

**Theorizing experience: the psychological search for
a science of religion (1896-1937)**

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DECLARATION

I, Matei George Iagher, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:.....

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the central projects for a psychology of religion put forward in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that the proponents of this sub-discipline were attempting to set up a new science of religion, one which they thought was radically different from the science(s) of religion(s) that had been created in the second half of the nineteenth century by thinkers such as Max Müller, C.P. Tiele, E.B. Tylor, or Albert Réville. The novelty of the psychology of religion was thought to reside in its identification of a primarily affective and pre-intellectual religious experience as the essence of religion and in the development of tools (e.g. questionnaires) and concepts (e.g. conversion, mysticism) with which to probe that experience. After a period of efflorescence in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the psychology of religion began declining in the 1930s. I argue that this decline was, in part, the result of an inability to maintain the theoretical integrity of the psychology of religion's topic of study, such that the discipline either became dissolved into general psychology or it became a private theology in its own right. Chapter 1 outlines the ways in which the sciences of religion were constructed by the aforementioned nineteenth century theorists, looking in particular at several Gifford lectures and at a number of prominent French historians of religions. Chapter 2 reconstructs the debates around the concept of conversion and its relation to the notion of feeling, examining the texts of American psychologists such as William James, E.D. Starbuck, or James H. Leuba. Chapter 3 examines the formation of the notion of 'mysticism' in the French-speaking psychology of religion, by looking, primarily, at the works of Théodore Flournoy, Henri Delacroix, Théodule Ribot, and Pierre Janet. Chapter 4 examines C.G. Jung's psychology of religion.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CW: *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, edited by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler; William McGuire, executive editor; trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton, Bollingen Series 20: Princeton University Press, 1953-1983, 21 vols.

RB: Jung, C.G., *The Red Book Liber Novus: A Reader's Edition*, edited and with an introduction by Sonu Shamdasani. Trans by Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani. London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

FJL: *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung* edited by William McGuire, trans. Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

TSL: Jung, C.G. *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido, A Contribution to the History of the Evolution of Thought*. trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle. New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1916.

MP: Protocols of the interviews conducted by Aniela Jaffé with Jung for *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Library of Congress, Washington, DC

ZP: Protocols of the meetings of the Zofingia Society, Staatsarchiv, Basel.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1903, writing in the second issue of the *Archives de Psychologie*, Théodore Flournoy, the doyen of Swiss psychology, contended that the near total absence of the topic of religion from contemporary psychological textbooks could not convince one that religion was totally absent from the human soul. Rather, such absence only proved the great temperamental rift that existed between religious souls and scientific practitioners.¹ A bit over a decade later, writing in the same journal, Georges Berguer intimated that 'the young science was growing incessantly' and that one could already take stock of the various themes and methods espoused by religious psychology.² Finally, in 1933, Abraham Cronbach, an American reviewer, could count 255 titles published just in the five year span between 1928-32.³ This seeming efflorescence concealed, however, a cautionary tale. As Cronbach himself conceded, there was an 'extreme diversity' in the material he had gathered: psychoanalytic, theoretical, practical, biographical, introspective, biblical, apologetic, critical, questionnaire-based, introspective, as well as a category he called 'literary effusions'.⁴ The heterogeneity of the material made him wish for a time when the term 'psychology' would be used for the strictly 'factual' and other terms would be employed for accounts that, in his view, did not deserve the same 'scientific' label.⁵

The problem had been there from the very beginning. Flournoy himself had consciously excluded from his review the contributions that did not measure up to his own standard of 'science'—i.e. the double principle of an 'exclusion of transcendence' and a 'biological interpretation of religious phenomena'.⁶ What these two principles amounted to was the following: the psychology of religion was not to attempt to take sides on issues of ontology or theology. It should, quite simply, concern itself with understanding the way in which religion functioned in the mind. Its concerns were of a biological, that is to say psychological or physiological nature. All else was to be excluded from the start.

¹ Théodore Flournoy, *Les Principes de la psychologie religieuse* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903), 4.

² Georges Berguer, 'Revue et bibliographie générales de psychologie religieuse,' *Archives de psychologie* XIV, 53 (1914): 2.

³ Abraham Cronbach, 'The Psychology of Religion: A Bibliographical Survey,' *Psychological Bulletin* 30, 5 (1933): 327-361.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁶ Flournoy, *op.cit.*, 6.

But the debate was not only about what constituted 'science', and in particular the science of psychology. It was equally a debate about what constituted 'religion'. As Sonu Shamdasani has argued, the formation of psychology in the late nineteenth century depended on the successful negotiation of intellectual boundaries with disciplines such as anthropology, theology, biology, literature, medicine or philosophy (one should also add here the science of religion), which had a pre-existing claim to the same field on inquiry.⁷ This negotiation could not be accomplished without a prior re-fashioning of concepts belonging to those disciplines. 'Religion' was a prize quarry, as 'it was through constituting religion as an epistemological object that psychology could constitute itself.'⁸

This thesis looks at the ways in which religious psychologists sought to effect this double constitution and asks the following questions: how did the psychologists understand and use 'religion'? what were the other main concepts that they used to advance their purported science of religion? what was the link between the new sub-discipline that they proposed and the nineteenth century avatars of the science of religion? And most importantly: why did the psychology of religion decline so quickly as an academic enterprise?⁹ The argument is grounded on the idea that the primary theoretical engagement for the psychologists of religion was the notion of 'experience.' The importance of 'experience' for the psychology of religion is underscored by the frequency with which the term appears in the works of these thinkers. This frequency raises two questions: what is 'experience'? why was 'experience' so important to the religious psychologists?

An answer to the first question has recently been proposed by Robert H. Scharf. According to Scharf, the concept of 'experience' used by interpreters of religion is neither universal (e.g. there is no parallel concept in premodern Buddhism for example) nor conceptually clear enough to serve as a category of analysis.¹⁰ In fact, Scharf claims that 'experience' is by

⁷ Sonu Shamdasani, 'Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices,' in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. Jeremy Carrette (London: Routledge, 2005), 27. In 1908, James Bissett Pratt wrote: 'In fact, psychology seems to have enlarged her bounds at the expense of every other subject, and to have chosen all knowledge to be her province; so that he who desires his book or treatise on any subject whatever to be regarded as strictly "modern" and "scientific" must needs endow it with a psychological title.' See James Bissett Pratt, 'The Psychology of Religion,' *The Harvard Theological Review* 1, 4 (1908), 435.

⁸ Shamdasani, *op.cit.*, 32.

⁹ For the sake of simplicity, I will employ the singular 'science of religion' throughout this thesis, even though some of the psychologists of religion (e.g. James) preferred to use the plural 'science of religions' (thus following the French tradition of referring to a 'science des religions').

¹⁰ Robert H. Scharf, 'Experience,' in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 94-116.

definition unclearable, as it refers to 'that which is given to us in the immediacy of perception, [...] that which by definition is nonobjective, that which resists all signification.'¹¹

Following Wayne Proudfoot's suggestions in *Religious Experience*, Scharf thus proceeds to declare that 'experience' is nothing but 'a mere placeholder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning.'¹² Rather than supposing that there is something *out there* that corresponds to the invocation of the term by practitioners and scholars, he cautions his readers to pay attention to the ideological investments of those who appeal to such 'experiences'—not least of all those of scholars of religion who have a vested interest in maintaining the irreducible nature of their object of study over against encroachments from other disciplines. Scharf's critique of 'experience' converges with the contemporary critique of the term 'religion' by authors like Talal Asad and Timothy Fitzgerald.¹³ As Fitzgerald writes, 'Religion cannot reasonably be taken to be a valid analytical category since it does not pick out any distinctive cross-cultural aspect of human life.'¹⁴ Instead, he argues that the term is a loaded category, that hides a liberal ecumenical theological agenda.

Such critiques force us to change the form of questioning away from universal inquiries about 'religion' and 'religious experience' (which can no longer be sustained in the absence of a stable referent) and into an inquiry about how the term is employed in specific texts and contexts.¹⁵ In what follows, I will thus try to closely read the religious psychologists' narratives about religious experience in order to discern the main forms that such experiences were assumed to take (i.e. conversion, mysticism) and to get to the underlying ideologies and ontologies that informed them. As I will later suggest, there were a number of reasons that drew the psychologists of religion to the concept of 'experience.' Prominent among these was their reliance on Schleiermacher's theology as well as their desire to move away from the supposed intellectualism of nineteenth century proponents of the science of religion.

By religious psychologists I mean a body of researchers who, though loosely organised, understood themselves to be part of the project for a secular and psychological science of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹² *Ibid.*, 113. For Proudfoot's use of the term see Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 127-148.

¹³ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

¹⁴ Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

¹⁵ For an intellectual history of the concept of 'experience' see Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

religion, who read each other's work and commented on it, who subscribed to the primacy of religious experience, and who can reasonably be said to have subscribed to Flournoy's two principles. This definition should not, however, be taken as more than a heuristic device for tracking a movement that was almost completely lacking in institutional structure.¹⁶

One can make several comments about this lack of institutional structure. There were, for example, no chairs for religious psychology in the period under investigation, and the majority of psychologists surveyed here had positions in general psychology or philosophy. The journals that were dedicated to the sub-discipline were also short lived: the *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, edited by G. Stanley Hall, appeared only sporadically between 1904-1915. The German *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* started appearing in 1907 and succumbed in 1913. The torch was then picked up by the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, which appeared between 1914-1921 and was then revived in the 1960s. Representation of the sub-discipline at international psychology congresses tended to be scant as well: the only exception here being the 1909 congress organized by Flournoy in Geneva, which featured an extensive discussion of religious topics.¹⁷ Above all, what the aforementioned definition means is that, for the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on psychologists who claimed to be writing from an avowedly secular perspective, leaving aside the various theological projects from this period, which contained a psychological component.¹⁸

The mention of theological-cum-psychological projects versus the secular psychology of religion raises an issue of terminology. Recent advocates and historians of the psychology of

¹⁶ A full account of the institutional history of religious psychology remains to be written, but see for example Jacob A. v. Belzen, *Religionspsychologie: Eine historische Analyse im Spiegel der Internationalen Gessellschaft* (Berlin: Springer, 2015).

¹⁷ See *VIème Congrès international de psychologie tenu à Genève du 2 au 7 août 1909 sous le présidence de Th. Flournoy : rapports et comptes rendus*, ed. Edouard Claparède (Genève: Librairie Kündig, 1910).

¹⁸ Such projects include, for example, the work of Georg Wobbermin (1869-1943), the translator of William James' *Varieties* into German, of Ernst Troeltsch and other members of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, or of Henri Bois, who established a productive school for the theologically engaged psychology of religion at the Faculty of Montauban. On Wobbermin, see Brent A. R. Hege, *Faith at the intersection of history and experience: The theology of Georg Wobbermin* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009). On Troeltsch see Mark D. Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). On Bois, see Matei Iagher, 'From America to the Planet Florissant: Théodore Flournoy and the Psychology of Religious Experience,' *Piper: International Psychology, Practice and Research* 5 (2014), 1-24. However, this is a point of emphasis and not a distinction of nature. Thus, as I will show, the secular psychologists of religion had as much of a theological agenda as any of their theological peers. At the same time there were also frequent exchanges between the two camps and the lines between them could be quite blurry. This was precisely the reason why Flournoy began his manifesto for the psychology of religion ('The two principles' cited above) with an expulsion of psychologically minded theologians like Auguste Sabatier, Gustav Vorbrodt or Jules Pacheu. See Flournoy, *op.cit.*, 6.

religion choose to make a distinction between 'religious psychology' and 'the psychology of religion.' Thus, David Wulff argues in a recent contribution that 'religious psychology' refers to the psychology that is implicit in religious traditions ('uncritically submerged in a specific religious worldview'), while the 'psychology of religion' is a secular enterprise that 'stands in principle outside of all religious tradition.'¹⁹ However, throughout this study, I will ignore the distinction and will instead use the two expressions interchangeably. My main reason for doing so is that there is no historical basis for using this distinction when speaking of the period under investigation in this thesis: the majority of the authors that I will invoke appear to use the two expressions interchangeably.²⁰ A second reason for eschewing this distinction has to do with the argument that I am putting forth in this thesis. Briefly put, if I am right that the psychology of religion always leads to either dissolving the category of religion or to the upholding of a specific theology, then Wulff's distinction becomes immaterial—since the question is no longer how to distinguish between 'religious psychology' and 'the psychology of religion,' but whether the psychology of religion as a separate discipline is possible. At best, the aforementioned distinction becomes simply one between psychology and theology.

My work draws on a number of pioneering studies in the history of religious psychology. Generally speaking, the psychology of religion has received very little attention from historians. In what follows, I try to fill some of this lacuna and also draw on a much wider pool of archival records than have previously been used. My aim is also to offer a more international view of the discipline than has previously been attempted, by drawing on the writings of religious psychologists in America, France, Germany and Switzerland. I do not pretend to give an exhaustive account of the psychology of religion during the period under investigation, which would be illusory given the extent of the movement and the number of

¹⁹ David Wulff, 'Psychology of Religion: An Overview,' in *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain. Contemporary Dialogues, Future Prospects*, ed. Diane Jonte-Pace and William B. Parsons (London: Routledge, 2015), 15.

²⁰ The examples abound: Flournoy, who penned the aforementioned methodological manifesto and who could be thus expected to foreground the secular nature of enterprise consistently refers to the sub-discipline as 'psychologie religieuse' and not as 'psychologie de la religion'; Hall's journal was titled *The American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*; Starbuck appears to have used both expressions: the title of his best known book is 'The Psychology of Religion,' but in his correspondence he also uses 'religious psychology' to refer to the enterprise. See Edwin Diller Starbuck to Raymond Dodge, 22 May 1929, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California, Box 5. See also a book by A.R. Uren, an early historian of the sub-discipline, which uses both expressions in the very title: A. R. Uren, *Recent Religious Psychology. A Study in the Psychology of Religion. Being a Critical Exposition of the Methods and Results of Representative Investigators of the Psychological Phenomena of Religion* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928).

works published.²¹ Rather, I am putting forward a number of paradigmatic examples, which point to the general trends in the discipline.

Until the 1990s, the majority of the studies on the history of the sub-discipline have usually been intellectual biographies of a single, representative figure, such as Bremer's study on Coe (1949), Heisig's excellent book on Jung (1979), Booth's biography of Starbuck (1981) or Jacques Maître's carefully researched biography of Madeleine Lebouc, Janet's famous patient (1991).²² To these we can add the various biographies and studies of William James, as well as the articles of Henrika Vande-Kemp and Benjamin Beit-Hallami on the American psychology of religion, or Wulff's study of the Dorpat school.²³ Necessarily constrained by their subject matter, the bulk of these studies do not attempt to give a more general account of the psychology of religion, or of its international dimension. Very few of them, one might add, explore the link between the psychology of religion and the attempt to construct a science of religion.

In 1990, John Shanner Cornell, a student of Peter Gay, submitted a doctoral thesis that deals with the history of the German psychology of religion, titled *When Science entered the Soul: German Psychology and Religion, 1890-1914*. The work is, as the author explains, not 'a systematic intellectual history of German *Religionspsychologie*' but a 'cultural history' of the turn of the century, which draws 'freely from any material in which psychology and religion could be found together in liberal measure.'²⁴ According to Cornell, he was led to ask questions about the interaction between 'psychology' and 'religion' at the turn of the century

²¹ Comprehensive bibliographies can be found in W.W. Meissner, *Annotated Bibliography in Religion and Psychology* (New York: The Academy of Religion and Mental Health, 1961) and Henrika Vande Kemp, *Psychology and Theology in Western Thought 1672-1965: A Historical and Annotated Bibliography* (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1984).

²² David Henry Bremer, 'George Albert Coe's Contribution to the Psychology of Religion.' PhD diss., Boston University, 1949. James W. Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion* (London: Associated University Press, 1979). Howard J. Booth, *Edwin Diller Starbuck: Pioneer in the Psychology of Religion* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981). Jacques Maître, *Une Inconnue célèbre: Madeleine Lebouc/ Pauline Lair Lamotte (1863- 1918)* (Paris: Anthropos, 1993).

²³ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, 'Psychology of Religion 1880-1930: The Rise and Fall of a Psychological Movement,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 10 (1974), 84-90. Hendrika Vande Kemp, 'G. Stanley Hall and the Clark School of Religious Psychology,' *American Psychologist* 47 (1992), 290-298. David Wulff, 'Experimental Introspection and Religious Experience: The Dorpat School of Religious Psychology,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 21 (1985), 131-50. There are many studies that deal with James's philosophy of religion, with greater or lesser emphasis on the psychological aspect. One of the earliest is S. J. Bixler, *Religion in the Philosophy of William James* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1926). One of the latest is Jeremy Carrette, *William James' Hidden Religious Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2013), which proposes a new way of reading James' religious philosophy and also contains a wealth of references to the earlier literature.

²⁴ John Shanner Cornell, 'When Science Entered the Soul: German Psychology and Religion, 1890-1914' (PhD diss., Yale University, 1990), xv.

by reading the correspondence between Freud and Pfister. Much like Freud, Cornell was struck by the fact that Pfister could be at the same time a follower of psychoanalysis and a firm believer. This in turn led him to research the topic further, which showed that Freud's position was in minority and that the majority of theologians and psychological practitioners tried to effect some kind of rapprochement between their religious beliefs and the psy disciplines. How and why did they do so?

Cornell couches his discussion in the context of the nineteenth century conflict between 'science' and 'religion' and he tries to show how the psychology of religion was an (unsuccessful) attempt to resolve this conflict. The work is divided into three parts, labeled 'Wishful Thinking,' 'Aggressions' and 'Accommodations.' The first part contains the 'science vs. religion' background and a discussion of contemporary psychical research, while the other two deal more specifically with psychological attacks on 'religion' and with attempts to bring the two disciplines together. The thesis does contain much interesting information about the work published in the German *Journal of Religious Psychology*, about the interaction between *Seelsorge* and psychiatry and about the way in which the supposedly neutral language of psychology was used as a weapon in the fight between Protestants and Catholics. Cornell points, correctly I think, to the importance of Schleiermacher's theology for many German religious psychologists. Less interesting and in fact misleading is the discussion of turn of the century psychical research, which for Cornell was an attempt to establish a parallel psychology based on 'indulgent empiricism.'²⁵ The latter was, according to him, opposed by more serious academic psychologists like Wundt. At first glance, it is not clear why Cornell felt the need to include such a long discussion of psychical research in a thesis ostensibly about religious psychology. The answer for him seems to be that psychical research was—along with religious psychology, spiritualism and mind-cure—one more way in which psychology could go astray: 'once science entered the soul, people argued, it must be willing to entertain hypotheses and explanations which would otherwise seem implausible and unscientific.'²⁶ It is not clear how Cornell has reached this conclusion. Incidentally, we might also question the assumption that science only entered the soul circa 1880.²⁷

²⁵ This is a position that is borrowed from some of the adversaries of psychical research, such as Münsterberg. See *infra*, section 3.3. This view of psychical research is also questioned by Andreas Sommer's historical reconstruction. See Andreas Sommer, 'Crossing the boundaries of mind and body: Psychical Research and the Origins of Modern Psychology' (PhD diss., UCL, 2013).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁷ See Fernando Vidal, *The Sciences of the Soul: The Early Modern Origins of Psychology*, trans. Saskia Brown (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Cornell offers no satisfactory explanation as to why there was a conflict between psychologists about the question of psychical research and he seems to take at face value the critics of psychical research. The claims of proponents of the latter are thus written off in an *a priori* fashion, relegated to the realm of occultism and bad psychology. There is also little serious discussion of how the proponents of religious psychology managed to overcome the seeming incompatibility between the secular discourse of psychology and their own religious propensities, which is what Cornell set out to answer. The only answer that he provides to this question is 'wishful thinking' or 'the will to believe.' on the part of both psychologists and theologians.²⁸ As it should be clear from this brief overview, there is no attempt from Cornell's side at problematizing the concepts of 'religion' and 'psychology,' and no attempt to take the psychology of religion seriously as a scientific endeavour. In contrast to him, I argue that we must take the psychology of religion's scientific nature seriously.

In 1991, David Wulff published his massive *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views*, which remains to this day the only large-scale survey of the topic.²⁹ However, Wulff's *Psychology of Religion* is not so much a history of the sub-discipline, as a historically informed account of various psychologies of religion, meant primarily for contemporary psychologists.³⁰ The book draws only on published sources and is organized thematically, in chapters that explore 'the biological foundations of religion,' 'religion in the laboratory,' 'the German descriptive tradition,' etc. Major theorists, such as Jung, James or Freud are discussed in individual chapters, and an introductory chapter is devoted to outlining 'the emergence of the psychology of religion.' Wulff's methodological principles are laid out in the introduction. According to him, the term 'psychology of religion' is misleading, because there never was one single psychology behind this endeavour, but rather a plurality of psychological approaches. At the same time, Wulff regards the term 'religion' as reifying and essentializing. Nevertheless, he proceeds to use it, and defines it in a way derived from the work of W.C. Smith, as including: a) tradition (institutions, documents, moral codes, myths, etc.); b) faith ('the human capacity "to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension"').³¹ While Wulff thinks that this a 'new conceptual framework,' this is in fact the way that liberal theologians and liberally-inspired comparative religionists have defined religion since the nineteenth century. In Chapter 1, we will have the occasion to explore some

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 292-93.

²⁹ David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991).

³⁰ Wulff, *Psychology of Religion*, ix.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

of these definitions, through the work of C.P. Tiele and Sabatier. Wulff, a psychologist, also appears to not realize that 'faith' is a distinctly Christian term, nor does he interrogate the psychological plausibility of a 'human capacity' to perceive the transcendent. In a historically concise account, Wulff outlines the emergence of the psychology of religion, by pointing out the existence of three, almost concomitant traditions (Anglo-American, French, German) and summarizing some of the key texts belonging to them. As a side note, I can point out that it would have been better to call the Anglo-American tradition simply 'the Anglophone tradition,' as Wulff is mapping out linguistic and not national traditions (the French and German traditions, as he describes them, also contain references to Swiss authors). Wulff is correct to point out, early on, the overwhelming impact of Schleiermacher (and the Liberal tradition in general) on the psychology of religion. However, he does not follow this suggestion through consistently, even though it would have provided him with a thread that runs through all of the different traditions. Wulff, nevertheless, provides useful, if often very succinct summaries of some of the main texts of all these three traditions. In general, he does not explore the links between different authors, or for the fact that a single author (e.g. Starbuck) may have changed his views or his approach throughout his life. In later chapters, Wulff delves more into the biographies and texts of selected authors. His main criterion of choice is: who is still relevant today, particularly for contemporary debates?³² As this criterion shows, there is a presentist attitude running throughout the book. This presentism makes Wulff regard Janet's psychasthenia as nothing but an 'obsolete term for what today is called obsessive-compulsive disorder.'³³ A similar presentism is evident in the evaluative sections of his chapters, wherein past psychological theories are evaluated not according to their own criteria, or in their own contexts, but in a vacuum, where present and past studies are brought to bear on the issue, with no regard for when, how and with what aim such contributions were produced. While Wulff's account is in some respects historiographically deficient, it is invaluable as a bibliographic resource and does contain suggestions that will be more fully taken up in what follows. An example of such a suggestion is the importance of Schleiermacher's theology. The latter, I will argue, links together both a variety of religious psychologists, and establishes some of their continuity with the nineteenth century science of religions.

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 22.

In the post-Wulff era, historians of the psychology of religion have taken a more contextual and less large scale approach. One set of studies, represented by Ann Taves' *Fits, Trances & Visions* (1999) and Christopher White's *Unsettled Minds* (2009), has attempted to place the psychology of religion (the American branch at least) into the broader history of American Protestantism.³⁴ For Taves, the scientific psychology of religions is thus only one chapter in the long tradition of debates about the value and meaning of religious experience, which go as far back as the First Great Awakening. Alternatively, in his study, White looks at the movement as an attempt by Liberal Protestants to grapple with the late nineteenth century crisis of faith—in brief, as a way of gaining 'spiritual assurance' using the tools and methods of modern science. Another kind of approach, represented by Graham Richards, has been to move away from focusing on the history of the sub-discipline in order to probe the larger and more insidious question of the relationship between 'psychology' and 'religion' in the twentieth century. Richards has done this in a series of essays that examine, for example, the take-up of psychology into modern theology, the theological underpinnings of several psychological theories, the interaction between 'religion and psychotherapy,' or the construction of psychologies of non-Christian religions.³⁵ In what follows, I will draw on all of these, either for context, or in order to define my own position. As it will be clear from chapter 2, I take some issue with White's reading of Starbuck and Leuba.

The book that has had the most impact on the present work is Eric Sharpe's *Comparative Religion*.³⁶ Sharpe's contribution is, as its title lays bare, not a history of religious psychology, but one of comparative religion. Nevertheless, it is significant that Sharpe regards the psychology of religion as a part of the history of comparative religion—he is, in fact, the first contemporary historian to make explicit the link between the two disciplines. As he explains with regard to the two endeavours: 'both were attempting to account for the origin and the nature of religion as an important aspect of the workings of the human mind; and there was absolutely no reason why the psychologist and the comparative religionist should not be the

³⁴ Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Christopher G. White, *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). More recently, Taves has also begun to explore the history of the French religious psychology. See Ann Taves, 'A Tale of Two Congresses: The Psychological Study of Psychical, Occult, and Religious Phenomena, 1900-1909,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 50, 4 (2014): 376-99.

³⁵ Graham Richards, *Psychology, Religion, and the Nature of the Soul: A Historical Entanglement* (London: Springer, 2011). See also Graham Richards, 'Psychology and the Churches in Britain, 1919-39,' *History of the Human Sciences* 13 (2000), 57-84.

