superstitious practices as reflecting this attempt to connect with that which lies outside ourselves and our capacity. It is not such a great leap to see in superstitious actions of this kind a connection with the more formal practices of religious rituals.^{liv}

While Freud highlights the desire to control as the basic human motivation behind such actions, it is worth digging deeper in order to get at what lies behind such behaviours. There is something in these actions that suggests a (sometimes desperate) desire to reach out beyond the self and to connect with that which lies outside ourselves and our control. Freud's sense of gratitude cannot be met simply by sending a card or a gift to the medical practitioners who enabled his daughter's recovery. His feelings of relief and gratitude go beyond such obvious ways of giving thanks. His

desire reaches beyond himself to the very world itself, and it is notable that he writes in this passage of his desire to communicate with Fate. In such moments there is a reminder of the fragility of human life, dependent as it is on natural processes which shape and limit human power.

The formal religious structuring of the desire for connection with such powers - felt in worship or prayer - is only one manifestation of the attempt to reach beyond oneself to world and others, as this example from Freud suggests. In returning to the idea of connection as a basic feature of humanity, I am not suggesting that any particular religious tradition or any particular set of religious principles is the best or only way of expressing such desires. Nor do I claim that religious belief and practice is necessary in order to live well: which is not to say that I do not think such rituals and practices capable of enabling the space to reflect on how to live and what has intrinsic value. What I am advocating is something much more fundamental about the practices of the human animal. To be human is to be an animal whose subjectivity is defined through connection, and which is formed out of its attempts at relation with others and the world.

If this fact is grasped, religion ceases to be something that can be hived off from the rest of life. Instead, it offers space for reflecting on the kinds of connection possible between self and others, self and the world. Here, the rituals of religion find their place. These are practice which enable us to reach outside ourselves in order to connect with that which lies at the heart of the universe and which flows through us in the processes that make us alive.

If we are to live well, we need to cultivate ways of placing our lives in that broader universe which gives birth to us and to which we eventually return at death. The lived experience of religion acknowledges that good relationships need work. We need to work at binding ourselves 'again' to world and others. The questions Grace Jantzen raised in her *Feminist Philosophy of Religion* become of crucial importance to the practice of philosophy of religion: what is *needed* in order to flourish? How do we develop trustworthy community?^{iv} How do we live well in the world?^{vi} How do we live in such a way that we are able to embody ways of connecting that we see as so important that we call them divine? If as philosophers we focus our work on addressing these questions, the

study of religion starts to look very different. Addressing the lived experience of the religious life becomes the ground for exploring the qualities necessary for the truly flourishing human life.

Advocating *homo religiosus* as the lens through which we might see each other goes some way to challenge the economic shaping of human nature. It allows for sustained criticism of accounts of the human which would make individuals and communities subservient to the movements of global capital. We are not competitors in the public space, but beings who need each other. In the shift to *homo religiosus*, there is the basis for a politics that addresses inequality, and that seeks to ground community in sustainable practices that help us live well with each other and with the world.

Conclusion

We have come a long way from the critique of analytic philosophy of religion. In the attempt to consider religion as something more than the practices of a specific tradition, the analytic philosopher of religion makes possible the remaking of human nature. In religious practices, there is the possibility for the kind of reflection that makes possible new ways of living. All human beings require connection with world and others. In this acknowledgment there is the possibility of challenging a world that would shape all value through the economic.

Tillich suggests that 'faith is a total and centred act of the personal self, the act of unconditional, infinite and ultimate concern'.^{lvii} For Tillich, faith is not simply to be found in specific religious practices. All individuals commit to something that they take for their ultimate concern. What matters is that whatever we commit to is worthy of our commitment. Here, the importance of depth comes to the fore, for it is through this process of reflective engagement that we get closer to that which grounds us in the world. Religion under this model ceases to be containable as a set of beliefs, and emerges, instead, as a way of engaging more deeply and fully with the world: 'There can be no depth without the way to depth.'^{lviii} It is in this process of striving for a deeper understanding that we participate in that which enables the flourishing life, and it is in providing resources for this work that philosophers of religion can be of much help.