³⁶ Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2nd edition (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986).

closest of colleagues.³⁷ Sharpe regards the psychology of religion as the first distinctively American contribution to the wider science of religion, a field that was mostly dominated by European scholars. He also points out that around the turn of the century, psychology was part of the arsenal of methods employed by researchers in comparative religion and anthropology.³⁸ However, these insights are left underexplored in his account. In what follows, I will try to further develop the link between comparative religion and religious psychology, in at least two directions: 1) through an analysis of the texts of prominent comparative religions, I will probe the extent to which they relied on psychological methods; 2) I will attempt to expand Sharpe's analysis of the psychology of religion, by drawing on a wider pool of theorists (not just American, but also Swiss, German or French), in order to assess in what way they attempted to contribute to the science of religion.

Like some of the authors already invoked (e.g. Shamdasani, Sharpe), I adopt an intellectual history approach.³⁹ This means that I will focus on the debates that were taking place within religious psychology, and more generally on the development, transmission and reception of psychological ideas. In chapter 3, I also engage in a brief conceptual history inspired by the works of Jean Starobinski and Jonathan Z. Smith.⁴⁰ My methodology relies a lot on what could be called a kind of 'source criticism,' whereby I try to unearth the sources that psychologists and proponents of the science of religion used in the making of their own conceptions.

This approach is motivated, first of all, by the primary sources themselves: the psychology of religion was very much an armchair discipline, whose practices were not much different from those of contemporary sociologists, anthropologists, or theologians. As I will point out in chapter 4, it was only at a later date, through the work of Pfister and Jung, that the psychology of religion became a psychotherapeutic practice and not just a theory. It would thus be unfruitful to try to attempt to write a history of the practices of religious psychologists. Secondly, my intellectual approach is motivated by the attempt to discern the main theoretical outlines of the psychology of religion and the variety of conceptions adopted

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

³⁹ See for example Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ See Jean Starobinski, 'The Word Reaction: From Physics to Psychiatry,' *Diogenes* 23 (1976): 1-27. Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Religion, Religions, Religious,' *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269-281.

by its practitioners. Such an attempt means that I will be forced to forgo much of the social, political, cultural or even economic contexts in which such conceptions are embedded.⁴¹

My aim in this thesis is thus to take the proposals of religious psychology seriously and to assess the validity of the sub-discipline as one attempt to start a science of religion at the turn of the century. While I think that the science of religion context is an illuminating one, I do not claim it is the only one, or that it exhausts the meaning of the sub-discipline. Many other contextual illuminations are possible, but since I am trying to describe more widely the contours of the psychology of religion, I cannot draw out much of the social, political or cultural context of various theories, as doing so would essentially make the material unmanageable.

The central issue that I will try to address is the question of why the psychologists' projects for a unified 'science of religion' failed to take off in the first decades of the twentieth century. As I will try to prove, the reason why the sub-discipline failed is intimately connected with how its votaries defined and used concepts like 'religion' and 'religious experience.' Secondly, as intimated already, I will also try to get at the underlying ontologies that underscore the practices of religious psychology—in particular the Liberal Protestant theology that frames much of the theorising in the sub-discipline.

According to Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, by the 1930s, the psychology of religion was dead, even if it continued to lead a larval existence in the myriad studies listed by Cronbach in his review.⁴² As Beit-Hallahmi points out, there were several reasons for the movement's decline: its theoretical naiveté, the rise of competing psychological fads, such as behaviourism and psychoanalysis, which had little interest in religion, as well as the absorption of religious psychology into pastoral counselling.⁴³

However, there were other reasons for the movement's failure, which had little to do with the psychologists' supposed naiveté or with the rise of competing movements in psychology or in theology. On the one hand, as I have already mentioned, the psychology of religion was too little institutionalized to be able to continue as a separate discipline. At the same time, its

⁴¹ For an account of the usually ignored linkage between psychology of religion and modern Western capitalism see Jeremy Carrette, *Religion and Critical Psychology: Religious Experience in the Knowledge Economy* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴² Beit-Hallahmi, *op.cit.*, 87. As Beit-Hallahmi notes, Cronbach's article was also the last review of religious psychology to be published in the *Psychological Bulletin*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 87-89.

approach was almost immediately absorbed as only one method within comparative religion—as it is evident from a number of early twentieth century textbooks.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the rise of more popular approaches to the study of religion, such as Durkheim's sociology (who was also opposed to the psychological-cum-individual study of religion), served to change the focus from the individual experience of believers onto collective representations and the study of societies.

In addition to these exterior circumstances, reasons for the movement's decline can be found in the very presuppositions of the psychology of religion. As I argue, many of the religious psychologists saw their discipline as a response and a correction of the perceived intellectualism of nineteenth century interpretations of 'religion' put forward by anthropologists, philosophers and comparative religionists. They sought to counter the latter by focusing on what they thought was the bedrock of any potential 'science of religion'—individual experiences as recounted by the believers themselves. Drawing on the resources of Schleiermacher's theology (primarily the notion that religion was a thing of the heart and not of the intellect), they saw these experiences as being primarily affective, spontaneous, and only imperfectly translatable into rites, creeds, and theological propositions. At the same time, they also saw themselves as perfectly suited to translate these individual narratives into a series of psychological concepts: conversion, feelings, mysticism, religion, the subconscious.

The problem with this translation is that it resulted in an inability to maintain the theoretical integrity of their own topic of study—and consequently of their discipline. We can describe this situation as a double conundrum. On the one hand, if religion was ultimately a thing of the mind, or of the emotions, if it could be fully described in psychological terms and with no reference to any theology, then the very object of study (i.e. religion) that the discipline was supposed to investigate was being dissolved in the process of analysing it.⁴⁵ The psychology of religion would, in that case, turn out to be nothing else than general psychology. On the other hand, if religion was nothing but an experience, whose interpretation was best left to psychologists (because it fell within their field of study), if followed that the only

⁴⁴ Jordan, *Comparative Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905). Morris Jastrow, *The Study of Religion* (New York: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1902). Pinard de la Boullaye, *L'Étude comparée des religions. vol.1: Son histoire dans le monde occidental* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1922).

⁴⁵ This may seem like a contradiction, since, as I mentioned earlier, the psychologists of religion were also creating a new concept of 'religion.' The contradiction is only apparent. The psychologists were indeed setting up a new concept of 'religion,' but one which proved to be deficient precisely because it was dissolved in the process of its deployment.

'scientifically' legitimate speculation on that experience was that of psychology. In other words, psychology was either to take on the role of an arbiter of religious experience, or it would itself become the theology or religion of the future. Throughout this thesis, I will use 'theology' and 'religion' as contextual terms, which refer to how the authors in question understand their own endeavors. I do not suppose that the terms themselves have an unchanging essence. However, much like Fitzgerald, I find it problematic that a discipline which presents itself as detached, 'scientific' and hence universal, turns out to be simply an advocate for a distorting and very Western ontology.⁴⁶

What I am thus proposing is that the psychology of religion was marred by deep conceptual flaws that made the project unsustainable as a science of religion. However, in order to show that this was the case, I will need to pay close attention to the ways in which the categories of 'religion' and 'religious experience' were used by the psychologists—what they put into them and what they hoped to get out. At the very least, this will involve a closer reading of the texts of religious psychologists than has previously been attempted by previous historians like Wulff or Sharpe. At the same time, I will also have to show (as I do in Chapter 1) that the sub-discipline fitted quite well into the programme for a science of religion as was articulated in the late nineteenth century. As that chapter will argue, the sciences of religion promoted by people like Tiele or Müller were oftentimes thoroughly psychologised. This is the same as saying that aims and hermeneutics of the science of religion were commensurate with those of religious psychology and probably helped to bring the latter about.

Furthermore, as it will become clear, both groups drew on the same kind of Liberal Protestant theological inspiration, represented by Friedrich Schleiermacher.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, the point that religious psychology was largely promoted by Liberal Protestants has been made in some form or other by most of the historians of the sub-discipline. The intimation that comparative religion is heir to the Liberal Protestant tradition is also not new—it is in fact central to Fitzgerald's critique of the discipline of Religious Studies, which he regards as a disguised form of Liberal ecumenical theology.⁴⁸ Wulff even goes as far as claiming that the decline of religious psychology was linked to the decline of Liberal theology in the 1920s and

⁴⁶ Timothy Fitzgerald, *op.cit.*, 7.

⁴⁷ My understanding of the term 'Liberal Protestantism' is similar to the way in which Fitzgerald uses the term 'liberal ecumenical theology.' It refers, primarily, not to a group of actual liberal Protestants, but to the ideology that is embodied in the term 'religion,' and which is drawn directly from Schleiermacher. See Fitzgerald, *op.cit.*, 5,6, 14.

⁴⁸ Fitzgerald, *op.cit.*, 6. On the liberal Protestantism of the founding fathers of comparative religion, see also Sharpe, *op.cit.*, 148.

the ascendance of Christian fundamentalism and of Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy.⁴⁹ While this point may explain why the psychology of religion was no longer interesting for the theological public, it says nothing about why its proponents ran out of steam, why they were unable to generate new research or come up with new conceptual models.⁵⁰ Nor does this insight explain why there was no decline in the fortunes of comparative religion, since the latter was just as much a Liberal theological enterprise as the psychology of religion. The problem, in fact, was not so much the Liberal theological heritage as the conceptual flaws of religious psychology, which forced its proponents into a theoretical corner from which they could not dig themselves out. As such, the question of the Liberal Protestant context is subsidiary to my main argument, but it is nevertheless important in that it shows that the comparative religionists and the psychologists of religion were starting out with commensurate presuppositions and were in fact part of the same intellectual trajectory.

My choice of texts and authors in the subsequent chapters is motivated by the attempt to describe the science of religion trajectory in the psychology of religion. This is not to say that I have cherry-picked the authors that make this claim: the majority of authors I discuss are well-known and central figures in the movement. The science of religion focus explains as well why I do not dwell on Freud's musings about religion or on those of his followers. The reason is that neither Freud nor his immediate followers ever claimed that they were contributing to the science of religion. A second criterion of choice covers authors that been omitted from the histories of religious psychology (e.g. Godfernaux, Probst-Biraben) even though their writings were seriously considered and discussed at the time. At the same time, in chapter 3, I have resisted the impulse to expound on William James, precisely because discussions of the psychology of mysticism have always tended to focus on James' theory, to the exclusion of other authors. As we shall see, I have allocated a lot more space, proportionately speaking, to the discussion of authors such as Flournoy, Janet and Jung. In the case of Flournoy and Janet, the reason for this is that there is no adequate discussion of their contribution to religious psychology in the English secondary literature. In the case of Jung, the psychology of religion was a central and almost life-long preoccupation, which

⁴⁹ Wulff, *Psychology of Religion*, 12.

⁵⁰ The situation emerges clearly from E.D. Starbuck's correspondence in 1929, when he was trying to put together a panel on religious psychology for the upcoming Ninth International Congress of Psychology. See for example Edwin Diller Starbuck to George B. Cutten, 6 June 1929: 'I share fully the note of discouragement in your letter about the present trend in America in the Psychology of Religion. The pessimism has taken on a little deeper coloring since receiving letters just now from several persons to whom I wrote. Almost all the men who have been writing stout books on the Psychology of Religion confess they are not doing any research.' Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, USC, Box 5.

could not be adequately summarised in less than a chapter. The theory that he proposed was, as we shall see, a synthesis of several previous conceptions and also has a complexity that outweighs anything that comes before it.

The thesis is organized according to thematic and biographical divisions: the first chapter deals with the main theorists of the nineteenth century science of religion and tries to probe their interest in, and use of psychology. The following two chapters are thematic, dealing with 'conversion' and 'mysticism' respectively. The reason for choosing this thematic division is that these two concepts represent the main way in which religious psychologists sought to refashion the science of religion. The presence of Americans in the 'conversion' chapter and their relative absence in the one on 'mysticism' could lead one to believe that these two themes represent different national styles of doing the psychology of religion. This impression is, in part, justified, as 'conversion' was mostly an American phenomenon, connected with the varieties of American Protestantism, which had few immediate parallels in European countries. Nevertheless, some French and Germans did write about 'conversion' and most Americans also wrote about 'mysticism.' As we shall see, there were also attempts by some authors to bring these two thematic lines into agreement. The last chapter departs from this thematic division, as Jung changes the form of questioning away from the focus on either conversion or mysticism and into a focus on the religious-making process.

Before outlining the way in which the argument is followed through in the subsequent chapters, I must first say a few words about the person who, by the end of the nineteenth century, came to be seen as the father of religious psychology: Friedrich Schleiermacher.⁵¹

The Schleiermacher Connection

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is a central figure in the history of Protestant theology in the nineteenth century.⁵² He was born in Breslau and grew up in a community of Moravian Brethren, founded by Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in 1722.⁵³ In 1787, Schleiermacher entered the University of Halle, where he studied theology, philosophy and classical

⁵¹ See for example Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 548.

⁵² The bibliography of works dealing with Schleiermacher and his contribution to theology is enormous. See for example Andrew C. Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 88-102. B.A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). For Schleiermacher's life see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Autobiography and Letters*. 2 vols. trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860).

⁵³ We will have the occasion to run into Zinzendorf again in chapter 4.

languages, and where he came in contact with Kant's critical philosophy. He began teaching theology in Halle in 1803, moving to Berlin in 1810, where he was for many years a colleague and intellectual opponent to Hegel.

Schleiermacher's theological position was constructed in opposition to Kant and his strictures on the theoretical use of the faculty of reason. Kant presented a general account of the limits of knowledge in his classic *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and later took up the effects of that account on the knowledge of religion in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793) and in the posthumously published *Lectures on Philosophical Theology* (1830).⁵⁴ As Kant made clear, for example in the latter text, one cannot really know anything about God, since God is not an object of experience. Strictly speaking, there can be no science of God, hence no theology, since 'I can have scientific knowledge only of what I myself experience.'⁵⁵ What this means is that all that one can rely on in matters of religion is belief, i.e. the postulate of God's existence, as a necessary adjunct for practical morality.⁵⁶ No science is required for this 'simple moral concept of God.'⁵⁷

Schleiermacher's answer to this theoretical challenge was to claim that religion was not a thing of the mind but of the heart. He first put forward this theory in a book addressed to his circle of Romantic friends in Berlin, and published anonymously in 1799 with the title *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*.⁵⁸ The book was as much an exercise in rhetoric as it was a work of analysis. Its aim was to evoke a sense of the religious among its 'cultured despisers'. According to Schleiermacher, religion was neither metaphysics nor morality, even though one usually found it mixed together with these two fields. As he put it: 'Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling.'⁵⁹ Religion was 'the sensibility and taste for the infinite,' and the 'intuition of the universe.'⁶⁰ As intuitions were always individual, so was religion. Religious intuitions were self-contained and could not be

⁵⁴ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason And Other Writings*. trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*. Trans. Allen W. Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*. trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). As Crouter notes, Schleiermacher never disowned this early text, which he re-issued again in 1806 and 1821 with some revisions and under his own name. See Richard Crouter, 'Introduction' in *On Religion*, xi.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

reduced to something else. The intuition and the feeling of the infinite were fused together in the original moment of consciousness and Schleiermacher deplored the fact that the very act of analysis forced him to split them into rubrics.⁶¹ For him, it was impossible to fully translate the ineffability of religion into intellectual formulas without doing an injustice to its poetic originality. The dogmas and propositions of faith were only imperfect attempts to translate the richness of feeling and intuition into the alien language of reason.⁶² As he put it: 'Every holy writing is merely a mausoleum of religion, a monument that a great spirit was there that no longer exists; for if it still lived and were active, why would it attach such great importance to the dead letter that only be a weak reproduction of it?'⁶³

Schleiermacher reprised these ideas in his massive *The Christian Faith*, published in two parts in 1821 and 1822. *The Faith* was an innovative work that both developed Schleiermacher's earlier affective based theory of religion and also outlined a radical new method in dogmatic theology. As in *On Religion*, Schleiermacher began by distinguishing piety from metaphysics and morality and. Piety, for him, was '*but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness.*'⁶⁴ In a further statement, he qualified this feeling by claiming that its essence was '*the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation to God.*'⁶⁵ Since the essence of religion was a feeling, dogmas were only secondary constructions—they were, as he put it, only 'accounts of the religious affections set forth in speech.'⁶⁶ The task of theology was to systematize the dogmas in a certain community at a certain time and to check them against the statements of Christ in the Scriptures. As Wayne Proudfoot has noted, this procedure effectively made theology a thoroughly empirical discipline, since it no longer maintained that it was making claims about God or transcendence, but only about religious affections, or about the reflection of God or transcendence in human consciousness.⁶⁷

Schleiermacher's account of religion had an overwhelming impact on the development of the science of religion and, as we will see, many nineteenth century theorists of religion felt they needed to refer to him, even if it was only to criticize him for offering a too restrictive

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁴ Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*. trans. H.R.Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁷ See Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, 16.

definition of religion.⁶⁸ In the psychology of religion, Schleiermacher's theory was especially pervasive, though usually with far less emphasis on the notion of dependence.

Breakdown of chapters

Consequent upon the claim of religious psychologists that they were contributing to, or establishing a science of religion, I begin by an examination of several major projects for establishing sciences of religion at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 thus looks at the works of authors like Max Müller, C.P. Tiele or Andrew Lang and tries to outline how they understood religion and asks if psychology played any role in that understanding. As I will show, psychology in fact played a fundamental role in the majority of these theories, such that by the turn of the century there was a general consensus in anthropology and in comparative religion that religion was essentially a thing of the mind. This consensus set the stage for the psychological approaches to religious experience, which are examined in the following three chapters. In chapters 2 and 3, I look at the way in which religious psychologists tried to reconstruct the science of religion with reference to two main concepts: conversion and mysticism. Chapter 2 examines the earlier contribution of American psychologists and looks specifically at how they analysed the interrelated notions of conversion and feeling. In the early years of the sub-discipline, conversion was considered to be the main phenomenon in religion, though by 1912, it was obviously on the decline. As I argue, the reason for this decline was twofold: on the one hand, since conversion was taken to be nothing but a process of physiological and psychological transformation that took place in adolescence, religious psychologists had to admit that the ultimate questions about religion were questions pertaining to psychology and physiology; on the other hand, the category was compromised by the realization that what was being described under the name of 'conversion' was not a pure experience, but an experience that was the result of training and education in specifically Protestant churches.

Chapter 3 picks up the other major conceptual nexus of religious psychology, namely mysticism, and tracks its development until 1936. While conversion was mostly an American affair, chapter 3 exhibits a more international cast of characters (most of them French speaking). As I show, mysticism was a more flexible category than conversion, and had a far broader range of interpretations applied to it. At the same time, I argue that a number of the

⁶⁸ See for example Morris Jastrow, *The Study of Religion* (New York: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1902), 153.

psychologists of mysticism saw themselves as continuators of the American project. This continuity is particularly evident in the way in which Delacroix and Flournoy provided suggestions that mysticism was essentially also a conversion experience. Chapter 3 thus outlines the various approaches to mysticism and also shows that there was a major change in the way in which the category was described, which occurred after 1902. Briefly stated, this change was a movement away from a more static conception, which regarded mysticism as reducible to ecstasy (i.e. a single state of heightened affectivity), into a view that mysticism was a whole process, one which perhaps covered a person's entire life. As I show, the psychology of mysticism was heir to the same presuppositions as the psychology of conversion and hence led to the same result: the dissolution of the very category that it was trying to investigate.

The final chapter picks up the second prong of the central conundrum of religious psychology formulated earlier: the notion of turning psychology into a theology or a religion. As the other chapters show, Jung was not the only psychologist to contemplate this possibility, but he was nevertheless unique in the extent to which he followed the project through to its last implications. Chapter 4 thus shows how Jung attempted to fuse the science of religion project of people like Tiele and Müller with the religious psychology of James and Flournoy. At the same time, it shows that through Jung's reformulation of psychotherapy as a quest for life's meaning, the psychology of religion was transformed from an academic discipline into a practice aimed at facilitating religious experiences.

Chapter 1: Psychology and the science(s) of religion(s)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the larger intellectual context of religious psychology, by doing a close reading of some of the major projects to establish a science of religion in the late nineteenth century. The reason for examining these projects is given by the religious psychologists themselves, most of whom claimed, in one form or another, that they were contributing to, or establishing a science of religion. Furthermore, as it is evident from some of the statements of religious psychologists, their own discipline was a reaction to the nineteenth century science of religion, which in their view, had failed to look at what was the most important element in religions: the experience of believers themselves. As the religious psychologist George Coe wrote in 1900, at the very beginning of his study on conversion:

the history and science of religions rummaged museums of anthropology and dug about the roots of language in order to discover the earliest forms of religion: but to none of these was it revealed that the surest way to understand religion is to observe its present manifestations.⁶⁹

What Coe expressed in this passage was something that would become a staple of the historiography of the study of religion in the nineteenth century, namely the idea that the study of religion in that period was ruled by approaches that were primarily philological, historical, anthropological and speculative.⁷⁰ The authors of these approaches were men like Max Müller, one of the seminal figures in comparative philology, historians of religion like C.P. Tiele, and the father of anthropology E.B. Tylor. However, what has often been missed by historians of the science(s) of religion(s) is the fact that all of these different approaches were underscored by a similar, if at times obliquely stated psychology.

In what follows, I try to redress this gap by analysing the role played by psychology in the theorization of religion in the late nineteenth century. As I show, psychology did in fact play a major role in a number of these projects, even if most of the time it was a kind of *ad hoc* psychology that was worked out independently from the discipline of scientific psychology,

⁶⁹ George A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life: Studies in the Science of Religion* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), 12.

⁷⁰ See for example Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2nd edition (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986). Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain, 1860- 1915* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

which was in the process of being established at the same time. My argument is that, when taken together, the texts of the nineteenth century scientists of religions can be said to have established an intellectual climate which fostered the notion that religion was a psychological affair, in effect opening the door for the efflorescence of religious psychologies that appeared around the turn of the century.

At the same time, as it will become clear, a number of the authors under investigation were, much like the religious psychologists themselves, heirs to the Schleiermachiian tradition, even if they often criticised Schleiermacher and tried to modify or expand his definition.

My argument starts with an examination of several of the Gifford Lectures, delivered at Scottish universities starting in 1888, and then turns to some of proponents of the *science des religions* in France, starting with Ernest Renan, Émile Burnouf, and following with the historians and theologians associated with the fifth section of the *École pratique des hautes études*, one of the powerhouses of the history of religions.

There are several reasons for choosing these examples. Firstly, I have chosen the Gifford Lectures because they represent one of the first attempts to institutionalise the science of religion in Britain. Though this statement could be challenged, one could reply that they were seen as such by some (though not all) of the lecturers themselves. At the same time, it is not my contention that the lectures were only mouthpieces for the science of religion, since lecturers could speak of whatever they chose, and some chose to present their own philosophical and ethical systems. And even when they did speak of the science of religion, this term could be taken to mean a wide variety of things.⁷¹ Secondly, in part because of the substantial remuneration that they offered to the lecturers, the Giffords succeeded in attracting a large amount of high calibre scholars, both native and from abroad.⁷² Furthermore, William James' appointment to give this series of lectures in 1899-1901 shows that, in some circles at least, his psychology of religion approach was seen as being commensurate with the aim of the lectures.

In the case of France, I have chosen Renan because of his renown as a scholar of religion, and because he appears to be among the first scholars to make an argument for the use of

⁷¹ See *infra*. For a list of the lectures given until 1904 see Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion*, 570-71.

⁷² As Stanley Jaki notes, in the early years it was mostly the huge salary rather than the renown of the lecture series, which attracted scholars. Otto Pfleiderer, the third Gifford lecturer in Edinburgh is said to have remarked with respect to his appointment that 'The honor is not great, but the honorarium is colossal.' See Pfleiderer, quoted in Stanley L. Jaki, *Lord Gifford and his Lectures: A Centenary Retrospect*. 2nd edition (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995), 11.

psychology in the science of religions (already in the late 1840s). My choice of the Burnouf example, which follows that of Renan, was motivated by an awareness that his text on *La Science des religions* was published in the popular *Revue des deux mondes* and hence had a wide audience, despite the fact that it was later scoffed at by other scholars of religion. Finally, I have opted to also look at the theorists based around the fifth section of the *École pratique des hautes études* because of their prime position in the French academic environment as proponents of the new science.

A word should be said about the lack of German examples (discounting Müller of course, who worked in England). As Louis H. Jordan, one of the earliest historians of comparative religion noted, the science of religion was only institutionalized quite late in Germany, and there was major resistance from theologians to such an institutionalization. Chairs in the History of Religions were created only in 1910 (Berlin) and 1912 (Leipzig). It is thus difficult to track what the science of religion was before this time, not least of all because the term that one would use to describe such a discipline (*Religionswissenschaft*) was primarily used to describe the philosophy of religion or theology. *Religionswissenschaft* does begin to be used as a term for the secular science of religion (à la Müller) around the end of the nineteenth century, either in translations of Müller's work (where it appears as *vergleichende Religionswissenschaft* precisely so as to distinguish it from simply *Religionswissenschaft*), or for example in a journal titled *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, which started appearing in 1898. Interestingly enough, Thomas Achelis, the editor of this journal, noted in his introduction to the first volume that that the new discipline, which his journal was promoting, would draw on linguistics, ethnology, and history, but with the goal of uniting all of these by a psychological analysis.⁷³ According to him, without this unifying perspective, which tracked the 'changing developments of religious consciousness,' there could be no *Religionswissenschaft*. All else was only preparatory work, only *Vorarbeit*.⁷⁴

1.2 The Gifford Lectures

The Gifford lectures were established upon the death of their eponymous founder in 1887. In his will, Lord Gifford had left provisions for the establishment of a 'Lectureship or Popular Chair for 'Promoting, Advancing, Teaching and Diffusing the study of Natural Theology,' in

⁷³ On Achelis' work see Chapter 3.

⁷⁴See Louis H. Jordan, 'The History of Religions, and its Introduction into the German Universities,' *The Expository Times* 22 (1911), 198-201. Louis H. Jordan, 'The Study of the History of Religions in the German Universities,' *The Expository Times* 24 (1912), 136-39. See also Th. Achelis, 'Zur Einführung,' *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, I, 1-8. For more about Achelis' perspective see Chapter 3.

the widest sense of that term' in the four universities of Scotland: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews. On the one hand, Gifford had left no doubt about what he thought 'natural theology' to be: 'the Knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and the Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, and the Sole Existence, the Knowledge of His Nature and Attributes, the Knowledge of the Relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him'. The speakers were to be selected at the discretion of the academic senates of the four universities, without regard to their religious affiliation (even freethinkers could be considered, provided they approached their topic with due diligence and reverence), and without any restriction on how they approached their theme. At the same time, he wished that they would approach their topic as a natural science, without reference to the miraculous or supernatural revelation. In Gifford's own words: 'I wish it considered just as astronomy or chemistry is.'⁷⁵

The double requirement of an edifying theological discourse done in the manner of the natural sciences must have surely puzzled the academic senates charged with choosing the lecturers. An astronomy or a chemistry of religion had not yet been invented. The nearest thing seemed to be the so-called 'science of religion,' which explains perhaps why Max Müller was one of the obvious first choices for at least two of the aforementioned universities. But the question of what exactly Gifford had meant by his words was by no means a settled one. Edinburgh, for example, had discussed Müller's selection but had finally decided for a more traditional option: the Hegelian philosopher James Hutchison Stirling (1820-1909). As would other Gifford lecturers as well, Stirling offered a meditation on Lord Gifford's will. He concluded that the stipulation that the subject ought to be treated in the manner of the natural sciences, like astronomy and chemistry, was sheer nonsense. Natural theology was, he submitted, a natural science (because it worked without the aid of supernatural revelation), but it was not a physical science. It was in fact philosophy, 'Rational Theology,' or 'the Metaphysic of God.'⁷⁶ In fact, the terms 'anthropology' and 'science of religion' do not even occur in his lectures. Stirling had thus no interest in these disciplines and claimed he would get no satisfaction from an exploration of 'the seat of religion' and whether it was a sentiment or a knowledge.⁷⁷ He in fact declared that that he stood for the 'old

⁷⁵ Lord Adam Gifford's Will, available online at <http://www.giffordlectures.org/will.asp>.

⁷⁶ James Hutchison Stirling, *Philosophy and Theology: Being the First Edinburgh University Gifford Lectures* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 32-33.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

forms.⁷⁸ His own course of lectures was thus a crash course in the history of philosophy, through an examination of the proofs for the existence of God, from antiquity to the present.⁷⁹ In a letter to one of his supporters in Edinburgh, Müller quipped that Stirling could surely talk about what natural religion '*would* or *could* or *should* have been', but the important thing was what it actually was. Echoing the title of Stirling's book 'The Secret of Hegel', Müller claimed that even a Hegelian (if he knew that the secret of Hegel was that the Rational is the Real) could understand that 'development means the historical triumph of what is right, or reasonable, or, as they now say, fittest.'⁸⁰ St. Andrews offered to appoint Müller at its university, but the Glaswegians snatched him up before. In the end, St. Andrews offered their first appointment to Andrew Lang, while Aberdeen got E. B. Tylor.

1.2.1 Max Müller

On 13 December 1888, *The Dundee Courier & Argus* reported the following:

Professor Max Müller was last night entertained by dinner by the Glasgow University Club. In replying to his health, Professor Müller said some who had heard his lectures were disappointed, because they were under the impression that the object of the Gifford lectures was to propound a new religion. This was not the sense in which he interpreted the will of Lord Gifford. Instead of propounding a new religion, Professor Müller thought the best plan would be to expound the old religion, to show not so much what religion should be, but what it had been.⁸¹

Müller, the article continued, recounted how a Japanese official had once asked him to propound a new religion for the Japanese. The Professor had replied that the Japanese did not need a new one, since they had a good one already, namely Buddhism. The Japanese should simply try to be 'real Buddhists, not sham Buddhists.' By analogy, the same went for the Europeans: there was no need for a new religion, though there was a need for a 'renewed religion.' This theme was not a new one, as Müller had been making the same kind of remarks since the publication of the first volume of *Chips from a German Workshop* in 1867.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁰ Max Müller to Professor Lorimer, 31 January 1888, in *The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller, Edited by his Wife*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902), 223.

⁸¹ 'Professor Max Muller on religion,' *The Dundee Courier & Argues*, December 13, 1888.

Müller was born in the German town of Dessau in 1823. He studied philology and Sanskrit at the university of Leipzig, where he obtained a doctorate in 1843. He then went on to Berlin, where he attended Schelling's philosophy lectures and made the acquaintance of the philologist Franz Bopp. In 1845 he went to Paris, where he befriended the renowned Orientalist and philologist Eugene Burnouf. A year later he moved to England to study Sanskrit manuscripts in the British Museum and to conclude negotiations with the East India Company, which offered to support the publication of a critical edition of the Rig-Veda. Müller worked assiduously on this edition, which came out in four volumes between 1849-1862. In 1868, Müller was appointed Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford, having lost the election for the Boden Chair in Sanskrit a few years earlier. Starting in 1876, Müller was put in charge of one of the most ambitious editorial projects of the late nineteenth century: the translation and publication of all the major sacred books in the world's religions, or what became known as *The Sacred Books of the East*. The project occupied Müller for the rest of his life, eventually totalling 50 volumes.⁸²

Müller's interest in the publication of the *Sacred Books* was predicated upon its substantial contribution to the science of religion, a term which he actually coined in the aforementioned volume of *Chips* from 1867. In the preface to that volume, Müller had written of every religion's need to undergo a 'constant reformation,' a return to the original message as it was articulated by its founders. As soon as a religion came into the world it decayed and it was only at the origin that one could find it pure and 'free from the many of the blemishes that offend us in its later phases.'⁸³ For Müller, the science of religion was the best equipped to track down such pure, original, beginnings. In this text, the meaning of the new science was merely sketched out: it was a vast science, whose materials had yet to be collected and translated, and whose principles were not yet formulated. Nevertheless, he hoped that once this work was done, this new science will succeed in discovering 'the purpose that runs through the religions of mankind' and humanity will be able to rebuild the *civitas Dei* on a

⁸² For Müller's life and work see *The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller Edited by his Wife*, 2. vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902). G. W. Trompf, *Friedrich Max Mueller: As a Theorist of Comparative Religion* (Bombay: Shakuntala Publishing House, 1978). Ronald W. Neufeldt, *F. Max Müller and the Rg-Veda: A Study of Its Role in His Life and Thought* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1980). Joseph M. Kitagawa and John S. Strong, 'Friedrich Max Müller and the Comparative Study of Religion,' in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. III, ed. Ninian Smart *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 179-213. Lourens Peter van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁸³ Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop: Essays on the Science of Religion*, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1868), xxiv.

universal foundation.⁸⁴ The science of religion was to be comparative as well as historical, its goal being to restore the sacred character of world history, in its 'unconscious progress' towards Christianity.⁸⁵ Such a science would not eschew the comparison between Christianity and other faiths, and it would attempt to discover if there were not some sparks of divine light buried in the latter. There was, after all, 'in all religions a secret yearning after the true, though unknown, God.'⁸⁶

Müller's language thus indicated that there was nothing for the Christian to fear from the new science, whose role was, among others, nothing short of the universal export of the Protestant Reformation. Seen from the latter angle, Müller's editorial work on the Sacred Books of the East was a world-scale reprisal of the role of Luther, Zwingli or other Protestant translators of the Bible. It is quite evident that in the 1867 preface Müller was trying to advertise his new science to a largely Protestant, and probably sceptical audience. The reform of Buddhism was probably less of a selling point for such readership. At the same time, such readers would have probably found common ground with Müller's views on the corroding effects of history, and they might have responded to his claims that a comparative understanding of other religions could provide the tools for renewed missionary efforts. They probably did not remain indifferent to Müller's adage that it was the simple form of first century Christianity that had conquered foes more redoubtable than Hinduism or Buddhism.

As for Müller himself, he was hardly an unqualified partisan of the notion of pure beginnings. His interest in, and attraction for ancient religious texts was matched by an equal if not stronger distaste for their 'childish' character and their mythological language. The 'disease of language' theory that he started developing in 1865 in order to understand the genesis of mythology, fully justifies the view that 'renewal' for him was by no means a return to the origins.⁸⁷ Briefly stated, the disease of language theory claimed that certain words that were used in a metaphorical sense could be gradually divested of their primary concrete meaning, taking a life of their own, becoming gods, generating mythologies and metaphysical systems. The prevalence of mythology in ancient religious texts was precisely the result of a generalized verbal metastasis. If Müller could work back, etymologically and semantically, to the first symptoms, he could, no doubt, claim that there was more purity there than in the later

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁸⁷ Max Müller, 'Comparative Mythology,' *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868), 1-146.

stages of the disease. But there was still sickness even in the beginning. If one understood how the disease took hold, one could work to prevent it in the future. That was the main lesson to be gained thereof. Hence the task of renewing religion (whether Buddhist or Christian or otherwise) meant more than recuperating its ancient texts. It meant as well, eliminating its mythology and its metaphysical content. But what then, was there left, once this surgery was performed?

Müller gave a first set of Gifford lectures between 14 November and 20 December 1888. To a correspondent, he wrote at the end of October: 'I am very deep in the waters of despair! Sixteen lectures on Natural Religion is enough to drown everybody!'⁸⁸ Still, he managed to tread water for another three series, ending his appointment in 1892. In print, the four series of lectures filled almost 2000 pages. Müller's anxiety was perhaps also motivated by the overwhelming importance he attached to the Giffords. They were to be 'the outcome of the *Sacred Books of the East*'⁸⁹ and the 'final consummation'⁹⁰ of the work that he had begun in Leipzig half a century before.

Like other lecturers that followed him, Müller devoted ample space to an interpretation of Lord Gifford's will. For Müller, Gifford's provisions left little doubt that what he was envisioning for his lectures was nothing else than the promotion of the science of religion. He acknowledged, however, that for some people it was perhaps bizarre that the science of religion should be considered a 'natural science.' But there was nothing strange here. The science of religion studied religion as a 'spontaneous and necessary outcome of the mind of man, when brought under the genial influence of surrounding nature.'⁹¹ The science of religion was a 'natural science' in a double sense: on the one hand because it studied religion '*au naturel*,' as a product of human faculties, and on the other because it did so with the method of the natural sciences. The method amounted to three principles: collection, comparison, interpretation.⁹² Müller confessed that he was not so hung-up on the distinction between the 'natural' and 'historical' sciences as some philosophers had been. For him, the science of religion had a necessary historical element, just as the science of language had one. One could not critically examine religion without taking into account the human element, 'the accidents and infirmities of human nature' that accounted for change, development or decay

⁸⁸ Max Müller to Miss Byrd McCall, 30 October 1888, in *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 234.

⁸⁹ Max Müller to Dean Liddell, 24 February 1888, in *Life and Letters*, vol. II, 222.

⁹⁰ F. Max Müller, *Natural Religion: The Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of Glasgow in 1888* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 25.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 14.

in religious matters.⁹³ This would seem to make history little more than an inventory of errors, but Müller's plans were more ambitious in scope. Probably to the annoyance of his contemporary listeners, he implied that there was no essential difference between the theological treatises of the Christians and the musings of the Indian *rishi*, not to mention the unwritten doctrines of the 'savages' of Africa or the Americas. He declared:

The student of religion knows no savages, no barbarians. Some of the races who are called savage or barbarous possess the purest, simplest, and truest views of religion, while some nations who consider themselves in the very van of civilization, profess religious dogmas of the most degraded and degrading character.⁹⁴

The purpose of the history of religion was to uncover the truths that were hidden in all religions as well as to map out their evolution. What evolution meant in this context was hardly clear and Müller did little to clarify it, but he claimed that he was a firm believer in the notion that there was a 'continuous growth in religion as well as in language.'⁹⁵ Growth however, did not necessarily mean teleology, and as he put it, 'whether it was meant or intended, by whom it was intended, and for what it was intended, these are questions which need not disturb our equanimity.'⁹⁶

Müller's first series of lectures, which he finished delivering on the 19 December, dealt only with methodological questions: how to define religion, how to go about studying it, and what materials could be used in this endeavour.⁹⁷ Speaking of the definition of religion, Müller intimated that there was an original experience, a primary process that could be discerned at the heart of any religion. He defined this process as 'the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man.'⁹⁸

There was a *sui generis* psychology at the heart of this description. At a first level, he thought, one needed to establish that religion was an experience just like any other. Without this assumption, one could not hope to ever understand it. As any experience, this one begun as well with the senses: 'all that we have or know consists of *sensations, percepts, concepts,*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 349

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

and *names*.⁹⁹ Müller confessed he did not know how to approach the issue of how feelings and sensations were formed. The way in which the physical ray of light became a sensation was a mysterious process. But he was quite ready to accept the results of natural science, even though these did not entirely disperse the mystery. The real question for Müller, pertained, however, to the notion that without a name, without a concept, one did not really perceive anything: 'I hold myself as strongly as ever that not until we have a name and concept of sky, can we truly be said to see the sky; not till we have a name for blue, do we know that the sky is blue.'¹⁰⁰ The details of Müller's argument got even fuzzier from this point onwards. He claimed that perceptions were always finite, that is, that people took in only bits of reality at a time. This made it so that concepts were also finite. But in that finiteness, one also took in the infinite. How this happened was not discussed at all, but simply pinned on the authority of Descartes, who claimed that the notion of the infinite was not obtained by mere negation of the finite, but that 'I clearly *perceive* that there is more reality in infinite substance than in finite, and therefore that, in a certain sense, the idea of the infinite is prior to me than the finite.'¹⁰¹

Müller wrote that he did not go as far as Descartes, but in fact he went much farther. For whereas Descartes seemed to be arguing for the logical priority of the idea of the infinite, Müller went on to claim that 'even in our earliest and simplest perceptions we always perceive the finite and the infinite simultaneously, though it takes a long time before we clearly conceive and name the two as simply finite and infinite.'¹⁰² In other words, Müller not only contradicted what he had written only a few pages earlier, namely that one cannot perceive what one hasn't conceptualized or named, but also claimed that one could perceive an *idea* in the same way that one perceived flowers and skies, which was not what Descartes had maintained.¹⁰³ Part of the problem came also from not defining what terms like 'perception', 'sensation' and 'concept' actually meant. This was at least strange for someone

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁰¹ This is Müller's translation. The passage is taken from Descartes' third meditation. See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32-33.

¹⁰² Müller, *Natural Theology*, 128.

¹⁰³ The issue of Descartes' psychology goes beyond the scope of my argument. It does seem safe to assume however, that in the context of the aforementioned passage Descartes' interest is not in the psychological process of perception, but in the intellectual apprehension of an idea. Descartes makes as much clear in his answer to Hobbes. See Descartes, *op.cit.*, 113-14.

who insisted that the problem with the variety of definitions of religion was that scholars did not define their terms.¹⁰⁴

Müller's definition of religion raises the issue of his engagement with the contemporary discipline of psychology. In a certain sense, Müller's understanding of religion had always been psychological. In the second volume of the *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1865), he claimed that religion was always connected to a *sensus numinis*, an 'immediate perception' or intuition that one was dependent on 'something else' such as a 'Higher Self, a higher power.'¹⁰⁵ The mention of dependence was a clear nod to Schleiermacher, but it is difficult to see how long Müller followed his lead. By the early 1870s, and the *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873), Müller outlined the notion that religion was a mental faculty 'which, independent of, nay in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names, and under varying disguises.'¹⁰⁶ This was the 'faculty of faith,' which he claimed to clarify by noting that it corresponded to the German *Vernunft*, as opposed to *Verstand*, 'reason,' and *Sinn*, sense.¹⁰⁷ But though given in a matter of fact way that would supposedly quell any confusion, the German terminology was just as confusing as the English.

Firstly, the proximate source in modern philosophy for the *Vernunft/Verstand* distinction was Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Müller was intimately familiar with the latter, and also produced an English translation of it in 1881.¹⁰⁸ In the introduction to the translation, Müller wrote of the epochal importance of Kant in his own intellectual development. Retrospectively, he saw *The Rig-Veda* and *The Critique of Pure Reason* as the two poles or completing halves of his life. In a sense, these works summed up his entire intellectual project. While the former represented the beginnings of Aryan thought, the latter was the embodiment of its 'perfect manhood.'¹⁰⁹ Kant's demolition of metaphysics was in fact the definitive blow dealt to the 'mythology of philosophy.' In Müller's own language, it was an act of pruning away the dead or dying language of the past, so that 'living thought' could progress unhindered. His own project followed from there: if Kant showed the limits of man's

¹⁰⁴ Müller, *Natural Theology*, 70.

¹⁰⁵ F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, vol. II (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1877), 479.

¹⁰⁶ F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institute in February and May 1870* (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: In Commemoration of the Centenary of its First Publication*. Trans. F. Max Müller, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1881).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, lxi.

thought, Müller's *Science of Language* would show how man came to believe that one could know more than it was possible.¹¹⁰ In other words, what he was proposing was an intellectual genealogy of modern thought that started with Kant and worked its way back to the earliest records, of which the Rig-Veda was representative. But despite his championing of Kant, Müller confessed that he was not in full agreement with his thinking.¹¹¹ In fact, in the aforementioned distinction, he was radically opposed to it. Kant's *Vernunft* was not a faculty of faith, but rather the faculty of *a priori* thought. Kant distinguished between such an *a priori Vernunft* (reason), and a *Verstand* (understanding) whose task was the grasping and ordering of the world of appearances furnished by the sensibility.¹¹² There was no sense in Kant that the *Vernunft* could be used to 'apprehend the Infinite' as Müller contended in the aforementioned *Introduction to the Science of Religion*. Rather, the main thrust of the *Critique* was to show that such an attempt was a misguided and illegitimate use of the faculty of reason. A further point has to do with Müller's translation of *Verstand* as 'reason' in the same lectures. English translations have usually rendered the pair as reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*), and Müller himself followed this terminology in his own 1881 rendition.¹¹³ So why did he translate the two terms in such an unseemly way in 1873? The answer is that he was not following Kant, but rather the post-Kantians.

As Robert Eisler noted in his turn of the century philosophical dictionary, in the immediate aftermath of Kant, *Vernunft* was taken to mean primarily 'an organ of knowledge that dealt with the infinite, the absolute, the super-sensible (*Übersinnliche*).'¹¹⁴ A case in point was the conception of Friedrich Jacobi (1743-1819), whose work was probably known to Müller from his years of study in Leipzig, and whom he also quoted in the preface to his translation of Kant.¹¹⁵ Jacobi was among the first philosophers to attempt to confront the strictures imposed by Kant on matters of religious belief and metaphysical knowledge. Kant was clear that it was neither legitimate nor productive to try to speculate about ultimate entities like God or the immortality of the soul. One could not have a science of such *noumena*, because one only had access to the world of the *phenomena* that were given through the sensibility and the

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.1, xxviii.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allan Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40.

¹¹³ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. F. Haywood (London: William Pickering, 1838), 655; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855); Müller, *Immanuel Kant's Critique*, vol. 2, xxvi *et passim*.

¹¹⁴ See Rudolf Eisler, *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1910), s.v. 'Vernunft,' 1658. An earlier edition (1904) is available online at <http://www.textlog.de/5493.html>.

¹¹⁵ Müller, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, vol.1, xlv.

categories of the understanding. Religion, for Kant, could only unfold in the realm of morality: it was a practical and not a theoretical pursuit. Jacobi attempted to counter this view by claiming that reason (*Vernunft*) did not construct knowledge, but revealed it in the same way as the senses revealed the outside world.¹¹⁶ It was in this sense that he could define *Vernunft* as a *Glaubenskraft* (faculty of faith), a rational intuition (*Rationale Anschauung*) or a feeling (*Gefühl*) after the super-sensible.¹¹⁷ Jacobi made clear that he thought that the presence of such 'objective feelings' was what distinguished man's reason (*Vernunft*), properly so-called, from mere understanding, which animals possessed as well. It was this *reason* that revealed to man 'freedom, virtue, wisdom, art and the knowledge of God.'¹¹⁸

If Müller subscribed to this view, translating *Verstand* as reason was a way of signalling that he was by no means following Kant. Müller's 'faculty of faith' was not just simple reason, but also intuition and feeling. At the same time, he did not seem to distinguish between Jacobi and Schleiermacher too closely. He thus wrote in the *Introduction to the Science of Religion*: 'There was in the heart of man, from the very first, a feeling of incompleteness, of weakness, of dependence, whatever we like to call it in our abstract language.'¹¹⁹ Even so, his own abstract language did change at some point in the 1870s. As Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay has perceptively shown, by the late 1870s, Müller had, at least in public, given up the notion of a separate faculty of faith.¹²⁰ But he was only half-heartedly apologetic about his advocacy of such a faculty: in an 1882 reprint of the *Introduction* he kept the same language, and only inserted a footnote that explained that his use of the word 'faculty' only meant that the mind had a possibility of doing something, and he did not feel that such terminology committed him to any specific view as to the ultimate nature of the mind.¹²¹ This change in Müller's thinking was quite possibly the result of criticisms, which he received from authors who were more informed on contemporary psychology.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Rationalism, A Dialogue: Preface and also Introduction to the Author's Collected Philosophical Works (1815),' in *The Main Philosophical Works and the novel AllWill*, trans. George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1994), 562.

¹¹⁷ See Eisler, *Wörterbuch*, 1904 edition. Available online at <http://www.textlog.de/5493.html>. See also Friedrich Jacobi, *op.cit.*, 563-64.

¹¹⁸ Jacobi, *op.cit.*, 564.

¹¹⁹ Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 198.

¹²⁰ Marjorie Wheeler-Barclay, *The Science of Religion in Britain*, 56-57. F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 22-25.

¹²¹ Müller, *Introduction*, 16.

¹²² Van den Bosch mentions Andrew Lang and Otto Pflieger as being among these critics. See van den Bosch, *op.cit.*, 307-308.

By the time of the *Gifford* lectures of 1888, Müller had found a way to integrate his earlier conception into the general framework of a progressive disenchantment from the fetters of mythology. Upon discussing the etymology of 'remorse,' he noted:

In watching the growth of these names, which were all intended for one and the same state of mind, we can see how easily these acts of ours lead to the admission of a separate mental organ or faculty, or, as the Brahmans called it, a deity.¹²³

There was, he claimed, no such organ, and he seemed to doubt if one could even speak of 'conscience' properly so-called. One could speak of being conscious of right or wrong, but did that justify a belief in a faculty of 'conscience'? It was mere poetry and mythological thinking to refer to such a faculty or any similar ones. And, he thought, one had to be on guard against such mythological propensities:

[...]as we have ceased to believe in Jupiter, we shall also have to surrender our belief in Reason, as an independent agency, or faculty, or power, and translate the old poetry of mythology into the sober prose of psychology.¹²⁴

But Müller seemed little equipped to carry on this project through in all its implications. Despite the psychological call to arms, he included scant references to contemporary psychological works, and seemed to eschew the new psychology altogether. Even if he was aware of Wundt for example, his account of him appeared to be derived solely from a text on the philosophy of religion by the recently deceased Gustav Teichmüller (1832-1888).¹²⁵ In fact, the only psychologist whom Müller cited approvingly in the *Gifford* lectures was a certain Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, whose work, Müller implied, was in general agreement with his own theory.¹²⁶

Thompson (1850-1897) was a New York lawyer, armchair psychologist, and author of *A System of Psychology* (1884) and of *The Religious Sentiments of the Human Mind* (1888).¹²⁷ As he noted in the dedication of his massive *System of Psychology*, Thompson drew most of his intellectual sap from Spencer, Bain and Mill. In the words of one colleague who

¹²³ Müller, *Natural Religion*, 180.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹²⁵ Müller, *Natural Theology*, 64- 74.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁷ Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, *A System of Psychology*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1884); Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, *The Religious Sentiments of the Human Mind* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888); [no author] *Daniel Greenleaf Thompson: February 9, 1850- July 10, 1897* (New York: Eagle Press, 1898).

contributed to a volume of eulogies published after his death, Thompson was 'somewhat provincial in his indifference to German psychology, and too proudly self-sufficient in his neglect of contemporary studies.'¹²⁸ But he was not by any means obscure: the *System of Psychology* was not unkindly reviewed in both *Mind* and the *Revue Philosophique*, and some contemporary psychologists were definitely aware of his extensive production.¹²⁹ As William James later noted in a letter to his wife, Thompson's *System* was among those few psychology textbooks that managed to outdo his *Principles* by sheer bulk, if nothing else.¹³⁰ Thompson's *System* had only a few scattered references to religion, but did include an attack on the notion of a special mind-faculty that would have an immediate, intuitive access to something like the Good, the Infinite, or the Absolute. As Thompson explained, notions like 'the Infinite' were abstract generalizations, which could in no way be described as immediate. They were intellectual elaborations of experience. It was wishful thinking on the part of some philosophers to imagine that such a super-sensible 'mind's eye' really existed.¹³¹ If Müller had read the *System*, it may have provided further evidence that he had to drop his *Vernunft* or risk sinking with it. At the very least, he had never claimed that his Brahmans ever apprehended the Infinite as an abstract concept, but as a germ which was elaborated in the course of many millennia.

As for Thompson, his *Religious Sentiments* (1888) showed that his understanding of 'religion' was quite different than what Müller implied in his gloss. Thompson's position was avowedly individualistic and psychological, but also intellectualistic. He defined 'religious sentiments' as a combination of feelings, cognitions, and volitions which 'received their character from an intellectual apprehension or assumption of a relation of one sort or another between the mind and a postulated supernatural.'¹³² This understanding of the 'sentiments' was quite different from Schleiermacher's emphasis on the emotional essence of religion, but it was also different from Müller's own focus on the psychology of perception. Thompson's main point was not that one perceived the infinite in the finite, but rather that the existence of nature

¹²⁸ Daniel Greenleaf Thompson: February 9, 1850- July 10, 1897, 25.