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Notes

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- i See for example: Beattie, "Redeeming Mary"; Hollywood, "Practice, Belief and Feminist Philosophy of Religion"; Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*; Phillips "On Not Understanding God"; Trakakis, *End of Philosophy of Religion*; Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*; Cottingham, *How to Believe*.
- ii See for example: Alston *Perceiving God*; Gellman, *Mystical Experience of God*; Franks Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience*.
- iii Wynn, *Emotion, Experience and Religious Understanding*.
- iv Scrutton, *Thinking Through Feeling*.
- v Phillips, 'On Not Understanding God', 166.
- vi See Swinburne, *Coherence of Theism*, 1, for this definition of God.
- vii Phillips, *Faith after Foundationalism*, 7.
- viii See Clack, 'Distortion, Dishonesty and the Problem of Evil', for a critique of this kind.
- ix Wiesel, *Night*, p. 34.
- x Stein, *Science of the Cross*, 31.
- xi Stein, *Science of the Cross*, 32.
- xii Quinn and Taliferro, *Companion*, 1.

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- xiii See MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, for a flavour of the disputes within a faith, but also the variety of faith positions possible within one religious tradition.
- xiv Hollywood, "Practice, Belief and Feminist Philosophy of Religion", 226.
- xv Beattie, "Redeeming Mary".
- xvi Note the concern with discipleship and what it means to follow Christ for one's daily life in the writings of theologians: Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*; Kung, *On Being a Christian*; Williams, *Being Disciples*.
- xvii Williams, *Being Disciples*.
- xviii Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*; Anderson, *Feminist Philosophy of Religion*.
- xix Kant, *Beautiful and Sublime*, 78.
- xx Kant, *Beautiful and Sublime*, 78.
- xxi Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 608.
- xxii Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 609.
- xxiii Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 613.
- xxiv Michele Le Doeuff's reflections on Simone de Beauvoir's refusal to call herself a philosopher is a disturbing example of the internalisation of such thinking: see Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice*; also Le Doeuff, 'Simone de Beauvoir'.
- xxv See Anderson, 'The Case for a Feminist Philosophy of Religion'.
- xxvi Tillich, *Shaking of Foundations*, 62.
- xxvii Cottingham, *How to Believe*, 143.
- xxviii Cottingham, *How to Believe*, 82.
- xxix Cottingham, *How to Believe*, 82.
- xxx For a fuller discussion of this connection, see Clack and Clack, *The Philosophy of Religion*, chapter 6.
- xxxi Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*.
- xxxii Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.
- xxxiii This question is as old as Western philosophy: see Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1:5.
- xxxiv Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*.
- xxxv For key commentators on neoliberalism see Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go To Waste*; Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Standing, *Precariat*; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Rose, *Governing the Soul*; Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*.
- xxxvi Standing, *Precariat*, 1.
- xxxvii Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 2.
- xxxviii For a discussion of how neoliberalism shapes subjectivity, see Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*.
- xxxix A point made most powerfully in McLuhan, *Environment, Anti-Environment*.
- xl See Bellah, 'Homo Religiosus'; Hamilton 'Homo Religiosus'; and Miller 'Religious Evolution' for discussion of the variety of ways of understanding the history of religion through this lens.
- xli See for example Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*.
- xlii Tillich, *Theology of Culture*.
- xliii Barth, *No!*
- xliv Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 327.
- xlv For an analysis of the dangers of capitalism for the environment, as well as a challenge to conservative forms of religion, see Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion*.
- xlvi For a rehearsal of these definitions, see Clack and Clack, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 1-7.
- xlvii Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 424.
- xlviii Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*.
- xlix Freud, 'Obsessional Practice'; 1919.
- i Freud, 'Case of Obsessional Neurosis'.
- ii Freud, *Psychopathology*.
- iii Freud, *Psychopathology*, 169.
- liii Freud, *Psychopathology*, 169.
- liv We might conclude this from the connection Freud makes between religious rituals and obsessive practices in his 'Obsessional Practice'. While this might be read as part of his critique of religion, it can also be read as suggesting something of the way in which religious practices are rooted in human attempts at connection.
- lv Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 204-226.
- lvi Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*, 227-253.
- lvii Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 9-10.
- lviii Tillich, *Shaking of Foundations*, 61.