¹²⁹ Thomas Whittaker, review of *A System of Psychology* by Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, *Mind* 10, 37 (1885): 115-124; F. Picavet, review of *A System of Psychology* by Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 21 (1886): 80-86. James Leuba referred to Thompson in a 1901 article. See James H. Leuba, 'Introduction to a psychological study of religion,' *The Monist* 11, 2 (1901): 203.

¹³⁰ William James to Alice Howe Gibbens James, 24 May 1890, in Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James, volume 7: 1890- 1894* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 38.

¹³¹ Thompson, *A System*, vol.1, 500. See also Thompson, *A System*, vol.2, 183, where he identifies the notion of a special faculty with the work of Jacobi, Schleiermacher and Coleridge.

¹³² Daniel Greenleaf Thompson, *Religious Sentiments*, 5.

forced one to posit a supernatural world. The way he saw it, this was because whenever one posited a 'nature,' that nature had to be in relation to something else (i.e. a supernatural). It could not be in relation to nothing.¹³³ The origin of religion was thus not a direct sensual experience, but an act of thinking. Thompson had little interest in elucidating how this positing of the supernatural happened historically. For him the science of religion 'is a science not of *religions* as they exist or have existed, but of *religion* as a general fact of conscious experience.' Nor did he think that anything meaningful could be affirmed about the supernatural save its existence.¹³⁴

1.2.1.1 The Three Branches of Natural Religion

Starting with this foundation of the 'perception of the infinite in the finite', Müller proceeded to build up the system of natural religion. In the physical universe, he thought, one dealt with three types of objects: tangible, semi-tangible, and intangible. A rock or a bone were tangible, but the earth, a tree, a river, a mountain were semi-tangible. One could not really take the former fully in: they remained outside one's immediate reach, stretching high towards the sky, or deep underground, or far towards the sea. The final category was populated by objects that could be seen, but never touched: sky, stars, clouds. These three divisions corresponded to different kinds of deities: the tangible ones were the object of reverence for fetishists, while semi-tangibles ones became demi-gods, and the intangibles the '*great gods* of the ancient world'.¹³⁵ This line was called by Müller 'Physical Religion' and he took it up in his second course of Gifford lectures.

A second line was covered by what he called 'anthropological religion.' Just as the objects of the world disclosed a nugget of infinity, so too, when looking upon the human, man perceived a kind of inward infinite: a spirit, a soul that was not subject to decay and destruction. Müller claimed that he called this branch 'anthropological,' rather than 'anthropic' because he did not like to coin new words if he could avoid it. At any rate, he explained that the name did not imply that this branch had any direct link with the actual discipline of anthropology, as advocated by E.B. Tylor and others.¹³⁶

The third line of natural religion was what he termed 'psychological religion.' In 1892, he also appended the adjective 'theosophical' to this title. He claimed to have done so in order to

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹³⁶ F. Max Müller, *Anthropological Religion: The Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of Glasgow in 1891* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 115-16.

rescue the term from the clutches of contemporary occultists and to reclaim for it the true sense of the 'highest conception of God.'¹³⁷ This line also dealt with the inner infinite, but taken in a more metaphysical sense: as the Self or 'Atma' of the Upanishads, the daemon of Socrates or as the Holy Spirit of primitive Christianity.¹³⁸ In 1888, Müller still seemed to have only a faint idea of what he would be talking about in the final set of lectures. It was only in 1892 that he clearly explained that the third branch was meant to cover the types of relations that people had imagined between the soul (however conceptualized) and divinity. In other words, this line dealt with the connection between the two previously articulated 'infinities:' the exterior one of physical religion, and the inner one of anthropological religion.¹³⁹ But why did he call this line 'psychological'?

In his own words, he claimed that 'I called [it] *Psychological*, because it is filled with intellectual endeavours after that which lies beyond man, as a self-conscious subject, conscious of self, whatever that self may be.'¹⁴⁰ This passage would seem to contradict the conception of psychology as a secular science of the mind (*psychology no. 1*), which Müller set forth as a goal in the earlier part of *Natural Religion*. There was also a second meaning of psychology for Müller (*psychology no. 2*), as when he used the term to identify a school of mythological interpretation that he designated as 'a branch of *Völkerpsychologie*.'¹⁴¹ What he meant by this was simply ethnology, i.e. the study of contemporary customs, laws, languages, primarily in India and the colonies, as well as in America, Africa, or Oceania. It was not immediately apparent what, in Müller's view, made this research psychological, particularly since he said next to nothing about the theorists of *Völkerpsychologie* proper. The only work that he cited in this context was Theodor Waitz's *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*, which for him pointed the way by showing how much could be learned from what Waitz called 'not 'Savages,' but 'the People of Nature.'¹⁴² The key here was Müller's polemic with Spencer,

¹³⁷ F. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion: The Gifford Lectures delivered before the University of Glasgow in 1892* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), xvi.

¹³⁸ Müller, *Natural Religion*, 576-77.

¹³⁹ F. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion*, 89.

¹⁴⁰ Müller, *Natural Religion*, 576.

¹⁴¹ Müller, *Natural Religion*, 503.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 510. Theodor Waitz (1821-64) was a follower of Herbart and professor of philosophy in Marburg. His six volume *Anthropologie der Naturvölker* was published between 1859 and 1872, the last two volumes posthumously. An edited version of volume 1 was rendered into English in 1863. See Theodor Waitz, *Introduction to Anthropology*, ed. and trans. J. Frederick Colingwood (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1863). Waitz was a notable proponent of the thesis of the 'unity of mankind' (*die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes*): 'Everywhere we find essentially the same type of intellectual activity: the same motives for action, the same mental emotions, the same passions, the same mode of irritation, association, etc., are observed in the savage as in the civilized European, without any distinction of race; [...]we are thus justified in assuming in the human species, only differences in culture.' Waitz, *Introduction*, 274. See also Theodor Waitz,

Tylor, and other anthropologists who subscribed to the notion of a primitive or savage mind. As Müller repeatedly stated throughout his lectures, there were no savages, and no special psychology that applied to their mind. There were only people who spoke different languages, languages which, as he implied, the likes of Spencer knew nothing about.¹⁴³ *Psychology no. 2* was thus a catch-all term for a variety of ethnological works that he expected to provide a cross-cultural vindication to his notion of religion, and to his understanding of human nature.

In its third meaning (*psychology no. 3*), which Müller espoused in the third series of lectures, he appeared to take psychology back to an earlier historical connotation, closer, though by no means identical to how psychology (or *scientia de anima*) was understood in the 16th and 17th centuries. As Fernando Vidal has argued, in the early modern period, psychology was used to designate one or more of the following discourses: a naturalistic discussion on psycho-physiological functions; the analysis of the rational soul as united with the body; the theory of the soul as an immortal entity, independent of the body.¹⁴⁴ It was this latter sense, particularly its eschatological connotations that seemed to be at the heart of Müller's *psychology no. 3*. However, in his schema, this meaning covered both anthropological religion as well as psychological religion. This would be confusing, if not for the fact that psychological religion was only a special case of anthropological religion.¹⁴⁵ While the latter, according to Müller, treated of the soul in general, the former treated of the soul only in relation to divinity. One can understand thus, at least partially, why in 1892 he felt the need to append the adjective *theosophical* so as to explain that the psychological branch encompassed also a conception of the divine, and not just a knowledge of the soul.

Müller's use of terms like *anthropology*, *psychology* (i.e. *psychology no. 3*), and *theosophy* in such an unorthodox fashion could be puzzling to his contemporaries as well. As one reviewer noted, the title of the third course of Giffords (*Theosophy, or Psychological Religion*) was a 'curious, almost self-contradictory, title.'¹⁴⁶ But what was at stake in such a title was more than the quirkiness of an aging linguist. Müller was a man who believed firmly in the power

Anthropologie der Naturvölker: Erster Theil: Ueber die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes und der Naturstand des Menschen (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1859), 316-17. See also Werner Peterman, "'Real sind einzig und allein die Individuen:' Theodor Waitz und die 'Anthropologie der Naturvölker,'" *Paideuma* 22 (2009), 241-61.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 514.

¹⁴⁴ Fernando Vidal, *The Sciences of the Soul*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 116.

¹⁴⁶ R.M. Wenley, review of *Theosophy, or Psychological Religion*, by F. Max Muller, *International Journal of Ethics*, 4 (1894), 540.

that words had upon man's thinking. It was, after all, mere words that had given rise to man's mythologies, gods, and religions. If there was one thought that was central to his science of religion, it was that man's thinking was governed by his vocabulary and his grammar. It was thus obvious to him that the ancient Vedic poet could not look upon rain, or thunder, without imagining an agent that underscored them: *a Rainer* or a *Thunderer*.¹⁴⁷ In a similar way, the ancients could not look upon the final exhalation of their dead without finally positing that something ineffable had departed with it. Breath gradually acquired the quality of soul, which in turn generated a host of mythological constructions.¹⁴⁸ But Müller did not want merely to show the awesome power of past words. He also wanted to avail himself of their power in the present. By absorbing terms like *anthropology*, *theosophy*, and *psychology* into his own project, he expected to profit from whatever 'mythological aura' they might have around them. Simultaneously, by using these terms in an unorthodox way, he could destabilize their semantic coherence, or at least point out that no such coherence existed. In other words, it was a strategy of divide and conquer directed at what he perceived as potential rivals of his science of religion. As noted earlier, he had hardly made it a secret that he wanted to rescue 'theosophy' from the theosophists. It is perhaps not without significance that Müller had met Col. Olcott, the co-founder of *The Theosophical Society*, in 1888, and that Helena Blavatsky's final opus (published that same year) took a rather dim view of Prof. Müller's theories and his understanding of religious history.¹⁴⁹

1.2.1.2 Müller vs. Tylor

Concerning *anthropology*, it is readily apparent that Müller's claim that his second branch of natural religion had nothing to do with E.B. Tylor's science was simply dissimulation. Anthropological religion was in fact quite similar to Tylor's conception of religion, though Müller worked hard to prune Tylor's 'animism' before grafting it onto his own theoretical seedling.

Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) came from a family of Quakers. In the mid 1850s, after developing symptoms of tuberculosis, he set off on a trip to the United States and Mexico, an experience which he used as the basis for his first book *Anahuac, or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* (1861). In 1865 he published *Researches into the Early*

¹⁴⁷ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 61.

¹⁴⁸ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 205.

¹⁴⁹ See *Life and Letters of Max Müller*, vol. II, 234. See H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, vol.1 (London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888), 304, 360 and also vol. 2, 450.

History of Mankind and six years later *Primitive Culture*, which cemented his reputation as an anthropologist and theorist of religion. In part, it seems, through the ministrations of Müller, he was appointed Reader in Anthropology at Oxford in 1884, and later Keeper of the Pitt Rivers Museum.¹⁵⁰ In 1889, Tylor was invited to give the Gifford lectures in Aberdeen. He gave two series of lectures, ending his tenure in 1891, just as Müller was beginning his *Anthropological Religion* in Glasgow. Tylor never published his lectures, though he worked on turning them into a book (under the title *The Natural History of Religion*) for over a decade, eventually giving up at some point after 1900.¹⁵¹ The notes and fragments still extant in his archive do not permit a full-fledged reconstruction, but they do allow for the claim that, in their main lines, the lectures were only an extension of the argument put forward some 20 years previously in *Primitive Culture*, his most famous book.

In *Primitive Culture* (1871), Tylor had defined religion as a 'belief in Spiritual Beings' that could be understood genetically as early man's attempt to explain two types of experiences: the difference between a living body and a corpse, and the difference between dreams, trances, visions, and reality.¹⁵² Tylor's conception (which he christened 'animism') rested on the assumption that the savage mind was rational, but prone to category mistakes. A savage who saw human figures in dreams was bound to take such figures as evidence for a disembodied soul, free to roam through the ether and to enter at will into the bodies of men, animals, or things.¹⁵³ A separate soul offered a powerful means of explaining a variety of natural phenomena. Hallucinatory experiences (brought about by exhaustion, illness or drugs) further bolstered it, as did early man's general inability to tell the difference between dream and reality.¹⁵⁴ It was the muddled, fuzzy nature of the primitives' reasoning that explained why they could believe in ghosts, why they performed seemingly absurd rituals, why they talked to their horses as if the latter could understand them, and why they thought that souls could take their abode in weapons, in stones and other material objects.¹⁵⁵ As Tylor explained, the primitives were unable to distinguish with any precision between the realm of

¹⁵⁰ Wheller-Barclay, *op.cit.*, 88.

¹⁵¹ See E.B. Tylor Papers, Box 15, Pitt Rivers Museum Manuscript Collection. Box 15 contains galley proofs of what seem to be fragments of the book that Tylor was writing on the basis of the Gifford lectures. Some of the pages bear stamped dates, the latest of which is 5 July 1904. For a brief list of the topics covered in the lectures see H. Balfour et al. (eds.), *Anthropological Essays presented to Edward Burnett Tylor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 396-99.

¹⁵² Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 383-387.

¹⁵³ Tylor, *op.cit.*, 387.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

subjective phenomena and that of objective ones, or between past and future, dream and reality. A faculty of association 'unchecked by experience' ensured that wild speculations about the nature of reality ensued from this low state of affairs.¹⁵⁶

This, however, did not change the fact that religious (or rather animistic) beliefs were nevertheless rational attempts to explain the world, but with inadequate tools that had been largely superseded, firstly by more developed religions and philosophies, and finally by the arrival of modern science. As George Stocking Jr. has perceptively formulated Tylor's account: 'primitive man, in an attempt to create science, had accidentally created religion instead, and mankind had spent the rest of evolutionary time trying to rectify the error.'¹⁵⁷ Even though animism was a primitive kind of philosophy, its shadow extended far and wide, covering all known religions, myths, magical conceptions and superstitions, down to the present day. The concept of the 'soul,' for example, still held water for modern Christians or Spiritualists, much as it did for any distant savage.¹⁵⁸

Tylor's invocation of the term 'psychology' was closely connected with his concern over the persistence of the 'soul.' Throughout *Primitive Culture*, he used expressions such as 'savage psychology,' 'lower psychology' or 'primitive psychology' to refer not to his understanding of mental state of savages, but to the savages' own understanding of the nature and destiny of the soul. In part at least, 'lower psychology' was thus synonymous with animism. While the primitives were unconcerned with understanding the operations of their own mind, at a later stage in development the Greeks worked out a 'speculative psychology' which underlay all modern epistemology. For Tylor, the representative example of this 'speculative psychology' was Democritus' theory that perception was caused by 'objects throwing off images of themselves,' a notion that he found to be indebted to the animistic view that objects had some kind of soul.¹⁵⁹ It was only of late that, as he put it, 'there has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a "psychology" which has no longer anything to do with "soul."¹⁶⁰

One can read such significance in two ways: on the one hand, the arrival of this 'new' psychology provided Tylor (and the anthropological discipline more broadly) with the

¹⁵⁶ See Edward Burnet Tylor, [Offprint] 'On Traces of the Early Mental Condition of Man,' *Proceedings of the Royal Institution*, (March 15, 1867), 10.

¹⁵⁷ George W. Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 197.

¹⁵⁸ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, vol.1, 453.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 449.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 453.

categories with which to investigate the formation and development of culture. As can be seen from the summary of animism given above, these categories pertained to a rationalistic and individualistic psychology, which Tylor claimed he had extracted from 'pure experience,' and not from any theological or metaphysical conception.¹⁶¹ For him, anthropology and the 'new' psychology converged and re-enforced each other's conclusions, much as it did for other contemporary anthropologists whose work he relied on. The 'soulless' psychology that Tylor advocated was significant in that it portended the end of animistic 'survivals.'

As Tylor saw it, the task of an anthropologically minded 'science of religion' was that of 'bringing each stage [of the evolutionary progress of religion] to bear on the interpretation of others.' In the manuscript of the *Natural History of Religion*, he even produced a chart that could serve as an aid to such comparative endeavours (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: E.B. Tylor's Chart of Animism (from *Natural History of Religion*, unpublished manuscript, Pitt Rivers Museum, Box 15)

This chart was Tylor's attempt at providing a tentative morphology for the science of religion. It was a kind of checklist of concepts to follow when tracing the evolution of beliefs and customs. As he explained, the chart illustrated the point that if all religions were built of the same materials, then there was essentially no major theoretical distinction to be made between savage religions and those recorded in sacred books.¹⁶² At the same time, the inclusion of a section on the influence of animism upon morals, politics and philosophy, was meant to show how animism had spilled outside of theology proper and permeated other parts of society.¹⁶³ This was an important point, though one that Tylor made with his usual caution when it came to specifying what his theory meant for contemporary religious belief.¹⁶⁴ The implication, however, was that the science of religion fell within the reformist purview that he envisaged for anthropology more broadly construed: to mark out and eliminate whatever primitivisms, whatever 'survivals' still remained in contemporary culture.¹⁶⁵ Since all religion was more or less animism, it was probably not going to survive the sweep of ethnographic criticism.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 453.

¹⁶² Tylor, *Natural History*, 25-26, E.B. Tylor Papers, Box 15.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁴ Stocking Jr., *op.cit.*, 195.

¹⁶⁵ Wheeler-Barclay, *op.cit.*, 88.

Müller disagreed with a number of points in Tylor's theory, but not with the centrality of the notion of 'soul,' which he readily adopted as the distinguishing mark of *Anthropological religion*. He seemed to shirk from a direct frontal attack on Tylor, even when Tylor was evidently the unnamed target. Often, it was Herbert Spencer who bore the brunt of his ironies.¹⁶⁶ As I have already noted, Müller was thoroughly opposed to the notion of 'savage psychology,' which Tylor and Spencer championed.¹⁶⁷ Müller also ridiculed the notion that at any time in human history man would have been so idiotic as to be unable to distinguish between animate and inanimate objects. Animism, he averred (without naming names), was an 'irrational' doctrine that failed to see that even some animals could distinguish between the animate and the inanimate.¹⁶⁸ He also seemed to doubt that 'primitives' and even contemporary Spiritualists actually believed in ghosts, and relegated such beliefs to a desire to impress by outlandish statements, or on a figurative use of language, which the likes of Spencer failed to understand.¹⁶⁹

Müller had little patience for previous attempts to resolve religion to one single form of experience, be it 'hallucination,' fetishism (which he accepted only as a later degeneration and not as an original religious conception), totemism or ancestor-worship: 'Why should religion, one of the most comprehensive terms in our language, be supposed to have had one beginning only?'¹⁷⁰ Müller's theory appeared to allow for multiple beginnings: at the very least, one could count the three branches of natural religion as stand-ins for so many different beginnings. Even within the confines of *Anthropological religion* alone there were a variety of different beginnings, each corresponding to the notions inherent in the ancient or contemporary words for the soul: blood, heart, breath, or even 'dance' as was the case with the Tamil language.¹⁷¹

Such an admission was different from Tylor's monocausal reconstruction, but in practice, Müller's genealogy of the 'soul' had a lot more in common with the father of anthropology than it did with his own understanding of religion as a kind of perceptual 'illumination.' In

¹⁶⁶ Spencer and Tylor's theories on the origin of religion were close enough to be frequently bundled together, both by Müller and by other theorists. For Spencer's theory of religion, see Herbert Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions: Being part VI. of The Principles of Sociology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1885). For his part, Spencer criticised Müller for believing that religion was innate, a fact which Spencer thought had been disproved by anthropologists and psychologists. See Spencer, *op.cit.*, 671.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 399, *et passim*.

¹⁶⁸ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 73.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 225-26.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 190-203.

fact, his whole method, as well as his definition of religion as 'the perception of the infinite in the finite' seem to break down as soon as one tries to untangle his conceptualization of *Anthropological religion*. If Müller had been consistent in his method, he would have had to focus on certain primordial perceptions associated with 'man' and embodied in the words that described them.

This had been his practice in *Physical religion*, where he had shown, for example, how the perception of material fire could lead, through the compelling suggestions of the Sanskrit language itself, to the notion of the god Agni.¹⁷² The task was quietly passed over in *Anthropological religion* where there was no attempt to show how the simple perception of another man, or of breathing, of blood, etc. could contain the infinitude necessary for the religious notion of soul. Nor was it clear what 'the infinite' meant in such a context, though, as he at times hinted, the infinite part of the human soul was most likely worked out by reference to the infinitude of the gods of *Physical religion*.¹⁷³ *Anthropological religion* was thus not an independent beginning—it was closely connected with the branch that preceded it. It was also not reducible to a perception, but rather to a reasoning about death and about the principle of life.¹⁷⁴ In part at least, this had been Tylor's contention as well.

1.2.1.3 Psychological religion

By the time he wrote his forth course of lectures, Müller claimed that *Physical* and *Anthropological religion* were so intimately connected that he could not tell which of them came before. What was clear was that *Psychological religion* required both, and that the 'God' of the former and the 'soul' of the latter had to be of a similar nature if they were to ever come into contact: God was either soul-like, or the soul was God-like.¹⁷⁵ *Theosophy or Psychological religion* contained no elucidation of the possible relation between the three meanings of 'psychology' that I have outlined above. *Psychology no. 1* was apparently absent from the lectures, as was the disenchantment project that Müller had outlined in the first course of lectures. *Psychology no. 2* made a single appearance, occasioning the comment that its materials were too untrustworthy and its conclusions hasty—so much so that it was premature to 'speak of universal psychological instincts, of innate ideas and all the rest.'¹⁷⁶ It was *psychology no. 3* that held the day as the true consummation of what religion really

¹⁷² Müller, *Physical Religion*, 127.

¹⁷³ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 285: 'As far as my own studies go, I have not succeeded in discovering one single race believing in ancestral souls only, and not in gods.'

¹⁷⁴ Müller, *Anthropological Religion*, 195-96.

¹⁷⁵ Müller, *Psychological Religion*, 91.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

meant: the reunion of the soul with God or 'the perception of the eternal oneness of human and divine nature.'¹⁷⁷ 'Perception' was quite evidently abused in this context, as Müller no longer spoke here of any actual perceptions in the common psychological sense. Rather, the subject of the lectures was a chronological treatment of metaphysical speculations on the ultimate nature of the individual soul as being either identical with divinity, or capable of being absorbed into the divine. The investigation began with the Upanishads, discussed the Avesta, Sufism, Plato, the Neo-Platonists, and ended with Dionysius the Areopagite and German medieval mystics. Whatever Müller may have thought about the source of the knowledge expounded in these texts, he did not seem prepared to accept that it was mere 'perception.' This was particularly evident in his discussion of Vedanta, where the word 'perception' cropped up regularly in the compound 'sense perception' (*pratyaksha*), which the Vedantists carefully distinguished from the 'revealed' source of the Atman-Brahman identity.¹⁷⁸

Müller explained that the essence of *Psychological Religion* was contained in the Upanishadic formula 'tat tvam asi' or 'Thou art that.' As he elucidated, this was precisely the same as saying that the ultimate result of *Physical Religion* (i.e. the Infinite in nature) was identical with the result of *Anthropological Religion* (i.e. the Infinite in man). The soul and God, or Atman and Brahman were ultimately one, and he could not think of a better or more powerful statement of this thought than the one found in the Upanishads.¹⁷⁹ Müller was in fact so taken with the Upanishads and with non-dualistic Vedantic thought that he did not seem to realize that he had set out to write a history of the development of thought. But where was the development if one could find the same idea and even, as he maintained, the same metaphorical formulations in the Upanishads as in the Neo-Platonists or in medieval Christian mystics?¹⁸⁰ If Müller had entertained any plans to show the ultimate superiority of Christianity, such plans were fully contradicted by the repeated statement that Vedantic thought was singular in its soaring beyond the confines of any 'effete anthropomorphism.'¹⁸¹ The 'Father and son' metaphor that was found in Christianity might have been the best one

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 539. For the connection between this meaning of religion and its Latin etymology, see also *Psychological Religion*, 535.

¹⁷⁸ *Anthropological Religion*, 102, 108, 271, 293

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 483, 491, 539.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 234, 363. There was a personal background to this praise, as Müller had become more and more drawn to the *Vedanta* in his later years. See Max Müller to Professor Weber, 9 September 1893, *Life and Letters of Max Müller*, vol. II, 306.

possible, but it was still a metaphor and hence imperfect: hardly a rival for the abstract, pure way in which the Vedanta acknowledged the identity of the divine and the human.¹⁸²

Theosophy or Psychological religion would have thus presented a curious conclusion to anyone who had bothered to listen to Müller's *Gifford* lectures from the very beginning. At first glance, the conclusion did not seem to tally with his disenchantment project and its two-pronged agenda of a) the reconstruction of the birth of the gods, of the soul, revelation and other much cherished concepts whose ultimate sources were natural processes that were misconstrued as a result of the inherent mythological character of ancient languages; b) the use of this genealogical lesson as the basis for the critical enterprise of purging contemporary language of any existing mythological remains. The language of mental faculties, of Reason, Mind, or conscience, was a prime target for this purging: such words would have to be translated into the 'sober' prose of psychology.

But Müller's last course of lectures seemed to leave both prongs lying in the lurch: there was no attempt to divine the historical pitfalls of the 'soul-God' identity and little suggestion as to how to divest it of its inherently mythological character. There was perhaps good reason for his refusal to resolve the 'soul-God' couplet into a less mythological vocabulary. He could use such ambiguity to avoid any potential charges of atheism: a Christian audience would be left guessing as to whether Müller wasn't some kind of mystic after all, heretical no doubt, but still in some way part of the fold. At the same time, a secularized, agnostic audience would have had no trouble in seeing the proposed identity of the divine and the human as nothing more than a metaphoric way of affirming that there was nothing beyond the infinitude of human perceptions, nothing outside the realm of phenomena as they were perceived by the mind via the filter of language.

In other words, affirming such an identity was the same as claiming with Kant that there was nothing outside the world of phenomena, nothing that could be probed by human understanding at any rate. This may seem like mere conjecture, but it is the only one that justifies Müller's assertion that *psychological religion* 'forms the final consummation of all religion and all philosophy.'¹⁸³ It is unlikely that the same Müller that had reduced both the 'soul' and 'god' to mere perception would have suddenly turned mystical, which raises the question: what could he have meant by such 'final consummation'? As I have already noted,

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 365.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, viii.

in the order of philosophy there was only one thinker that Müller would have considered consummate, and whom he took as a model for his own project: Immanuel Kant. Kant's main contribution to philosophy had been, according to Müller, to show the limits of man's thought. It was legitimate to ask if such limits could have been articulated before, even if only in the embryonic way in which the notion of 'infinite' was found to lurk, unbeknownst, in man's early perceptions of nature or of himself. Since both 'soul' and 'God' were the result of a 'perception of the infinite in the finite,' the question can be asked: what would their identity actually amount to for Müller? Clearly not an identity of two infinities, which would be absurd, since for Müller infinitude was a quality of perception, not of the objects perceived. As such, the co-extension of the two concepts can only be taken as meaning that perception is involved in both, or otherwise put: both 'soul' and 'God' are the result of the vagaries and limits of human perception. '*Tat tvam asi*' (Thou art that) could be easily interpreted as meaning the same thing: your world, your gods, your self, are all the product of your (limited) perception. No wonder then that at the very end of the lectures Müller confided that 'if the true meaning of religion is the highest purpose of religion, you will see how, after a toilsome journey, the historian of religion arrives in the end at the same summit which the philosopher of religion has chosen from the first as his own.'¹⁸⁴ *Psychological religion* did seem like the right title after all. At the end of the journey, stripped of its mythological clothes, *psychology no. 3* was identical with *psychology no. 1*. The meaning and end of religion was only: the limits of the mind, of perception, of the human psyche.

Müller's intellectual project collapsed as soon as he died in 1900. One reviewer had the following to say about his contribution to the science of religion in 1901: 'a failed definition, an insufficient explanation of the way in which the feeling of the divine arises, a development of religion that leads to the destruction of religion itself: this is, to sum up, the system of Max Müller.'¹⁸⁵ Still, as the same reviewer noted, one could not dispense with Müller's work if one wanted to be initiated in the history of comparative religion.¹⁸⁶ A devastating appraisal was also expressed by Jordan in his 1905 textbook. According to Jordan, Müller had been an industrious and brilliant pioneer, but little more. He deemed his work to be 'incomplete and strangely defective' and claimed that Müller had produced 'no formal work on Comparative

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 542.

¹⁸⁵ F. Prat, 'La Science de la religion et la science du langage d'après Max Müller,' *Revue des questions scientifiques* 49 (1901): 540.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 510.

Religion... [and] did little that advanced directly the aims of that Science.'¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Jordan went on to voice an opinion that would be echoed as well in numerous other evaluations of his work: that its value lay primarily in Müller's literary style—in his ability to popularise abstruse philosophical ideas, exotic myths and to spread the word about the new science of religion.¹⁸⁸ On this level, Müller's work had a wide reaching impact on the larger culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—not least of all it also spurred some of the young religious psychologists who read his work to come up with their own projects for a science of religion.¹⁸⁹

1.2.2 Andrew Lang

Andrew Lang (1844-1912) was born in the Scottish town of Selkirk. He studied Classics, Philosophy and Mathematics in St. Andrews, Glasgow, and from 1865 at Oxford. In 1868 he was offered a fellowship at Merton College, which he kept until 1875, when he decided to move to London to become a journalist and independent author. He wrote prodigiously for the rest of his life, publishing poems, novels, literary criticism, as well as scholarly works on religion, mythology, folklore, anthropology and psychical research. He was particularly known for his wit, and for the facility with which he could switch among a dizzying variety of topics. Despite his almost dilettantish breadth, and despite the fact that he did not hold an academic post, he was considered a serious scholar by fellow anthropologists and scholars of religion, as was also evident in his appointment to give the Gifford lectures at St. Andrews in 1889.¹⁹⁰

Lang gave the inaugural lecture on the 17 January 1889, in front of an audience that greeted him enthusiastically. One newspaper recounted that before he could even get up and talk, the students 'very lustily' started singing 'For he's a jolly good fellow.'¹⁹¹ In this opening lecture, Andrew Lang remarked that Lord Gifford's bequest had given the science of religion in Scotland a firmer financial footing than it had anywhere else in the world, even in those countries where it was supported by the state. Thus being said, Lang proceeded to outline the

¹⁸⁷ Jordan, *Comparative Religion*, 152-53.

¹⁸⁸ For a fuller study of Müller's reception and legacy see van den Bosch, *op.cit.*, 481-545.

¹⁸⁹ E.D. Starbuck would later note in his autobiography that the reading of Müller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion* in his youth had formative impact on his career. See Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Religion's Use of Me,' in *Religion in Transition*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (London: George Allen & Unwind Ltd., 1937), 221. A majority of the religious psychologists were probably quite familiar with his work as well.

¹⁹⁰ For information on Lang's life and career see Roger Lancelyn Green, *Andrew Lang: A critical biography* (Leicester, England: Edmund Ward, 1946). Philippa J. Baylis, 'Andrew Lang and the study of religion in the Victorian era, with special reference to his High God theory' (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1987), 10-17.

¹⁹¹ 'The "Gifford" Lectureship at St. Andrews University. Opening lecture by Mr. Andrew Lang,' *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, January 18, 1889.

topic of his own lectures. His interest lay less in the 'haunted groves of metaphysics' and more in an attempt to understand what faculties man had for the acquisition of truth, how such faculties were used to construct religious truths and fantasies, what those truths and fantasies were, and what practices they engendered. He allowed for a broad time-frame, which went from the lower stages of civilization to Greeks, 'Hindoos,' and all the way to the present. At the same time, he averred that he would not discuss the topic of the origin of religion, because one had no information upon such beginnings.¹⁹²

It took Lang some eight years to work his lectures into a book, which he published in 1898 with the title *The Making of Religion*. As he confessed in the dedication, the book contained very little of what he had said in the actual lectures.¹⁹³ However, the paucity of newspaper and archival accounts makes it impossible to measure the distance between the two. *The Making of Religion* was a less than unitary account, as most contemporary reviewers observed. The first part of the book was a sustained attack on E.B. Tylor and Spencer. Both of the two theorists on the origin of religion believed that the ideas of God and 'spiritual beings' could be traced back to primitive man's erroneous musings on the phenomena of sleep, death, dreams, hallucinations, etc. Lang's refutation of this theory took the form of what Frank Podmore referred to as 'an essay in applied Psychical Research.'¹⁹⁴

On one hand, Lang's argument rested on exposing the fallacious reasoning of his anthropological and psychological peers. The available ethnographic evidence did not compel the anthropologist to assume that all religion was the result of defective reasoning. On the contrary, it was quite possible that the primitives obtained their beliefs through the observation and application of the same facts that constituted the object of psychical research: clairvoyance, visions, telepathy and so on. Lang referred to the faculties that produced these experiences as 'the X region of our nature.'¹⁹⁵ A materialistic understanding of the universe found no place in its ontology for such an X-region, but this did not mean that its existence had been scientifically refuted. On the contrary, as he tried to explain, the X-region could be established through experiments on contemporary subjects. As he claimed, it was the duty of anthropological science 'to compare data of savage and civilised psychology, or even of

¹⁹² *Ibid.* See also 'Mr. Andrew Lang on natural religion,' *Daily News*, January 18, 1889. 'The Court,' *Glasgow Herald*, January 18, 1889.

¹⁹³ See Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898).

¹⁹⁴ See Frank Podmore, review of *The Making of Religion*. by Andrew Lang,' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 14 (1898-1899): 128.

¹⁹⁵ Lang, *op.cit.*, 3.

savage and civilized illusions and fables'.¹⁹⁶ Still, he argued that his method was anthropological rather than psychological, because it concerned itself more with what could be learned 'from the rough observations and hasty inferences of the most backward races.'¹⁹⁷ That was a moot point however, as Lang was as much concerned with the savages, as with the implausible and unexplained assumptions of the psychologists. Presented with the opportunity, Lang could not resist taking a swing at contemporary psychology, by signalling out Jean-Martin Charcot, the most famous neurologist of the late nineteenth century. The theme was Charcot's last published article, before his death in 1893, in which he argued that the miracle cures effected in places like Lourdes were nothing but examples of hysterical ailments cured by suggestion or auto-suggestion.¹⁹⁸ For Charcot, there was nothing miraculous about these cures, which demonstrated the same natural action of the mind upon the body, which he had made use of at the Salpêtrière.

With reference to this interpretation of the faith-cure in terms of suggestion and hysteria, Lang exclaimed:

But what do we mean by "hysterical"? Nobody knows. The "mind," somehow, causes gangrenes, if not cancers, paralysis, shrinking of tissues; the mind, somehow, cures them. And what is the "mind"?¹⁹⁹

When it came to accounting for the so-called 'miraculous,' Lang claimed that non-experimental psychology relied on unexamined anecdotes, pseudo-explanations, and a persistent bad-faith. Psychologists thought they had understood a phenomenon (e.g. the faith-cure), when all they did was rebrand it in terms of hysteria and suggestion—a point also made by William James, some years previously.²⁰⁰ As Lang explained in a brief survey of the history of psychical research, philosophers and psychologists could be quite illogical when it came to accepting new topics of investigation. The acceptance of hypnotism into mainstream science proved as much. James Braid's hypnotism was in fact, nothing other than the old magnetism repackaged into a new word that explained nothing, but was at least devoid of occult and mysterious associations.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹⁸ See J.M. Charcot, 'The faith-cure,' *The New Review* 8, 44 (1893), 18-31.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰⁰ See William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 2 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1890), 612-613.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

Lang was more generous with anthropology than he had been with psychology. Anthropologists were more critical of their sources than critics like Müller had allowed. But being a recent science, still trying to make its voice heard, anthropology had easily fallen in line with her elder sisters, as to what concerned so-called 'psychical phenomena.' Tylor alone, Lang claimed, had not swept under the carpet the issue of the parallels that could be drawn between savage and civilized psychical experience. But Tylor had failed to ask the crucial question, which was whether there was a grain of truth to such experiences. In other words, for Lang the question was: 'are the phenomena real?'²⁰² Asking this question was crucial inasmuch as the 'origin of religion' theory constructed by the likes of Tylor and Spencer rested, at least partially, upon facts which primitive man thought to be 'supernormal.'²⁰³

Before examining that question, Lang marshalled several types of arguments against Tylor and Spencer. Firstly, he pointed to contrary ethnographic evidence. Spencer had constructed his theory based on the idea that primitive language did not allow for a distinction between 'seeing' and 'seeing in dreams.' Lang, however, proceeded to show that such a distinction did exist in some primitive languages, and that savages also distinguished between hallucinations and dreams.²⁰⁴ This, however, did not say much about the 'origin of religion' in the distant past, because one had no information of that period. But the point was sufficient to show that Spencer's theory was hasty in its sweeping generalization. The second type of argument was to show circular reasoning in the opposing theory. In Tylor's case, his theory presupposed that early man already had an abstract conception of life *before* he obtained it by meditating on the difference between a living and a dead body, and *before* he could assign it to a disembodied soul. For how else could the primitive find absence in the corpse and presence in the soul, if he did not know already what life was? Thirdly, there was an inconsistency between the image of the bungling savage that Tylor concocted, and the level of metaphysical speculation and abstract reasoning that he assigned to him at the same time.²⁰⁵

Fourthly, Tylor's theory could be criticised from the standpoint of what Lang called 'experimental psychology.'²⁰⁶ By this he meant psychical research, a topic to which he was no stranger.²⁰⁷ For Lang, psychical research did not necessarily vindicate the savage's belief in

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁰⁷ Lang was one of the earliest member of the Society for Psychical Research and published extensively on the topic. He also served as president of the society in 1911 and 1912. See Philippa J. Baylis, *op.cit.*, 252-261.

animism, or 'wandering spirits.' But it did vindicate the notion that certain unexplained experiences (clairvoyance, second-sight, crystal gazing) were real and probably corresponded to as yet undiscovered human faculties.²⁰⁸ Lang's argument relied on laying side by side a number of stories culled from ethnographic accounts, and the evidence of similar experiences gathered from fellow psychical researchers or from his own experiments. In several topically arranged chapters, he discussed clairvoyance among the Zulus, Scottish second-sight and other modern equivalents, crystal-visions, hallucinations of either living or dying persons, possession and 'fetishism' (stories of inanimate objects becoming animate, dowsing, etc.) Lang's account did much to close the gap between the primitive and the modern. As one reviewer noted in *The Times*:

nowhere have we seen a more ingenious and strenuous attempt to destroy the notion that a great gulf severs primitive and civilized man; nowhere is the unity of the religious feelings and ideas of men in all stages of culture put forward with more confidence as a scientific truth.²⁰⁹

Against Tylor, Lang insisted on the value of examining supernormal happenings "'in the field of experience'" prior to theorizing about them.²¹⁰ As such, he seemed to suggest that 'religion' (or at least its constitutive elements) could be studied at first hand, in an experimental way. But Lang was less interested in developing this insight than in showing that anthropology could be useful as a means of independently verifying the near universal incidence of psychical phenomena (independently because its stories were supposedly free of European psychological theory.)²¹¹

The second part of the book offered a different, if by no means novel way of reading primitive ontology, through a support for a version of primitive monotheism or *Urmonotheismus*.²¹² Lang's positing of original monotheism once again took the route of a criticism of Tylor and Spencer. Lang's point was not that he had found a theory which could fully supplant the one advanced by Tylor and Spencer. Rather, his aim was to show that both

²⁰⁸ Lang, *The Making of Religion*, 70-71.

²⁰⁹ 'The Making of Religion.' *The Times (London)*, July 4, 1898, 15.

²¹⁰ Andrew Lang, *op.cit.*, 120.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

²¹² The most well-known defender of this idea in the first half of the twentieth century was Father Wilhelm Schmidt with his massive 12 volume opus *The Origin of the Idea of God*. In 1911, Lang favourably reviewed the first volume of this opus, noting that Schmidt had also acknowledged his work as an impetus for his. See Andrew Lang, review of *L'Origine de l'Idée de Dieu*, by Le P. Guillaume Schmidt. *Journal of the Royal African Society* 10, 38 (1911): 232-33. On Schmidt's work see Ernest Brandewie, *Wilhelm Schmidt and the origin of the idea of God* (London: University Press of America, 1983).

primitive animism and the ghost theory could not fully account for the formation of gods among primitive religions. The argument followed several axes. Firstly, if supreme deities were merely the metaphysical equivalent of tribal chiefs, it was not clear how societies devoid of such social features could ever get an idea of a supreme god.²¹³ Secondly, if supreme creator gods could be envisaged as having developed from first ancestors, the evidence also allowed for the converse: the Creator came first, and was then, in its waning phase, assimilated to the first ancestor.²¹⁴

While these were minor points, Lang's argument hinged, however, on the notion that Supreme Deities were not thought of as spirits, and could not have evolved from the latter. Lang could marshal his own evidence that such Supreme Gods were thought to be different from mortal men or their wondering spirits²¹⁵, that such gods were guardians of an ethical system²¹⁶, and that Spencer and Tylor had wilfully ignored such evidence.²¹⁷ But the problem was how to square the notion of primitive Supreme Beings with social evolution. Lang's solution was to disentangle material and intellectual culture from theology and to claim ignorance on the question of origins.²¹⁸ According to him, what one found in multiple historical and geographical settings was the simultaneous existence of two currents: a pure, ethical one (which related to Supreme Beings), and a mythological one, 'full of magic, mummery, and scandalous legend.'²¹⁹ These two currents were always found co-existing, and if anthropologists had so far focused on the scandalous one, that was because it was more salient. High Gods were reclusive and required no propitiation, unless degeneration had brought them to be assimilated into the ghost-worshipping animistic current.²²⁰ In some cases at least, it was quite possible that the pure current lay hidden in certain mysteries and an 'inner religion' which were little known by anthropologists.²²¹

Lang claimed that it was impossible to ascertain whether Supreme Beings or 'surviving ghosts' came first.²²² However, he maintained that the former were at least logically prior to

²¹³ Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion*, 179.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183, 205.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 199, 211 *et passim*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198-99.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 206-07.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

²²² *Ibid.*, 220-21.

the latter.²²³ His criticisms of Spencer and Tylor notwithstanding, primitive animism and 'ghost gods' could still find a place among savages who needed deities that they could propitiate, enter into commerce with, and use. In fact, they needed to find a place: aside from practical interests, the developing metaphysical instinct required man to develop the notion of 'soul' and all that came with it in the Tylorian construct.²²⁴ Degeneration was the necessary outcome of 'advancing social conditions.'²²⁵ Ultimately, even he seemed to imply that in the world of actually existing savage religion, there was but little space for lofty, unapproachable Supreme Beings.²²⁶

This latter point did not escape a sharp critic like Marcel Mauss (1872-1950). Mauss was the nephew of Émile Durkheim and a champion of his uncle's new discipline of sociology. From this perspective, Mauss was a relentless critic of English anthropology, whose psychological and individualistic explanations he saw as obsolete. In his review, Mauss claimed that even when so-called 'great gods' could be found, they were second-rate, and played no part in the religious life of primitive communities.²²⁷ However, Mauss' strictures went further than this. For him, the first part of the book presented no 'sociological, or even scientific interest.'²²⁸ Regarding it, he only noted in passing that even if one accepted the evidence of psychical phenomena (he did not), it did not follow that just because such phenomena were unexplained, they were thereby supernormal or divine. He did not see how such experiences could evoke the notion of divinity, that is, of a 'moral and creator being.'²²⁹ This was a clear misreading, but it contained the seeds of a legitimate criticism. For, even though Lang had not claimed such facts to be indeed outside the remit of science, he had failed to show exactly in what way psychical experiences led to notions of divinity among the primitives. In fact, he had assumed that such development was unproblematic, or could still be mapped according to the Tylor-Spencer theory, in spite of his simultaneous claim that the theory was epistemologically and logically unsound. C. C. Everett (1829-1900), the Dean of Harvard Divinity School put his finger on the issue, by pointing out that the existence of psychical phenomena among the primitives did not necessarily change one iota of the current theories

²²³ *Ibid.*, 281.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 290.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 284.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

²²⁷ M. Mauss, 'The Making of Religion. (Comment on a fait la religion) by Andrew Lang.' *L' Année Sociologique* 3 (1898-1899): 201-202.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

as to the origin of the beliefs in souls.²³⁰ He also noted that Lang's overly nuanced conclusions and his vacillating attitude did not serve to drive home the point that he wanted to make.²³¹ Reviewers' attitudes toward the first part of the book generally depended on their approval or disapproval of psychical research. Some past it over in silence.²³² E. S. Hartland submitted that the main issue was that of impartiality and empathy in regard to the primitives. Lang had certainly showed that, but for Hartland the truth value of psychical experiences was the domain of 'scientific psychology,' not of 'the science of folklore.'²³³ He then launched into a 37 page critique of Lang's account of primitive high-gods. Over and above the specific omissions and misreadings that Hartland found in *The Making of Religion*, his criticism also pointed to the impropriety of using Christian theological categories to discuss primitive beliefs.²³⁴ Mauss made the same point, but in a less charitable language. According to him, Lang was merely rehashing the old theological idea of primitive revelation, and he did not hesitate to criticise both him and Müller for being motivated by 'extra-scientific reasons.'²³⁵

Even a sympathetic reviewer like Léon Marillier, a fellow psychical researcher and early champion of religious psychology, could find little to recommend it, besides the author's well known ironic style and 'prestigious dialectic.'²³⁶ For Marillier, the first part of the book did break new ground, but its argument was only a condensed version of Lang's 1894 *Cock-Lane and common sense*. He also noted that Lang had given the impression that primitive religion was all great gods and ghost worship, with very little in between.²³⁷

²³⁰ See C.C. Everett, 'The Making of Religion,' *The Philosophical Review* 8, 2 (1899): 174-175.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 171. The same point had been made by William James in a review of *Cock-Lane and Common Sense* four years earlier. See William James, 'Cock Lane and Common Sense. Andrew Lang. *Die Entdeckung der Seele durch die Geheimwissenschaften*. Carl du Prel,' *Psychological Review* 1, (1894): 630-32. As James wrote, Lang had 'the worldly dislike to push things too far' (630) and was guilty of 'leaving things unsettled' (632). He contrasted this with du Prel's too gullible attitude. I am grateful to Andreas Sommer for pointing out this review.

²³² As did the aforementioned *Times* reviewer. See 'The Making of Religion,' *The Times (London)*, July 4, 1898, 15. See also W.W. Newell, 'The Making of Religion by Andrew Lang,' *The Journal of American Folklore* 12, 46 (1899): 234-36.

²³³ Edwin Sidney Hartland, 'The "High Gods" of Australia,' review of *The Making of Religion*, by Andrew Lang. *Folklore* 9, 4 (1898): 291.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 328 *et passim*. See also Wheeler-Barclay's canvassing of the ensuing debate in Wheeler-Barclay, *op.cit.*, 134-39.

²³⁵ Mauss, 'The Making of Religion,' 200.

²³⁶ L. Marillier, 'The Making of Religion by Andrew Lang,' *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 49 (Janvier à Juin 1900): 407. Marillier had also translated Lang's *Myth, ritual and religion* into French. See Andrew Lang, *Mythe, cultes et religion*. trans. by Léon Marillier and A. Dirr (Paris: Alcan, 1896). On Marillier as a religious psychologist see section 1.3.5.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 412.

1.2.3 Edward Caird

Between 1890 and 1891 Edward Caird delivered two courses of lectures published in 1893 as *The Evolution of Religion*.²³⁸ Caird was born in 1835 and was educated at the University of Glasgow and in Oxford. He became Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow in 1866 and later Master of Balliol College, replacing his former teacher Benjamin Jowett.²³⁹ Caird saw the 'science of religion' as the result of a historical process whereby two principles had come to dominate modern thinking: 1) the unity of mankind; 2) the notion of development or evolution, which replaced the ancient notion of the cyclical nature of time.²⁴⁰

For Caird, these two principles were interconnected: while the unity of mankind presumed that the experiences of historical men were intelligible if one could make them live again in the imagination, the idea of development allowed one to trace successively the different degrees of civilization, and 'bridge over the gulf between ourselves and men of an earlier and simpler stage of culture.'²⁴¹ The history of religion was thus a chapter in the larger history of man, and it is for this reason that Caird claimed that the science of religion was a part (the most important one) of anthropology.²⁴² Religion provided the researcher with a 'brief abstract and epitome of the man' and contained an 'expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe.'²⁴³ Furthermore, the writing of such a history was important from the point of view of self-knowledge, in that the history of humanity was recapitulated in the history of each individual being, though 'in an abbreviated and therefore confused way.'²⁴⁴

His understanding of 'development' appears to have been significantly influenced by Hegel, even though Caird also invoked the names of Darwin, Lamarck, Spencer, Wundt, Comte and von Hartmann, but without explaining how he was going to reconcile all of their different views. He did concede that the notion was one that was difficult to describe 'in logically consistent language.'²⁴⁵ His favourite metaphor of how development applied to the science of religion was that of organic growth. For him, religion could not be defined by trying to discover the common denominator among the world's faiths, but by seeing the various religions as all part of the same historical process:

²³⁸ Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1893).

²³⁹ See Sir Henry Jones and John Henry Muirhead, *The Life and Philosophy of Edward Caird* (Bristol: Thoemmes, [1921] 1991).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* vol.1, 21-24.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

As there is little to be gained by asking what is common to the bud, the leaf, the flower, and the fruit of the tree, so there is little to be gained by asking what is common to the Vedic Polytheism of early India, to the later Brahmanic system and to the religion of the Buddha, if these, as we find to be the case, are only different stages in one great movement of religious life.²⁴⁶

The process of looking for the common denominator usually led researchers to posit a definition in terms of the lowest form of religion, which was like trying to define man in terms of the embryo or the infant. But, as in biology the definition of man was taken from the characteristics of the mature individual, so was religion more suitably defined by looking first at its most mature incarnation (i.e. Christianity), and then backwards at the forms that preceded it.²⁴⁷ What Caird was thus after was not only a definition of religion, as an account of the principle that underscored the development of religious forms. Much like Hegel in the *Lectures on the philosophy of religion*, his gaze was fixed on the 'religious idea' as it passed through various nations and periods in time.²⁴⁸ The starting point for Caird's unfolding of this principle was the analysis of man's consciousness, according to three ideas: the non-self (the object), the self (the subject) and the union of the two or God.²⁴⁹

Any being that was capable of becoming conscious of the objective world and of oneself was thereby capable of becoming conscious of the unity of the two in God. For Caird, this latter statement was meant to illustrate the fact that all rational beings were religious, even when it could be shown that this or that primitive had no philosophical ideas about the self, the non-self, or about their relation. This latter point only proved that the primitive could not analyse his own beliefs, just as he could not give a grammatical analysis of his own language, even though he could nevertheless speak it all the same.²⁵⁰

It is not altogether easy to estimate what role Caird assigned to psychology in his science of religion. On the one hand, his use of the term made it clear that what he identified psychology with the analysis of the elements of rational consciousness that I have just outlined. As he explained, the persistence of religion throughout history made it necessary to inquire after its psychological causes and to demonstrate its psychological necessity.²⁵¹ He seemed to imply

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 58, 63.

that his claim that man could become conscious of God as the unity of the self and the world, was precisely such a demonstration. On the other hand, Caird claimed that 'psychological possibility' was not a factor when determining the ideas that ruled the lives of religious men. It was true that the primitives could not have possibly understood the metaphysical subtleties of modern philosophy, but this only went to show that man 'always *is* more than he *thinks* or *knows*; and his thinking and knowing are ruled by ideas of which he is at first unaware, but which, nevertheless, affect everything he says or does.'²⁵²

1.2.4 Cornelis Petrus Tiele

Another partisan of the notion of 'development' was C. P. Tiele. He was born in Leiden in 1830, studied theology in Amsterdam and became a Remonstrant minister in 1857. From 1877 he occupied the newly created chair in the History and Philosophy of Religion at the University of Leiden. With a linguistic gift that equalled if not surpassed that of Müller (he mastered Avestan, Akkadian and Egyptian), Tiele established himself as one of the main European promoters of the science of religion. He wrote extensively on the religions of Mesopotamia and Egypt and in 1877 published the widely read *Outlines of the History of Religions*.²⁵³ In 1886, Tiele wrote the article on 'Religions' for the 9th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Early on in the article he expressed the view that:

The comparative historical study of religions is one of the means indispensable to the solution of the difficult problem What is religion?—the other being a psychological study of man.²⁵⁴

Despite this assertion, the rest of article said nothing about psychology, but dealt only with issues of classification, outlining two types of taxonomies, one 'genealogical' (e.g. according to their descent) the other 'morphological' (the main taxa being 'nature religions' and 'ethical religions.')

In 1900, Tiele wrote a letter to the Danish philosopher and psychologist Harald Høffding (1843-1931), apropos of the latter's book *Sketch of a Psychology Founded on Experience*,

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁵³ For information about Tiele's life and career see Jordan, *Comparative Religion*, 180-84; Arie L. Molendijk, 'Tiele on Religion,' *Numen*, 46, 3 (1999): 237-268.

²⁵⁴ C.P.Tiele, 'Religions,' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and General Literature*, 9th edition, vol. 20 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 358.

which Høffding had sent him.²⁵⁵ Tiele confessed that, for him, 'Psychology is only an auxiliary science, even if of the highest interest.' Nevertheless,

from what I can judge of what I've read so far, the method that you have introduced into Psychology, equally distant from Materialism, on one side, and from speculative Idealism on the other, is the same method that I have tried (*pro viribus*) to apply to my special studies, the History and the Philosophy or the Science of, Religion.²⁵⁶

Otherwise put, Tiele thought there was a convergence of philosophical method between his own 'special studies' and Høffding's experience-based psychology. In order to understand that method, we must turn to Tiele's Gifford lectures, delivered in Edinburgh in 1896 and 1898, and published in two volumes, with the title *Elements of the Science of Religion*.²⁵⁷ Tiele's argument proceeded along a two-pronged path, as the first volume ('morphological') dealt with the evolution of religious forms, while the second one ('ontological') dealt with what was permanent and unchanging in historical development, i.e. the essence of religion.²⁵⁸

Tiele was confident that the 'natural theology,' which Lord Gifford had wanted expounded in his lectures, was none other than the science of religion.²⁵⁹ The task of the science of religion was to discover 'what religion is, and why we are religious.'²⁶⁰ As opposed to Müller, he did not consider it a 'natural science,' however much he might have agreed that religion was

²⁵⁵ Høffding had asked the French publisher to send him the French edition, which had just appeared, with a preface by Pierre Janet. The original Danish edition appeared in 1882. See Harald Høffding, *Esquisse d'une psychologie fondée sur l'expérience*. 4th French ed. Trans. Léon Poitevin (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1909). In his preface, Janet noted that Høffding's book was especially striking, in that he managed to combine the latest experimental studies with a broader philosophical outlook. He argued that this was not usually the case in French psychology, where one either found detailed experimental studies, or simply metaphysical speculation. See Pierre Janet, 'Préface,' in Høffding, *op.cit.*, iii-iv. Høffding's book contained a very concise section on 'the religious sentiment,' which he defined as 'the feeling of cosmic life' that sprang from 'the dependence that man felt towards being,' and which expressed the way in which one's 'affective life is determined by the course of universal evolution.' As opposed to Tiele, Høffding did not think it was the business of psychology to examine the forms (symbols and dogmas) in which this sentiment manifested itself. One sentence of Høffding's might have convinced Tiele that they were on the same page: 'all of our activity only actually serves to assist and to develop what a silent and unconscious germination has already deposited in the depths of ourselves.' See *op.cit.*, 337-38.

²⁵⁶ C.P.Tiele to Harald Høffding, 26 April 1900, Harald Høffding Papers, Royal Library of Copenhagen, NKS3815- 4to.

²⁵⁷ C.P.Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion, Part I. Morphological: Being The Gifford Lectures Delivered Before the University of Edinburgh in 1896* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897). *Elements of the Science of Religion, Part II: Ontological: Being The Gifford Lectures Delivered Before the University of Edinburgh in 1898* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1899).

²⁵⁸ Tiele, *Elements, Part I*, 27.

²⁵⁹ Tiele, *Elements, Part I*, vi.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

rooted in man's nature. In his view, the science of religion was identical with a reformed philosophy of religion, that is, with a philosophy that drew on history, as well as on anthropology ('the science of man'), sociology ('the science of our social relations') and psychology ('the science of man's inmost being').²⁶¹ As he intimated, the various approaches to the science of religion, which had recourse either predominantly to mythology and doctrine, or to rituals and institutions, erred by their partiality. Nevertheless, even though he saw both rites and doctrines as important to a comprehensive study of the subject, he also subscribed to the view that doctrine was the 'fountainhead' of religion. For him, rituals and ceremonies could teach one nothing, if one did not understand their doctrinal meaning.²⁶²

For Tiele, the science of religion was a 'mental science.'²⁶³ As he put it, 'the development of religion is, as already remarked, the labour of the human mind to create more and more perfect forms for the ever-growing wants of the religious soul.'²⁶⁴ Religion was, essentially, 'a frame of mind adapted to the relation between man and his God,' which found expression in words, customs, and institutions.²⁶⁵ Ultimately however, 'we study these phenomena—the conceptions and the observances of religion—in order to penetrate to what is concealed behind them.'²⁶⁶ What one found behind the play of religious phenomena was not idle fancy, but rather the evolution of the idea, or as he put it ('in the language of faith'): 'the eternal working of the divine Spirit.'²⁶⁷ Much like Caird, whom he quoted approvingly in the lectures, Tiele's account of the history of religion, was thus also underscored by Hegelianism.²⁶⁸ Despite his later claim to Høffding that he had tried to walk the tight rope between materialism and speculative idealism, Tiele was in fact much closer to the latter. This was evident in the contention that 'all genuine development is mental, and even the development which is called material is simply that of the human mind applied to material aims.'²⁶⁹

Consequently, in order to understand religion, one had to first survey the range of historical incarnations of religion (its stages, or *μόρφαι* (*morphai*), as Tiele called them), and secondly,

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 22-23.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 216. See also *Part II*, 72, 235.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 25, 4.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁶⁸ See for example the reference to Caird on p. 61. Also Tiele, *op.cit.*, *Part II*, 121.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

one had to analyse the mind that produced these forms.²⁷⁰ As he wrote: 'No knowledge of man is possible without embryology and biology. No knowledge of religion is possible without a knowledge of its origin and growth.'²⁷¹ The embryological task was taken up, primarily, in the second course of his lectures. Already in his first volume, Tiele had argued that 'the question as to the origin of religion is not of a historical or archaeological nature, but is purely psychological'.²⁷² This statement did not mean that the question of origin was to be handed over to the psychologists. Instead, much like his older colleague Müller, Tiele went on to construct his own *ad hoc* psychology.

According to Tiele, religion was composed of emotions, conceptions and sentiments.²⁷³ As he made clear, the order in which enumerated these was not arbitrary. Religious phenomena always began with emotions, though they did not originate in emotion. An emotion, for him, comprised three elements: a partially unconscious predisposition, an impression produced from without, and the subject's becoming conscious of this affect.²⁷⁴ Tiele was not entirely clear on what made a religious emotion religious. From his examples, it seemed that such religious emotions were just emotions evoked when a subject came in contact with religious objects—i.e. like the preacher's sermon. However, he also contended that people 'whose temperaments are religiously predisposed' could also obtain such emotions by contemplating their own lives, or the events in the world, or the destiny of their tribe.²⁷⁵ Such a view appeared to imply that there was already some 'religion' in the individual's temperament, or perhaps that emotions themselves were not pure, but had an intellectual content from the start. Both of these assertions were in fact the case, for, as Tiele repeatedly asserted, the original source of religion was not emotion, but something deeper.²⁷⁶ This deeper, slumbering source of religion was the idea of the Infinite, which all people possessed unconsciously.²⁷⁷ As he himself remarked, Tiele was actually revisiting Müller's own definition of religion as the perception of the Infinite in the finite.²⁷⁸ However, in opposition to Müller, he argued that it was impossible to perceive the Infinite, because the latter was a

²⁷⁰ Tiele explained that he preferred to refer to 'morphai' instead of stages, because the former term conveyed more accurately the notion that one was dealing with forms that grew out of each other, or, as one might say, morphed into each other. *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁷³ Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion. Part II*, 14.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁷⁸ He also credited Caird with the 'psychological discovery' that in the human mind, the idea of the Infinite preceded that of the Finite. See Tiele, *Part II*, 121.

concept. Instead, he claimed that the Infinite was already present in man, as an instinct or an innate form of thought. Perception, as well as emotion merely called it up from its diffuse background.²⁷⁹

In his genetic outline, Tiele contended that religious emotion was immediately and 'spontaneously' translated into a conception. In a third step, the religious conception developed into a 'definite sentiment,' which was nothing other than the direction of the will that moved one to action.²⁸⁰ In Tiele's view, religious conceptions were always individual, even though they may have been borrowed from the society, or from the preacher. Their individuality resulted from the fact that every conception was always a little bit different from the one that gave rise to it, and because through his emotion, the individual made the conception his own. According to Tiele, the transformation from emotion to conception was accomplished by the faculty of imagination—an idea that can ultimately be traced to Schleiermacher.²⁸¹ Imagination, Tiele argued, was 'one of the noblest faculties of the human mind.'

Like a creative artist within us, it presents us with living pictures of what we ourselves have never beheld, and of things that happened in the past or at some remote distance; it encircles the heads of those we love and revere with a radiant halo of glory; it builds for us an ideal world which consoles us for all the miseries and infirmities of actual life, and for the realization of which we can never cease to strive.²⁸²

This panegyric was mitigated by the acknowledgment that the imagination was nevertheless a 'dangerous faculty' that could lead as well to fanaticism and madness.²⁸³ However, without the imagination there was no way of giving a concrete form to one's faith. The emotions and the intelligence contributed as well to this concretization of the faith, and also shaped the direction of the imagination, steering it away from its morbid inclinations.²⁸⁴ In fact, the intelligence had a more primary role to play, as its activity preceded that of imagination and the emotions. This was not because of the background Infinite, but rather because of another

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 228-231.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18, 67.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27. See Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 53: 'You will know that imagination is the highest and most original element in us, and that everything besides it is merely reflection upon it; you will know that it is our imagination that creates the world for you, and that you can have no God without the world.'

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

innate mental form: that of causality. In Tiele's psychological schema, all sensations immediately called up the question whence? This kind of causal questioning spontaneously escalated into a questioning about the ultimate cause, which religious man answered in the following manner: 'a power not ourselves, but a power above us, on which we are dependent, and with which we are yet related.'²⁸⁵

Ultimately, however, the conceptions of faith that were created in this manner were only temporary expressions, only *morphai*. This was because, on the one hand, one could never have a definitive expression of the Infinite. On the other hand, conceptions were temporary because of the evolution of thought and feeling. Tiele fully subscribed to the widespread anthropological notion that mankind had passed through a maturation process, similar to the one that each individual experienced in his own life. This meant that the emotions and the intelligence were 'purified' and 'deepened' in the course of ages, demanding more rarefied conceptions.²⁸⁶

Originally, religious conceptions were expressed in myths and symbols, and these two were necessary forms, corresponding to the development of imagination, thought and feeling at that distant time. Tiele placed himself in opposition to Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858), a well-known early nineteenth century philologist, who had maintained that mythology was only philosophy in disguise, which only the uneducated masses could take literally. On the contrary, Tiele claimed that mythology and symbolism, 'in so far as they are images, they are the only possible expressions of the daring thoughts of their period.'²⁸⁷ This was because philosophy and religious doctrine were originally fused together. It took a long time for the images of mythology to develop into abstract thoughts: 'man climbs up but slowly to such abstract ideas as eternity, omnipresence, and holiness in the ethical sense.'²⁸⁸ It was only at a later date, and with the separation of the two, that one got (in philosophy) an attempt to explain the whole of experience and 'to construct a complete and connected cosmogony,' while religious doctrine became simply 'a theory of practice.'²⁸⁹

In conclusion, Tiele's psychological account of the formation of religion was an attempt to combine Müller's naturalism with Hegelian idealism and Schleiermacher's affect-based theology. The influence of Schleiermacher was evident in Tiele's attempt to give some sort of

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 30. See also *Part I*, 83.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

priority to the emotions, even though he consistently sabotaged this priority by claiming that there was a deeper Infinite that came through in the actual emotion. At the same time, he also acknowledged that Schleiermacher had not been completely wrong, only that his theory did not account for religion as a whole.²⁹⁰ In Tiele's view, Schleiermacher had been too partial to feeling, whereas religion expressed the whole man: feelings, as well as intellect and will.²⁹¹ It was thus essential that his psychological schema be tripartite, so as to account for all of the functions of the soul. However, Tiele himself subverted this holistic approach, by making the idea of the Infinite the shadow background of any and all religious manifestations. Despite his protestations that this was a psychological and not metaphysical hypothesis, he offered no account of how he had arrived at his postulate, nor any evidence of how the Infinite could be extracted from the world's faiths.²⁹² Ultimately, Tiele's science of religion was not a secular psychological endeavour, but an attempt to construct a psychological-theological model wherein religious experience served as the vehicle for the continuous incarnation of the Infinite. As he wrote, with regard to the role of experience:

In a certain sense it may be said that faith also rests on experience, and that it is awakened by what we see, hear, and perceive; but the experience is an emotion of the soul, and the religious man transfers what he beholds and perceives to a sphere which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. All conceptions of faith are inferences. Acquired by reflection and shaped by imagination, they cannot be demonstrated like the results of research, or imparted in the same way as knowledge.²⁹³

With Tiele's conception of the science of religion in mind, we can now move on to several French projects for a science of religions, paying again a close attention to the place of psychology within these projects.

1.3 The French School

1.3.1 Ernest Renan

One of the first French scholars of religion to advocate the use of psychology as part of the *science des religions* was Ernest Renan (1823-1892), in his book *L'avenir de la Science* [The

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁹² Perhaps because he thought that Müller had already done most of the work, even though, as Tiele thought, he had misinterpreted the results.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

Future of Science], written in 1848 but published in 1890. The author of the later famous *Life of Jesus* (1863) was only 25 years old when he started penning the reflections that made up *L'avenir*. A former candidate for the priesthood, Renan had left the seminary in 1845, and settled into a life of secular scholarly pursuits in Paris. By his own account, it was the critical reading of Biblical texts that had triggered his loss of faith and made him opt out of a priestly career.²⁹⁴ In *L'avenir*, Renan attempted to articulate the 'new faith' that he had developed since his lapse from Catholicism.²⁹⁵ The result was a sprawling 450 pages long essay that revelled in paradox and glittered with literary artifice. Straightforwardly put, Renan's 'new faith' was the belief that 'science' was the new 'religion.' However, as his language implied, this meant more than simply a garden variety Comteanism. For him, Comte had erred because he had failed to understand the 'infinite variety of that shifting, capricious, multiple, ungraspable core of human nature.' In order to catch this shiftiness, one needed a certain suppleness, an artistic temperament, and an eye for nuances. One could not operate on the basis of hard and fast laws. As Renan put it, when it came to the things of the spirit, 'the vague is the truth.'²⁹⁶Comte, on the contrary, had reasoned in an *a priori* fashion, according to a system. At the same time, he found the science that Comte had extolled far too dry: he seemed to leave no room for poetry or religion, as if man could live only on 'scraps of phrases like the theorems of geometry, on arid formulas.'²⁹⁷

As opposed to this, Renan's science of the future relied on a rationalism that tried to recuperate the poetry and the religiousness that was absent from positivism. His chosen way was of a 'simultaneous and harmonious usage of all faculties, the exclusion of all exclusions.'²⁹⁸ Philology was the main road by which he hoped to arrive at such a glorious epoch of knowledge. However, philology was only a step (albeit an important one) towards a goal that was ultimately philosophical and historical. Its importance came from its usefulness as an instrument with which to plumb the historical and psychological depths of the human mind. The science of humanity was the science of an object that was in a state of perpetual *becoming*—hence the only form that such a science could take was historical.²⁹⁹ As such, 'the

²⁹⁴ See Robert Daniel Priest, 'The Production, Reception and Legacy of Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* in France 1845- 1904' (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2011), 30.

²⁹⁵ Ernest Renan, *L'Avenir de la science: Pensée de 1848* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890), ii.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

science of languages is the history of languages; the science of literatures and religions is the history of literatures and religions.³⁰⁰

Psychology played a central part in Renan's conceptualization of the science of religions. As shown by Jan Goldstein, Renan had been developing a psychological vocabulary for both personal and academic use ever since he begun studying at the Saint-Sulpice seminary in 1843. His early psychological observations bore on a range of phenomena, from introspective notes to jottings about the influence of psychological states on the body, the power of habit, the psychology of small groups like those of the student body at the seminary, as well as attempts at grasping the spirit of an epoch through exercises of historical psychology or 'history of mentalities' (i.e. attempts to relate ideas to their geographic, temporal and social contexts).³⁰¹ In 1845, Renan used his psychological-historical method to write an *Essai psychologique sur Jésus Christ*. In it, he argued that the figure of Jesus could not be understood without reference to 'extraordinary psychological laws,' which governed humanity at certain junctures in its history. For Renan, the difference between 'extraordinary' and 'ordinary' laws was one of intensity, and the distinction could be found to operate in other sciences as well. One could thus observe extraordinary laws at work in the revolutionary transformations recorded by geology, biology, or at the origin of languages.³⁰² In *L'avenir*, the distinction between the 'extraordinary' and the 'ordinary' was folded into the distinction between 'spontaneity' and 'reflection,' which he had borrowed from the work of the philosopher Victor Cousin.³⁰³

Renan did not rigorously define the two terms, which was at least ironic, given that he himself had wrestled with their obscurity in Cousin's work.³⁰⁴ Nonetheless, he considered the distinction to be fundamental for the science of humanity.³⁰⁵ According to him, 'spontaneity' was instinctual and muddled, yet it bespoke a surfeit of creativity that was unmatched by modern, 'reflective' consciousness. Religions, languages, morality were all the work of a

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁰¹ See Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 254. I have based this summary on Goldstein's attempt to classify the various meanings of the term 'psychology' in Renan's early work. See Goldstein, *op.cit.*, 256. I have borrowed from Priest the phrase 'history of mentalities' as a description for Renan's historical psychology. See Priest, *op.cit.*, 31.

³⁰² For a useful summary of the argument in the *Essai* see Priest, *op.cit.*, 28-33.

³⁰³ On the ambiguity of the two categories in Cousin's work, see Goldstein, *op.cit.*, 177.

³⁰⁴ Goldstein, *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Renan, *L'avenir*, 259.

'spontaneous reason' that worked among children as well as in the 'primitives' of yore.³⁰⁶ He expressed the hope that the experimental study of child psychology would one day take its rightful place (along with the study of primitive languages and literatures) in the science of the origins of humanity.³⁰⁷ Religion would form an integral part of this study, inasmuch as religion was an expression of primitive humanity in its totality. As he himself put it:

Just as a Gothic cathedral is the best witness of the Middle Ages, because the generations have lived there in the spirit; so are religions the best means for knowing humanity; for humanity has dwelt there; they are the abandoned tents where everything attests the traces of those whom they sheltered.³⁰⁸

All of the primitive peoples' philosophy, morality, poetry, or political theory could be found in their religion, which in turn was inscribed in various 'sacred books.'³⁰⁹ This attempt to grasp the totality of *l'esprit humain* made him argue for a need to study both the mediocre productions of past ages, as well as the most outlandish or even pathological ones. More than 50 years before James's *Varieties*, Renan professed a similar gusto for Spanish mystics and obscure sects (like the Mandeans, whose books, he claimed, were interesting because they were 'delirium composed in a barbaric and undecipherable style').³¹⁰ For him, these extreme examples offered a more transparent view of the inner springs of human nature, 'like the injected vein that juts out more clearly under the eyes of the anatomist.'³¹¹ It was in crises, or in sleep, madness and delirium rather than in normal states that psychology (and with it the science of humanity) would find an advantageous field of study.

1.3.2 Émile Burnouf

Renan's interest in the extremes of religion had little effect on the establishment of the *science des religions* in the late nineteenth century, but his profession of psychology as an integral part of that science was shared by a surprising number of scholars. Among them was Émile Burnouf (1821-1907), an author who played a major part in popularising the term *science des religions* in the second half of the nineteenth century. Burnouf was a cousin of the famous Orientalist Eugène Burnouf and a Classical scholar, Sanskritist, and archaeologist. He ran the French School in Athens, and coordinated archaeological excavations in Greece.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

³⁰⁷ Renan, *L'avenir*, 162.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁰⁹ Renan, *L'avenir*, 302-303.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

In 1861 he published a translation of the Bhagavad Gita, followed after two years by an *Essay on the Veda*. In 1864 and 1868, he wrote several articles in the *Revue des deux mondes*, which bore the collective title *The Science of Religions*. The articles were first published as a book in 1872.³¹²

Burnouf thought he was the first person to employ the expression 'science of religions,' as well as the first to adequately describe its remit.³¹³ He placed the new science at the confluence of a wide array of disciplines: history, archaeology, philology, comparative mythology, psychology, philosophy and biology. The science of religions, he averred, rested on historical, philological and biological 'facts,' but its goal was philosophical and explanatory. Its aim was to come up with a theory that accounted for the primitive unity of religions.³¹⁴

According to him, all religions consisted of two elements: rites and dogmas about god(s). While dogmas were thought to be prior, no religion could subsist without the rites that followed from them. Neither could one really find a religion without god(s), since 'psychology' postulated that the idea of god was identical with human reason.³¹⁵ Burnouf claimed that only the science of religions could show the ebb and flow of the idea of god among various peoples and religions. Religion, for him, was rooted in the individuals' attempt to understand nature. It was a 'phenomenon of general psychology,' not a result of miracles or supernatural intervention.³¹⁶ There was essentially no difference between religion and science, as far as intellectual procedures went: religion was an antique form of science.³¹⁷ The way in which the ancients got religion was the same way in which nineteenth century scientists got science: they observed phenomena and then generalized their observations, pursuing higher and higher degrees of abstractness, until they obtained the maximum of generalization, which was the notion of a necessary being.³¹⁸ However, some people stopped before they completed the whole process. The result was an inferior form of religion (e.g. Fetishism, Judaism, Islam), which he referred back to the inferiority of the race that had

³¹² P. Alphandéry, 'Nécrologie,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 55 (1907): 138.

³¹³ See Émile Burnouf, *La Science des Religions*, 2nd edition (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1872), 1. The claim was not true. As we have already seen, Renan used it earlier. So did Th.- Prosper Le Blanc, a Catholic author who published a book on natural religion between 1852-54. See Th.- Prosper Le Blanc, *Les religions et leur interprétation chrétienne*, vols I-III (Paris: Maison Méquignon- Junior, J Leroux et Jouby, Successeurs, 1852-1855), 29.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 403.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 418.

conceived it. The standard for his model was the ancient Aryan race, whose speculations he sought to trace through the Vedic hymns. According to Burnouf, Vedic religion could be reduced to an attempt to grapple with three notions, namely life, movement, and thought. He argued that the Vedic pundits construed all three notions by reference to the concept of heat or fire (*Agni*). Agni was both physical fire, the 'vital or *psychological*' principle as well as the metaphysical or divine principle.³¹⁹ Through what he himself admitted was a language half-way between poetry and science, Burnouf sought to show that the ancient Aryans were Trinitarians and pantheists who conceived of an underlying 'fire-substance' as the ontological juice that flowed between a Father (the sun, *Surya*), the Son (the fire below, *Agni*), the Spirit (the wind, *Vayu*).³²⁰ The supposed Trinitarianism of the Vedas was no speculative trifle. It served as evidence for his thesis that Christianity was essentially the Aryan religion in disguise, which a Jewish sect had obtained from the Persians during the Babylonian captivity and Jesus passed down to the apostles in the form of a 'secret teaching.'³²¹ Burnouf's attempt to demonstrate the Aryan pedigree of Christianity appeared to be in flagrant contradiction to his postulated racial determinism. For according to the latter, race determined not only how far one could go in one's religious conceptions, but also how far one could understand those that were superior to one's own. If as he claimed, the Chinese and the Tibetans could not grasp Buddhism (another quintessentially Aryan religion) without corrupting it, how could Jesus and his Jewish supporters grasp the Vedic religion and pass it on without modifying it?³²² There was only one possible answer to this question, though he did not dare to do more than suggest it: Jesus must have been Aryan himself.³²³

Burnouf seems to have realized, at least in part, that his own racism had backed him into a theoretical corner. For on one hand, he wanted to believe that the Aryan religious theory was destined, from the very beginning, to conquer the entire the human race, while on the other, he was forced to admit that this was impossible. His only solution to this quandary was to suggest interracial marriages between Aryans and members of 'inferior races.' While this may seem like a bizarre solution, he seemed convinced that the superior biology would thus gain the upper hand. After a few generations, the offspring would be rendered white, Aryan, and

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 127-129.

³²² *Ibid.*, 416, 426.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 323.

ready to be evangelised. He reckoned that a future, uniraical society was the only basis for a universal church.³²⁴

Burnouf's racist ideology percolated as well into his notion of psychology. As noted above, psychology played a fundamental part in his theorization of religion. But what sort of psychology was it? On one level, he left no doubt that the main psychological system that he referred to when he employed the word was none other than Victor Cousin's eclecticism. Burnouf seemed to have shared Cousin's distrust of mystical revelations and his account of religion as a rational and psychological phenomenon.³²⁵ But he parted ways with Cousin, particularly when it came to the issue of the universal and spontaneous use of reason. Whereas Cousin had postulated a kind of philosophical democracy, whereby even the illiterate masses could spontaneously obtain the same idea of God as the philosophers, Burnouf claimed that the notion of God was the result of a slow gestation, one that was accomplished fully by the Aryan race alone.³²⁶ Other races were simply too stupid to acquire the full concept of the divine.³²⁷ In other words, psychology was determined by physiology.

It was not by accident that Burnouf had, at one point, used the expression 'vital or *psychological*' to refer to one of the forms of Agni. This implied synonymy had to do with his dissatisfaction with what was 'improperly named psychology,' which was merely the knowledge of the laws of human thought.³²⁸ He suggested that a true psychology would surmount the reigning Cartesian dualism, and investigate 'all that lives,' not just the Aryan psyche, but also the souls of 'inferior races,' as well as psyches of higher animals. The result that he expected from such a psychology was a scientific vindication of vitalism, a modern revisitation of the 'unity of life and thought' that he had extracted from the Vedas.³²⁹

It is not easy to gauge the influence that Burnouf's text had on the development of the *science des religions* in the following decades. The fact that his book went through four editions and was translated into English in 1889 would suggest that he was not at a loss for readers. However, some of his scholarly peers appear to have taken his arguments with a grain of salt. A young William James had read Burnouf's articles in 1868 and corresponded about them

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 417-18.

³²⁵ See V. Cousin, *Fragments philosophiques*, vol. 1, 3rd edition (Paris: Ladrangue, 1838), 226-27.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 414-15.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 419.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 452-55.

with his friends Charles Ritter and Thomas Wren Ward.³³⁰ This may have quite possibly been the first time that James encountered the term 'science of religions' which he would later adopt himself in the *Varieties*. James was hardly taken with Burnouf or his method. As he wrote to Ward in 1869, he thought that the articles were indeed 'suggestive,' but he disliked the 'priggish' tone that Burnouf adopted when he discussed 'Science,' as if there was anything more than mere opinions that one could have in that regard. He also found it dubious to claim that religion had no right to argue with 'Science,' since both were derived from the same ancient Vedic religion. To claim such a thing, he wrote, was the same as claiming that Cain couldn't kill Abel because they both came from the same womb.³³¹ A year later, Max Müller declared in the first lecture of his *Introduction to the Science of Religion* that no scholar in their right mind could believe Burnouf's fanciful historical reconstructions. As far as he was concerned, Émile was not worthy of the name Burnouf.³³²

By 1907, when Burnouf died, Paul Alphandéry seemed to speak for a *consensus sapientium* when he remarked in his obituary that Burnouf's book was based on a 'rather specious ideological construction,' which had not withstood the test of time. At the same time, he did concede that it had nevertheless been a 'necessary manifesto' whose merit was that it wrested the new science away from the equivocations of eclecticism and affirmed instead its exclusively empirical character.³³³

1.3.3 Albert Réville and the fifth section

With these earlier examples in mind, we can now look at the status of psychology within the institutionalised form of the French science of religions. In 1882, the French supporters of secularization managed to obtain the abolition of state funded Catholic Faculties of Theology and their replacement with educational venues that advocated a nonpartisan, 'scientific' research into the history of religions.³³⁴ The first of such venues to be set-up was the Chair in the History of Religions at the *Collège de France*, which was occupied by Albert Réville (1826-1906) from its inception in 1879. As noted by Robert Priest in a recent study, Réville's appointment had been a solution of compromise for the French Ministry of Education

³³⁰ William James to Charles Ritter, 21 January 1869, in Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James, volume 4: 1856- 1877* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 358-9. William James to Thomas Wren Ward, March 1869, *ibid.*, 369-71.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 370.

³³² F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, 27-28. See also Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 248-225.

³³³ See Alphandéry, *op.cit.*, 138.

³³⁴ See Émile Poulat, 'L'Institution des 'sciences religieuses,' in *Cents ans de sciences religieuses en France*, ed. Jean Baubérot *et al.* (Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 1987), 49-78.

(*Ministère de L'Instruction Publique*).³³⁵ For a while during the months of deliberation it seemed as if the appointment would go to Jules Soury, a disciple of Renan and author of a psychopathologically informed study of the life of Jesus. Soury's main thesis had been that Jesus was mad, prone to fixed ideas, hallucinations, and delusions, the obvious victim of a tainted heredity. In the end, his medical-materialistic stance proved too extreme for such a public position, notwithstanding the fact that his work was coldly received by historians. The choice fell on Réville, who was a moderate Liberal Protestant pastor, not prone to polemics and incendiary statements.³³⁶

In 1886, a 'fifth section' for 'religious sciences' was inaugurated at the recently founded *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris.³³⁷ It was headed by the same Albert Réville and employed eleven other researchers.³³⁸ The fifth section and the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* founded by Maurice Vernes in 1880 set the tone for what would become the dominant way of practicing the science of religions in French Academia until the end of the nineteenth century. The model that these historians adopted was based on the Liberal Protestant assumption that religion was a universal and 'normal' product of the human psyche. This group of historians rejected Soury's psychopathological explanations, and did so because they relied on a different psychological model, a model that had its roots in Schleiermacher's theology. In his *Prolegomena* (first published in 1881), Albert Réville made it no secret that he was influenced by Schleiermacher's interpretation of religion. He thought that the father of liberal theology had been right to point to the feeling of absolute dependence, but wrong to consider that religion was reducible to merely that. Religion encompassed in fact a multitude of feelings: besides dependence, it contained feelings of union, reciprocity, admiration, fear, trust, and love.³³⁹ In his own definition, religion was taken to be 'the determination of human life by the feeling of a connection between the human mind (*esprit*) and a mysterious mind

³³⁵ Robert D. Priest, "After The God And The Man, The Patient': Jules Soury's Psychopathology Of Jesus And The Boundaries Of The Science Of Religions In The Early Third Republic,' *French History* 27 (2013), 535-556.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 550.

³³⁷ The school was inaugurated in 1868. The other four sections covered mathematics, physics and chemistry, natural history and physiology, and historical and philological sciences.

³³⁸ See Michel Despland, 'Les sciences religieuses en France: des sciences que l'on pratique mais que l'on n'enseigne pas,' *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 116 (2001), 6-7. For a full list of those originally employed by the fifth section, see Jules Toutain, 'La Section des sciences religieuses de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, de 1886 à 1911,' in *École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des sciences religieuses. Rapport sommaire sur les conférences de l'exercice 1909-1910 et le programme des conférences pour l'exercice 1910-1911* (1909), 13.

³³⁹ Albert Réville, *Prolégomène de l'histoire des religions*. 4th edition (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, [1881] 1886), 25, 103.

(*esprit*) recognized as ruling the world and oneself, and to which one desires to be united.³⁴⁰ He claimed to withhold judgment on whether the feeling in question was real or illusory, as well as on the question of the ontology of the 'mind' in question.³⁴¹ It was the aforementioned 'determinations' that made for the bread and butter of the history of religions. For Réville, the main task of the discipline was to track the historical form taken by these determinations, or otherwise put, to divine the meaning of past rituals, symbols, myths and dogmas, to trace intellectual filiations, and to propose explanatory patterns and classification systems. It was a historiographic model that most of his colleagues adopted.

They claimed to be seeking to write a history that was, as much as possible, divested of polemics and free from dogmatic interference and personal *parti pris*. Ivan Strenski has argued that the historiographic model put forward by the fifth section was that of a '*histoire historisante*,' that is, of a history claiming to be theory-free, merely presenting the 'facts' objectively, in their raw, natural development.³⁴² Strenski regards Maurice Vernes (1845-1923) as the representative exponent of this style of inquiry in the early days of the fifth section, even though his position was clearly extreme.³⁴³ Vernes advocated a historiography that rejected anything smacking of philosophical speculation, any attempt to offer a 'general explanation of religion.'³⁴⁴ He single-handedly took to task both his colleagues at the fifth section, as well as the bulk of contemporary practitioners of the history of religions. He threw down the gauntlet in 1885, in a scathing review of Goblet d'Alviella's inaugural course on the history of religions that had just been delivered at the University of Brussels. Vernes thought that the history of religions was suffering from a 'deplorable absence of method,' that it was demonstrating an abusive use of theoretical systems, which resulted in phantasmagorical

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁴² Ivan Strenski, 'The ironies of the Fin-de-Siècle Rebellions against Historicism and Empiricism in the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Fifth Section,' in *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of The Sciences of Religion*, ed. Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 160.

³⁴³ It was in fact so extreme, that I cannot find a single other contemporary historian agreeing with him. Strenski's thesis is partially a banality and partially false. It is a banality to the extent that all contemporary historians of religions would have agreed that they were trying to offer an objective account of the historical 'facts.' Vernes was perhaps the only one to signal that the 'facts' were made to fit ready-made theories, like evolutionism. On the other hand, Strenski's argument is oblivious to the fact that there was no real contest at the time between 'empirical' and 'constructivist' modes of scholarship. It is mere presentist illusion to claim, as he does, that there is a 'retreat' from the *histoire historisante* that one can find in Jean Réville's espousal of an 'interpretative history,' geared towards recovering the flavours of the past, 'the human soul' lurking beneath (Strenski, *op.cit.*, 165). Firstly, there is no 'retreat' here, since Albert Réville had been claiming a similar kind of thing since before the fifth section was founded. The very premise of the discipline for the older Réville was that one could recover the religious feelings and thoughts of ages long past. Secondly, Jean Réville, made clear that he still thought he was recovering an actual historical reality.

³⁴⁴ Maurice Vernes, *L'Histoire des religions. Son esprit, sa méthode, ses divisions, son enseignement en France et à l'étranger* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1887), 73.

explanations, and kept the discipline in a state of infancy.³⁴⁵ He gave a more systematised version of the same argument (using sentences taken verbatim from the review) in a book published several years later. The list of 'abuses' and philosophical impositions ran long: the quest for the origins of religion; taxonomical systems based on presupposed yet questionable natural affinities between linguistic families (e.g. Indo-European, Semitic) and corresponding races and religions; the illegitimate use of the comparative method to construct empirically unverifiable mother-religions and to find support for evolutionism, itself an unverifiable hypothesis, as plausible or implausible as the long abandoned primitive monotheism;³⁴⁶ any other arch-explanation of religious phenomena: euhemerism, hero-worship, ancestor-worship or the personification of natural phenomena.³⁴⁷

Jean Réville responded that Vernes' position was tantamount to turning history into a mere 'catalogue.'³⁴⁸ He doubted whether it was fruitful or even possible to write history without any system. It was in the nature of the mind to think systematically, and in the nature of science to work by testing hypotheses—by trying to establish if the 'facts' agreed to a given system. Réville did not see how one could write history without a general view of the evolution of say, a given religion: one needed to use the conclusions derived from a better documented period so as to construct hypotheses about a less documented one. He also pointed out that Vernes' meta-historical critique was shot-through with philosophical principles, obviously at odds with his own disavowal of the philosophy.³⁴⁹

More germane to my own argument, Jean Réville argued that the historian of religions was tasked primarily with the reconstruction of past ideas and past feelings. Far from being a mere archiving appendage, such a historian needed to be able to sympathetically grasp the past, and to offer a living image of it. For him, the historian needed to be a 'psychologist,' someone who knew by experience what a religious sentiment or idea was. He also agreed with Goblet d'Alviella that one had to begin the history of religions with a study of the religions of the 'uncivilised,' because in this way, one would be initiated into the 'psychology of uncultured man.'³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ Maurice Vernes, 'Des Préjugés qui entravent l'étude scientifique des religions,' *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature*, 39 (28 September 1885), 218-221.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 78-91.

³⁴⁸ Jean Réville, 'L'Histoire des religions. Sa méthode et son rôle d'après les travaux récents de MM. Maurice Vernes, Goblet d'Alviella et du P. van den Gheyn,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 14 (1886), 349.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

Nor was Jean Réville the only researcher at the *EPHE* to point to the importance of psychology for the budding *sciences religieuses*. Even Vernes was wont to admit at one point that 'religious psychology' might be useful to the historian in the same way that the study of contemporary society could be useful to the representation of past ones.³⁵¹ Jean's father Albert had also claimed that psychology had a role to play, particularly in the analysis of phenomena of primitive inspiration.³⁵² Hartwig Derenbourg, the section's Islamic scholar, reckoned 'the psychological analysis of ideas' to be among the common intellectual procedures performed by the historian of religions.³⁵³

1.3.4 Auguste Sabatier

In addition to these references to a kind of embryonic or implicit psychology, the fifth section employed two researchers who tried to give psychology a more prominent role in the study of religion. They were Louis-Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) and Léon Marillier (1862-1901).

Sabatier was a Liberal Protestant theologian who had been employed by the fifth section since its foundation in 1886. He studied theology at the University of Montauban, as well as in Tübingen and Heidelberg. From 1867, he taught theology in Strasbourg and later became Dean of the Protestant Theology Faculty in Paris (1895). In 1897 he attempted to distil his theological project in a book titled *Outline of a philosophy of religion based on psychology and history*. Sabatier's argument walked a tight rope between, on the one hand accepting a psychological explanation of religion, while on the other maintaining that religious experience was beyond the pale of any scientific psychology. On the explanatory side, Sabatier provided a psychological account of the origin of religion, which was rooted in an analysis of the birth of consciousness out of the perpetual contradiction between the expansive desires of the self (e.g. for knowledge, pleasure, moral good, etc.) and the contracting limits imposed by nature.³⁵⁴ Along with consciousness, religion, for him, was born out of this constant collision between the self and its own limits, or the limits imposed upon it by the implacable laws of nature. Religion was a practical (not theoretical) answer to

³⁵¹ Vernes, *L'Histoire des religions*, 183.

³⁵² See Albert Réville, *op.cit.*, 212. See also Albert Réville, 'Considérations générales sur les religions des peuples non-civilisés,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 6 (1882), 92-93.

³⁵³ Hartwig Derenbourg, *La Science des religions et l'islamisme* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1886), 33.

³⁵⁴ See Auguste Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion based on Psychology and History* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1910), 15-21. I have also made use of the French edition, as the English translation seems to omit a number of passages. See also Auguste Sabatier, *Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire*. 7th edition. (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1903). The anonymous English translator has rendered Sabatier's 'moi' as 'ego.' I have opted to keep the more neutral 'self' in my description.

this conundrum: it was in fact the mental equivalent of the instinct of conservation.³⁵⁵ With a clear Schleiermachian gusto, Sabatier could not fail to observe that religion started with a feeling of absolute dependence upon an external, universal being. However, as opposed to the German master, Sabatier did not find the essence of religion as residing in this feeling. Rather, he thought that such an essence was to be found in man's attempt to communicate, or to invoke the being on which one felt to depend on. Religion was, more than anything, prayer.³⁵⁶ But if man prayed, so God answered, and revelation constituted the 'objective' side of the subjective prayer.

Sabatier took this psychological-cum-theological analysis as the foundation for the history of religions and dogmatic elaboration. At the centre of his thinking lay the notion of an immanent, in-dwelling presence of the Spirit, of a continuous divine revelation, which informed the development of religious conceptions and led them along the ascending steps of social and cultural evolution. As he repeatedly noted, his main concern was to weld together his own Protestant religiosity with the scientific outlook that he had derived from disciplines such as history and psychology.

Paradoxically, the way he did so, was by maintaining that there was an unbridgeable gap between religious experience and whatever sciences one used to elaborate upon it. As he explained, the main aim of religion was to offer peace and unity of conscience, to place one's self beyond all contradiction. In his own words, 'to know ourselves religiously is not to construct scientific psychology; but that psychology being once constructed, and properly constructed, it is to realise ourselves in our relation both to God and to the world'³⁵⁷

This was a practical end, but one which raised for him the question of the usefulness of dogmatic elaboration. For Sabatier, dogma was useful inasmuch as it rendered those experiences precise, by fixing them into words.³⁵⁸ Psychology and history were only tools that could and indeed had been used in the elaboration of dogma in the past. As the tools got better with time, so did the dogma. Part of Sabatier's argument against Catholics, as well as against other religious theorists was that they worked with antiquated tools, i.e. with a 'mechanical' or 'insufficient' psychology. By contrast, Protestants had the more 'profound' psychology, though the criteria for profundity were not specified. If one presumes any

³⁵⁵ Sabatier, *Esquisse*, 19.

³⁵⁶ See Sabatier, *Outline*, 28. It was Sabatier's contention that he was looking to complete Schleiermacher's definition.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

consistency in the argument, profundity should have been a consequence of using the latest psychological theories, which Sabatier never did. Instead, he was content with the psychology that he inherited from Schleiermacher, Benjamin Constant and Alexander Vinet. Contemporary psychological works were never used in the argument, even though he did include a few of them in the bibliography.

1.3.5 Léon Marillier

Another author who inherited Sabatier's theological disposition was Léon Marillier. He was born in Lyon in 1862 in a Catholic family, studied philosophy in Dijon and obtained his *agrégation* in Paris in 1885.³⁵⁹ Between 1885-1886, he attended Sabatier's course on exegesis at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris. Between 1887-1889, he also taught a course at the same faculty, with the title 'Psychology and its connection with religion.' Around the same time, he appeared to have begun working on a doctoral thesis dealing with the topic of evil in the *Imitation of Christ*, which he never finished. It is unclear at what point Marillier began studying psychology and with whom, but by 1885 he was taking an active role in the institutionalization of scientific psychology: appearing as one of the founding members of the *Société de psychologie physiologique* together with Ribot and Charles Richet, presenting at psychology congresses, and undertaking his own research on hallucinations and the psychology of attention.³⁶⁰ He also became one of the more visible proponents of psychical research in France. In 1891, he brought out an abridged translation of Myers, Gurney and Podmore's *Phantasms of the living*, and he also started a statistical study of hallucinations in normal people in French speaking countries, inspired by the work of the English psychical researchers. In 1888, he began teaching a course at the *EHPS* on the psychological fundamentals of religious phenomena. In 1890, he was given a chair within the fifth section, which bore the title 'History of religions of non-civilized peoples,' and in 1896 he became co-editor of the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, together with Jean Réville. Marillier died an untimely death in 1901, leaving behind him a collection of articles, reviews and translations, but no monographs or major syntheses. His chair was offered to Marcel Mauss in 1902.

³⁵⁹ For information on Marillier's life and work see Pascal Le Maléfán, 'Léon Marillier, figure de la psychologie naissante (1862-1901),' *Bulletin de psychologie* 476 (2005), 267-280. Jean Réville, 'Léon Marillier,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 44 (1901), 167-73. Laetitia M. Conrad, 'Léon Marillier,' *The Open Court* XVI, no. 548 (1902), 50-51. See also Louis Henry Jordan, *Comparative Religion*, 189-91.

³⁶⁰ Le Maléfán, *op.cit.*, 269-71. Le Maléfán speculates that Marillier might have first encountered Ribot in his mother's salon. Réville noted in his obituary that, in his search for psychological understanding, Marillier used to frequent the laboratories of the Faculty of Medicine as well as the wards of mental institutions. See Réville, 'Marillier,' 168.

In his first course as the new incumbent, Mauss offered a tribute to his deceased colleague, while also making clear that he was bringing in a completely different paradigm to the job.³⁶¹ For Mauss, Marillier had begun his academic career at the right time, when the English anthropological school had reached its maturity in the works of Robertson Smith, Andrew Lang and James Frazer, and was hence ripe for critique and discussion. He thought his predecessor had performed a useful service in disseminating and critiquing the works of these authors. As Mauss indicated, Marillier had accomplished his task from the position of a philosopher and a psychologist. He had never stopped being a 'professional' psychologist' and he 'was a definite partisan of religious psychology; he thought he had explained a religious fact when he had taken it back to a psychological law' of universal application.³⁶² In Mauss's view, it was because Marillier was a psychologist that he was also an anthropologist. Otherwise put, it was because of Marillier's interest in finding evidence for psychological laws (such as a 'the law of the unity of the human mind') that he plied the records of ethnographers and the works of anthropologists. In this, as Mauss noted, he was no different than his predecessors and contemporaries like Tylor and Lang.³⁶³

Marillier's most developed statement on how he envisaged the study of religion was given in long encyclopaedia article, published in *La Grande Encyclopédie* in 1900.³⁶⁴ One of the main themes in the article was the impossibility of defining religion in anything other than a 'purely formal' way. As Marillier explained, if one understood religion to be a system of myths, dogmas and ritual prescriptions, one was effectively leaving out everything that gave value and a 'specifically religious significance' to religion. On the other hand, if one took religion to be a collection of feelings, analogous to moral or aesthetic ones, one was taking away all the concrete forms that embodied those feelings, and all that was left was a sort of 'psychological abstraction' that had nothing in common anymore with all those 'concepts, images, acts, affective states, which constitute a religion.'³⁶⁵

Nevertheless, he thought that a good balance between these two opposing modes of description had been achieved by C.P. Tiele and Auguste Sabatier. He summarised their

³⁶¹ M. Mauss, 'L'Enseignement de l'histoire des religions des peuples non-civilisés à l'École des Hautes Études: Leçon a' ouverture du cours 'd'Histoire des Religions des Peuples non-civilisés' (27 Janvier 1902),' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 45 (1902): 36-55.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁶⁴ See L. Marillier, 'Religion,' *La Grande encyclopédie: inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts par une société des savants et de gens de lettres*, vol. 28 (Paris: Société anonyme de la grande encyclopédie, 1900), 341-366.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 341.

approach by pointing to two ideas: 1) that religion was a particular way of life, a sum of emotions that led to particular acts, such as prayer; 2) that religion was essentially a feeling, but a feeling that had to be embodied in concepts, symbols and myths, or else risk evaporating because of its vague, partially unconscious character. This feeling was the soul of all religions and it was analogous if not identical in the heart of the liberal Christian and in that of an Egyptian contemporary with Ramses II. The feeling did not evolve as much as the forms in which it was embodied. At the same time, he conceded that the religious sentiment could not appear identical in all ages and to all human souls, because of the diversity of forms in which it was 'incarnated.' Its identity across time and space was, primarily, an identity of function. He claimed, however, that he could not simply say what this function was, without deforming it through description. Instead, he thought that it was better to outline the main steps of religious evolution and to let it 'define thus itself genetically.'³⁶⁶

Marillier argued that the science of religions was a descriptive discipline, whose role was not to evaluate religious conceptions, myths or symbols, but only to determine how a certain feeling was formed in the individual and in society and how this feeling was transformed into representations and actions. The method of the science was tripartite: historical, comparative and psychological. He described the psychological part as the attempt to separate out what was contingent from what was permanent and universal in religion; following this, one connected these two classes to what was universal and what was particular in the mental structure of races and individuals respectively. This separation then allowed one to subsume the permanent elements under the universal laws of the human mind.³⁶⁷ The work of the psychologist followed upon the path laid out by the historian. He argued that psychologists should not venture into hasty generalizations (especially about complex religions), before the historians, the philologists and the exegetes, had cleared the path through their studies. This caution could be laid aside when it came to primitive religions, which were so similar to be practically one single religion, and where the psychological meaning was evident from the start, because of the undeveloped state of these religions. Nevertheless, a danger lurked here, because the psychologist of religions could be tempted to conjecture that the meaning of certain symbols, myths or actions found in primitive religion could be equally applied to more developed religions, wherein one found the same or similar symbols, myths and rituals.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 343. As he explained in another paper, the task of religious psychology was to use the general knowledge of the human soul supplied by experimental psychology so as to help trace out the general evolution of the intelligence and of the will. See L. Marillier, 'Du rôle de la psychologie dans les études de mythologie comparée,' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 32 (1895): 126.

The questions here, was one of the judicious application of the notion of 'survivals,' which Marillier thought had been abused by Tylor and other anthropologists. In some cases of such 'survival,' one could be dealing with an old symbol that was invested with a new meaning, or what he referred to as cases of 'new wine poured into old skins.'³⁶⁸

Marillier did provide a 'formal' definition of religion, which he claimed to have derived from Goblet d'Alviella, but which was mostly indebted to Tiele:

Religion, in our view, is the collection of affective states awakened in the mind of man by the obscure consciousness of the existence (both inside and outside of him) of Powers that are superior yet analogous to himself, with which he can enter into relation; of representations created by these emotions and which furnish definite objects; and of ritual acts to which man is prompted by the combined action of these emotions and beliefs.³⁶⁹

He also discussed Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence. On the one hand, Marillier found the feeling of dependence to be an essential element in all religions. On the other, he thought that there could be no question of absolute dependence on the part of primitive peoples. The latter felt only relatively dependent on their deities, because they lacked the concept of God's omnipotence, which Marillier thought was necessary in order for dependence to be felt absolutely. Omnipotence was only developed later. At the same time, he also pointed out that there were always other emotions mixed in with dependence in the religious souls: love, confidence, desire, admiration, hate, violence.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, he thought that Schleiermacher's definition worked best when applied to the initial phase of religious development. This was probably because, at its beginnings, religion came closest to being a purely emotional state, even though, in Marillier's view, the same situation obtained as well in the ecstasy of the mystics.³⁷¹

Marillier's account of how religion appeared was only a slight update (through the addition of the subliminal) of Tylor's genetic schema. He claimed thus that the primitive lived in a state of perpetual confusion and fear, unable to tell between dream and reality, always prey to suggestion and to the calls and ideas that sprang from his own subliminal consciousness. Man in this early stage lacked critical faculties and thought only by a succession of images, like a

³⁶⁸ Marillier, 'Religion,' 344.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 345-46.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 358.

child and almost like an animal. In this state, his religion was nothing but a series of emotions weakly connected to unstable and confused images. Originally, there was no rite and no mythical conceptions, but only the terrors of the human soul exteriorised into representations. However, by the very representation of those early emotions, man managed to exorcise to some extent the terrors of the night and the phantoms that haunted his existence. Thus the function of religion, at least in its early days, was one of liberation. However, this seemed to be a function of representation than of the emotion itself.³⁷² The function of emotion appeared to be that of a bridge connecting the obscure consciousness of the Powers that gave one fright with representations. At first, these Powers were not represented as gods, nor even as spirits, but as mere desires, intentions and wills, spread out through nature and subsisting within the soul itself. It was only in the course of evolution that this multiplicity of intentions became assigned to different gods, and then, finally to God. Religious emotion became thus, ultimately, 'the sentiment of a direct communion with god.'³⁷³ As he put it at the very end of his article, the essential in all religions was not the forms it took, but the fact that it was 'a special mode of the inner life,' wherein the individual felt himself in the presence of God, a God that he could not define, but which he nevertheless felt to exist both inside and outside of him.³⁷⁴ Religious feeling was thus the link that connected man to divinity, and also the avenue by which God was continuously incarnated into conceptions, symbols and rites.

There was thus no major difference between Tiele's theory and that advocated by Marillier. Or if there was a difference, that difference lay mostly in Marillier's attempt to bring Tiele's theory in line with the study of the religions of the 'non-civilised'—to effect a rapprochement between anthropology and comparative religion. What was, nonetheless, conspicuously absent from Marillier's schema was the very discipline that he was supposed to represent: experimental psychology. This absence was also noted by Marcel Mauss, in a review of Marillier's article published in 1900/1901 in *L'année sociologique*.³⁷⁵ For Mauss, the contention that one could not define religion and that religious feeling was an irreducible something, a 'function' that could only be tracked in its effects, was evidence that Marillier was trying to smuggle in an extra-phenomenal cause, and that under the name of religious feeling, he was serving up a sort of inner God. He argued that it was because of this hidden theology that Marillier had never attempted to define or analyse this feeling in a way that was

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 348.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 363.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁷⁵ See M. Mauss, review of L. Marillier, 'Religion,' *Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. XXVIII, p. 341, Paris, 1900, *L'année sociologique* 5 (1900-1901), 191-97.

consistent with experimental psychology.³⁷⁶ Mauss also had other criticisms to make, which sprang from the fact that, as an exponent of Durkheimian sociology, he regarded religion as an eminently social phenomenon. As such, he found Marillier's individualist description of the origin of religion to be entirely unconvincing: 'an arbitrary thesis.' In his view, the more one approached the origins, the more religious emotions became collective. One had evidence of this in the religions of the primitive peoples of Australia or America, where religious rites (and the attending feelings) were always collective. There was no reason to suppose that things were any different in the case of 'the primitive horde.'³⁷⁷

Mauss reprised his criticisms in his opening lecture at the *EHESS* in 1902. As noted earlier, he made it clear to his audience that his arrival represented a paradigm change. In other words, the anthropological and psychological method championed by Marillier was to be abandoned. Religious facts were no longer to be explained by general psychological reasons or motivations, but by other religious facts or other social facts. In his view, such general reasons were no explanation at all:

For example, one does not offer a cause for funeral rites by saying that it is love or fear of death. The fact with which mourning rituals are in a direct, immediate connection is family organisation; they depend on the latter, not on vague and indecisive feelings. Moreover, it seems as if the explanations of general and simple psychology have already been found. One has perhaps said everything that could be said about the psychological origins of the notion of soul, of the character of magic as a false application of the principle of causality.³⁷⁸

The death of Marillier did not, of course, mean the death of religious psychology, though Mauss was probably right in assuming that it meant the death of a particular kind of rationalistic psychology that had been used by the followers of Tylor. At the same time, his death and the concomitant ascendance of the Durkheimian school represented the end of attempts to establish in France a psychology of religion as a branch of the *sciences religieuses*. As Patrick Cabanel has remarked, upon the death of August Sabatier in 1901, his course on *Christian Literature* was replaced with one on the *Primitive religions of Europe*, taught by none other than Henri Hubert, Mauss's close collaborator. In 1907, the Durkheimians were also able to successfully block the creation of a new chair in 'the

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 193-196.

³⁷⁸ Mauss, 'L'enseignement de l'histoire des religions,' 54.

psychology of religious phenomena' at *Collège de France*, which was to be offered to Raoul Allier.³⁷⁹ In 1913, another Durkheimian, the sinologist Marcel Granet took over the chair for religions of the Far East at the *École pratique*.³⁸⁰ As we will show through the examples in chapter 3, in the decades that followed, it was primarily the psychologists and not the historians of religions or the anthropologists who carried the torch for the new discipline.

1.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to offer a view of the range of projects for the scientific study of religion, which were put forward towards the end of the nineteenth century. We have started our inquiry with an analysis of Max Müller's theory and particularly his most extensive formulation of that theory in the Gifford lectures. We found that Müller's theory of religion was based on a psychological view that had its roots in the speculations of post-Kantian thinkers like Schleiermacher and Fichte. We have also seen that Müller eventually gave up that theory and ended up with a purely naturalistic understanding of religion: the notion that religion was reducible to the operations of the human mind. At the end of his long cycle of lectures, the conclusion that Müller drew was that the only mystery of religion was the mystery of the human mind, which psychology was called to dispel. Along the way we have also pointed to the meaning of psychology in Tylor's work and to how that work was criticised by Andrew Lang on the basis of another form of psychology, which Lang extracted from psychical research. We then examined Edward Caird's Hegelian inspired science of religion and the closely connected theory of C.P. Tiele. As we have seen, Tiele understood the science of religion to be a psychological science, whose task was to investigate the way in which an unconscious Infinite was incarnated into specific forms (rituals, conceptions, institutions) through the medium of the emotions, intelligence and the faculty of imagination.

Turning to France, we surveyed the uses of Cousinian psychology in the work of Renan and Émile Burnouf, and then turned to the theorists of the fifth section of the *École pratique des hautes études*. Much like their colleagues in England and Holland, we have found the French to profess a similar interest in psychology. The version of religious psychology that permeated the works of Albert Réville, Sabatier and Marillier was quite similar to the one

³⁷⁹ Allier was the author of a massive study of conversion among the 'non-civilized peoples.' See Raoul Allier, *La psychologie de la conversion chez les peuples non-civilisés*. 2 vols. (Paris: Payot, 1925). Patrick Cabanel, 'L'institutionnalisation des 'sciences religieuses' en France (1879-1908). Une entreprise protestante?' *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* (1994), 65-66.

³⁸⁰ Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'Les Sciences religieuses entre la sociologie, le comparatisme et l'anthropologie,' in *Cents ans de sciences religieuses en France*, ed. Jean Baubérot et al. (Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 1987), 81.

taught by Tiele. It was a Liberal Protestant theory that had its roots in Schleiermacher and which assumed that at the heart of all religions there was an irreducible feeling (or group of feelings), an infusing Presence that became concretised into specific forms through the operations of the mind. For these authors, psychology could have a role in determining the way in which the original Presence was being turned into rituals, dogmas, and symbols, but they denied that psychology could have any say about the immanent God that set the process into motion. As I have also noted, through Sabatier and Marillier, the French school came closest to establishing an institutional space for the psychology of religion as a sub-discipline within the science of religions. However, this project was cut short by the death of both Sabatier and Marillier, and by the ascendance of the rival discipline of sociology.

By 1900, the Liberal Protestant presuppositions of the nineteenth century scientists of religions were already being turned into a full blown psychological science of religion through the work of a number of American theorists of conversion. The latter readily adopted the notion that religion was essentially a psychological phenomenon and tried to find ways to measure and analyse it. The most important element that they took from the Schleiermachian tradition was the notion that religion was a form of feeling, that is, an experience, which was only imperfectly translatable into dogmas and institutions. As such, in opposition to their nineteenth century predecessors, who analysed beliefs and myths in order to get at the underlying essence of religion, the psychologists of religion tried to 'catch at first hand the feelings of spirituality,' as E. D. Starbuck later put it.³⁸¹ The way in which they did this, the conclusions they reached, and the fate of their new discipline form the subject of the next chapter.

³⁸¹ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Religion's Use of Me,' 223.

Chapter 2: Affairs of the heart: Conversion and Feelings

*Ich habe keinen Namen
Dafür! Gefühl ist alles;*³⁸²

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the work of a first generation of psychologists of religion and their attempt to create a science of religion around the concept of conversion and through an analysis of the affective factors in religious experience.

Conversions, tent-meetings and revivals were not only common occurrences in nineteenth century United States. They were also experiences that aroused the interest and the intellectual acumen of transatlantic thinkers from at least the time of the First Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s. At the same time, they were also deeply problematic experiences that went to the very heart of what it meant to be Christian. In the eighteenth century, debates about conversion and its attendant bodily manifestations were primarily debates about what constituted 'good' religious experience and how the latter could be distinguished from the twin evils of 'formalism' and 'enthusiasm'.³⁸³ As Ann Taves has shown, by describing the latter categories in psychological and physiological terms, thinkers like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Chauncy succeeded in establishing a naturalistic understanding of religion that sometimes undercut the very experiences that they were trying to secure. In Taves' own words, 'it is only a slight exaggeration to say that in this period "religious experience" was the name Protestants gave to that which survived the attacks of the Enlightenment.'³⁸⁴

This scathed 'religious experience' constituted the subject of various attempts at psychological theorization during the nineteenth century, the latest of which was the academic psychology

³⁸² See Walter Kaufmann, *Goethe's Faust: The Original German and a New Translation and Introduction* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 327: 'I do not have a name/ For this. Feeling is all'. G. Stanley Hall had tacked this quote from Faust at the top of a manuscript containing definitions of religion. See G. Stanley Hall, 'Notes and Epitomes on the Psychology of Religion,' G. Stanley Hall Papers, Clark University, B-1-4-1.

³⁸³ Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions*, 16.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

of religion established in the 1890s.³⁸⁵ The novelty of 'religious psychology' rested on the supposed scientific character of the new psychology and on the questionnaire method that religious psychologists applied to their topic. Ultimately, the certainty of 'science' was hoped to provide the means to a just division between 'good' and 'bad' religion, with practical applications in education and in ministry. As Graham Richards has shown, in the U.S., psychology, in part, grew out of pedagogical engagements (with both children and adolescents) that emphasised the natural character of 'religious' belief and the possibility of strengthening it through education.³⁸⁶ In this context, 'conversion' was taken to be the lynchpin of 'normal' religious growth, as it signalled the transition from childhood to adult life. In other words, it was the process that underscored the very origin of religion, both in the individual, and by extension, in the entire race.

At the same time, its marked emotional content made it a perfect testing ground for the psychologists' affective presuppositions. As I show, 'conversion' had in fact only a short and fulminating history. The first studies in the psychology of religion, published in the 1890s, considered it not only as a main category, but rather as *the category*, as far as religion went. The most notable study of this period was E.D. Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, which, noticeably enough, did not even include 'conversion' in its title. This was perhaps a way of signalling the virtual coincidence of the two terms: the study of religion was the study of conversion. However, by 1911 it seemed to have gone on the decline (otherwise put, the category had lost its central place as the main basis from which to build a psychological science of religion): George Stratton, a psychologist of religion at Berkley, could write a whole book on *The Psychology of the Religious Life* without even mentioning the term.³⁸⁷

This decline was the result of two combined factors: its failure to deliver the much vaunted primacy of the affective as well as the fact that it became so large as to be virtually identical with the process of adolescent development. My narrative does not progress in a strictly chronological fashion. Instead, I follow the development of several notable contributors, with a view to the shifting ways in which they tried to account for the meaning and value of religion, as well as to the lines of influence and intellectual debts between them.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 128-206.

³⁸⁶ Graham Richards, *Psychology, Religion, and the Nature of the Soul*, 15-17. See also G. Stanley Hall, 'The Moral and Religious Training of Children and Adolescents,' *Pedagogical Seminary* 1, 2 (1891): 196.

³⁸⁷ George Malcolm Stratton, *Psychology of the Religious Life*, 2nd edition (New York: Macmillan, 1918).

2.2 James Henry Leuba

G. Stanley Hall claimed he had inaugurated the psychology of religion, by being the first to point out the link between adolescence and conversion in his 1891 study on 'the moral and religious training of children and adolescents'.³⁸⁸ This fact, coupled with his role as teacher of a number of notable religious psychologists, has served to make him into a kind of father of the psychology of religion, though one whose intellectual integrity was questioned even by his students.³⁸⁹ In 1924 for example, E.D. Starbuck wrote to Leuba:

The purport of your letter is the same as mine, namely that the fine old teacher at Worcester was not the originator of the Psychology of Religion. I think it might have been gracious of him not to have assumed whatever credit there is of that sort.³⁹⁰

Notwithstanding these questions, Hall's publications on the topic came much later than those of his students, and it is these students that hold the dubious honour of being the inaugurators of the discipline.

The first of these was the Swiss James Henry Leuba. Leuba was born in Neuchâtel in 1867, the son of a watchmaker whose family emigrated to America after the watch companies of the US made him bankrupt. Before leaving Switzerland he came under the influence of the newly arrived Salvation Army, which managed to effect a conversion. In retrospect, in 1937 he called his conversion experience 'the most beneficial one of my life; it was certainly the most violent one'.³⁹¹

He was educated at the Académie de Neuchâtel (later the University of Neuchâtel) and studied for one year at Ursinus College (graduating in 1888). He spent the next few years working as a secretary for the French YMCA in New York and teaching French in a school in Massachusetts. In 1892 he was offered a fellowship to study for a doctorate in psychology at

³⁸⁸ Hall, *op.cit.*, 205. As his biographer points out, this connection was common knowledge in 19th century American clerical circles. See Dorothy Ross, *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as a Prophet* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 334.

³⁸⁹ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Religion's Use of Me,' in *Religion in Transition*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (London: George Allen & Unwind Ltd., 1937), 231-32. James Bissett Pratt was probably the first to refer to Hall as the originator of religious psychology. See James Bissett Pratt, 'The Psychology of Religion,' 436.

³⁹⁰ See E.D. Starbuck to James H. Leuba, 4 November, 1924, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

³⁹¹ See James H. Leuba, 'The Making of a Psychologist of Religion,' in *Religion in Transition*, 178.

Clark, under G. Stanley Hall.³⁹² According to his own reminiscences, he was from the start adamant that his topic should be conversion, but Hall was unsupportive and did his best to make him give it up.³⁹³ In his doctoral work, Leuba used questionnaires, as well as interviews and biographical accounts. Part of his dissertation was published in 1896 as a long article in the *American Journal of Psychology*.³⁹⁴

As Leuba put it in this study, 'if religion has any reality, it must perforce express itself in psychic and physiological phenomena.'³⁹⁵ It is these phenomena that a science of religions should occupy itself with, not beliefs (either old or new), but the 'religious experiences named *sense of sin, repentance, remorse, aspirations toward holiness, regeneration (conversion), trust, faith*.'³⁹⁶ These 'affective problems' constituted the essence of religious life. Too much ink, he complained, had been expended uselessly on the attempt to understand the intellectual and metaphysical presuppositions of religion. However, while the noetic impulse was undoubtedly a constitutive element in primitive religion, it was not the only one, nor perhaps the most important.³⁹⁷

Religious experience, for him, was independent of intellectual concepts. In opposition to what he regarded as the intellectualistic theory of authors like Spencer, Leuba claimed that religion was primarily an emotion and not a belief.³⁹⁸ At bottom, religion sprang from nothing save a '*feeling of unwholeness [...], of sin, to use the technical word, accompanied by the yearning after the peace of unity*.'³⁹⁹ Buddhism offered the clearest example of this radical divorce between concepts and religious experience. Gautama was not concerned with metaphysical speculation, but with salvation as a 'practical psychological reality' and with deliverance from evil passions. The same experience underscored the lives of Buddha, Christ,

³⁹² See also James H. Leuba to G. Stanley Hall, 30 May 1892, G. Stanley Hall Papers, Clark University, B1-6-7.

³⁹³ James H. Leuba to Edwin D. Starbuck, 28 October 1924, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

³⁹⁴ Towards the end of this article he announced that he would shortly publish a second part that would deal with the 'physiological forces at play in religious life'. See James H. Leuba, 'A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena,' *American Journal of Psychology* vol. VII, No. 3 (1896): 370. This seems to have remained unpublished, unless it is an article that he published the following year, in which he attempted a physiological and deterministic interpretation of the 'moral imperative'. But this latter article seems more restricted in scope than the one he announced. See James H. Leuba, 'The Psycho-physiology of the Moral Imperative,' *The American Journal of Psychology* 8, 4 (1897): 528-59.

³⁹⁵ James H. Leuba, 'A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena,' 310.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 311. In an annotated copy he added 'Psychological' next to 'Science of Religions'. See James H. Leuba, 'A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena' [offprint], 310. James H. Leuba Papers, 'Published Works: 1890-1900,' Bryn Mawr College.

³⁹⁷ Leuba, 'A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena,' 313.

³⁹⁸ See also Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, 671-704.

³⁹⁹ Leuba, 'A Study,' 315.

and countless other religionists after them—they all wanted wholeness and moral harmony. Rationalizations were always post-factum.⁴⁰⁰

Despite the fact however, that Buddhism would seem to offer a clearer understanding of religious experience than Christianity, Leuba still felt the need to argue that Buddhism was 'comparatively inferior' to Christianity. The reason was not metaphysical paucity but rather 'the greater weakness of the moral promptings of the Hindoo race' (and 'intellectual weakness', he added in an annotated copy of the article).⁴⁰¹ For him, this weakness was evident in the fact that Gautama took years to achieve his inner unity, whereas Christ possessed his from the beginning of his ministry.

Leuba was satisfied that the content of Christ's ministry was essentially the same as that preached by contemporary Protestant ministers. When Jesus said that 'I and the Father are one' he simply meant that he had achieved regeneration or moral unity. It was his disciples that made his practical and empirical religion into a bundle of metaphysics. A truer side current had, however, kept alive the actual teaching: one found it ever again in the medieval mystics, as well as in Luther, Loyola, Assisi, Fox, Edwards.⁴⁰²

This essentialist version of history had a clear aim for Leuba. By pointing out that religion boiled down to the same affective, non-intellectual experience, he could claim a special place for psychology in the work of clearing up what theology and metaphysics had only confused. In his own words:

When the division between metaphysics and science has been fully recognized in Religion, the church will take cognizance of facts only, and leave to independent specialists the post-experiential speculations.⁴⁰³

It is not difficult to imagine who Leuba was thinking about when he referenced 'independent specialists'. But the question was how to elaborate such post-experiential speculations. According to him, at one end of the spectrum, such speculations needed to leave room for physiological considerations: 'moral dualisms and their reductions are the psychic correlates of the establishment of new physiological functions.'⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 316-17.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 317. See also James H. Leuba, 'A Study' [offprint], 317, James H. Leuba Papers, Bryn Mawr College.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 318-319.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

At the other end, the psychologist had to establish a kind of phenomenology of affective states in their succession in the conversion process. As such, the experience of 'sin' could be said to be modified by various ideas. It was not an affective experience *tout court*. Rather, in some cases, 'the *natural* sin-pain' was intensified by religious ideas that pointed towards God as an inexorable judge, who had already passed judgment on the sinner. But there were also people who have escaped theological instruction, and who merely experienced sin as an inability to do what they feel to be right. The latter ones did not indulge in speculation. They were simply miserable (physically and morally) and wanted to be delivered from their misery in the here and now.⁴⁰⁵

At bottom, the sinner was quite right to feel miserable, because he/she really was so, due to the discomforts caused by unhealthy living. Religious ideas (about eternal damnation etc.) got their reality feeling from this real sense of discomfort, but they in turn gave rise to grosser feelings such as apprehension and fear. The ideas themselves however, had no bearing on the outcome of regeneration. They were superfluous additions.⁴⁰⁶

The second phase of conversion, according to Leuba, was 'self-surrender'. As one approached conversion, the will, 'strangely enough', became weakened.⁴⁰⁷ One could will oneself into salvation. Rather, a quiet 'organic transformation' worked itself out until, suddenly, moral unity was achieved at the expense of a class of desires which are subdued by newer more powerful ones.⁴⁰⁸

This 'organic transformation' was reflected in the order of feelings that succeed each other in the process. According to Leuba, their 'ideal type' order was: 'sin, humility, impotency, utter wretchedness, despair, self-surrender, hope, trust, love, faith'.⁴⁰⁹ He mentioned that one did not find them all in this order in every conversion narrative. For some, it was humility that prevailed. For others, it was impotency, despair, or sometimes love. Circumstances and temperament were paramount in reckoning why a certain feeling was more intense for one person, and why it seemed to lend its hues to the whole conversion process.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 329, 334.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

A significant portion of the rest of Leuba's paper was devoted to showing that the intellect played an altogether insignificant part in the conversion process. The cases of Jonathan Edwards, Saint Augustine, John Wesley, Charles Finney, were all brought to testify that 'faith' is arrived at with no interference from reason whatsoever.⁴¹¹ For him, one did not even need to know anything about religion in order to be converted. Col. H. H. Hadley's testimony (a well known converter of drunkards) could be adduced to show that many poor wretches were converted despite their lack of theological instruction, and even in states of extreme inebriation or delirium tremens.

Rational argument, he wrote, was equally powerless for the converted. Just as one did not reason one's way into conversion and regeneration, one could not be reasoned out either. The cold philosopher failed to see how otherwise sensible people can subscribe to the superstitions of faith. Such a philosopher did not realize however that 'the intellect is the slave of affections and of sensations.'⁴¹²

On one hand, one could observe more clearly this slavery in cases of mental pathology.⁴¹³ On the other, the difference between conversion and one's mundane moral struggles was not one of indifference for Leuba: in the former the whole person was involved—it was a fight to the death, whereas one's every day moral dilemmas were merely fights for first blood.⁴¹⁴ Leuba was rather sketchy when it came to spelling out what this difference actually meant, but he did agree that 'the facts justify the church in its claim that the true Christian possesses a life in which the mere moral man has no share.' The difference between the two would be as that between love and mere affection and friendship.⁴¹⁵ This description seemed to suggest that the value of it was eminently subjective. But there was also an objective side. Conversion was a reorganization of nervous energy, a change of association pathways: 'salvation is known as a need' and the process bespoke perhaps 'the mystery of evolutionary forces driving humanity to goals it understands not'.⁴¹⁶

While church doctrine usually misinterpreted the process, Leuba claimed it had gotten at least one thing right, even if it had expressed it inadequately. This thing was the 'illusory nature of the will' and the strict physiological determinism underscoring every conversion. In

⁴¹¹ For the distinction he draws between 'belief', 'opinion' and 'faith' see *ibid.*, 338.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 349.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

theological language, he argued that this determinism was what the churches called 'the grace of God'.⁴¹⁷ Despite these statements, it should be noted that Leuba was not a materialist, but as he put it himself in an unpublished note, a 'panpsychist'.⁴¹⁸ As a remark by Arthur Daniels, another one of the Clark psychologists of religion, demonstrates, it was totally conceivable to imagine conversion as both physiologically determined and the work of God at the same time:

If the criticism is passed that this discussion makes regeneration a "natural process" and leaves out the supernatural element...my position may be made a little clearer by asking if there is not a "supernatural element," so-called, in the laws and phenomena of mental life already considered?⁴¹⁹

Turning back to Leuba, he seems to have modified his opinion about the nature of religion by the turn of the new century. In an article published in *The Monist* in 1901, he in fact proceeded to take a radically different approach. In his earlier work he had subscribed fully to the Schleiermachian-inspired definition that made religion into a uniform, trans-historical feeling which could only be theorized upon *post-factum*. This time, he launched into a critique of all one sided attempts to reduce religion to a single essence—be it intellectual, affective, or voluntaristic. In 1901, in keeping with the Müller and Tiele tradition, Leuba also began to refer to a singular 'science of religion,' instead of the plural 'science of religions,' which he had used before.⁴²⁰

For Leuba, the reason why all definitions of religion failed had less to do with the scope of religious life itself. Most authors, he conceded, would have agreed on where religion was to be found. Rather, the disagreement sprang from a lack of understanding as to the basic terms of psychology⁴²¹, as well as from a tendency to highlight those aspects of religion which conformed best with the definer's own impulses and interests:

The artist, the voluptuary, the mystic, never lose sight of the feelings, because in feeling they find their life; the man of action cannot forget the impulses, the

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁴¹⁸ The note is found in an annotated copy of his papers. See James H. Leuba, 'The Psycho-physiology of the Moral Imperative' [offprint], James H. Leuba Papers, Bryn Mawr College.

⁴¹⁹ See Arthur H. Daniels, 'The New Life: A Study of Regeneration,' *The American Journal of Psychology* 6, 1 (1893): 100.

⁴²⁰ James H. Leuba, 'Introduction to the Psychology of Religion,' 196-97.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 206

desires, the will; but the philosopher, who is so only by virtue of his intellectual activity, is condemned by the very nature of his employment to intellectualistic one-sidedness, unless the Gods have poured upon him all the treasures of the horn of plenty.⁴²²

Furthermore, in a rather uncharacteristic passage, he proceeded to a thoroughgoing critique of the notion of 'essence' itself. Did essence, he asked, mean that which was sufficient in itself to constitute 'religion'? That could not be, for if the 'feeling of dependence' was there, one also needed a thought of God, or of a universe that one was dependant on. Did it then mean something which was found nowhere else in man's life? That would not do either, for that would extend the realm of religion far beyond what the authors of the definitions would themselves allow. Did it then mean that which was foregrounded in the individual consciousness? That would not do either, for some people were more intellectual, others more inclined to feeling, and others still to a life of action. Ultimately, he concluded, it was better to leave 'essences' altogether out of the definition.⁴²³

But though he left 'essences' out of the definition, he brought them back in the conclusion, which stipulated that 'the reflex-arc was the type of all living activity'.⁴²⁴ According to him, the psycho-physiological theory of the reflex arc could allow one to trace religious experience from its beginnings in some impulse to its discharge in an action or a movement. Thinking and feeling constituted a kind of 'place of transit' along the route, but could be totally absent in certain activities that became habitual and were performed 'automatically'. As to where 'religion' was to be found along this path, the answer was postulated but never explained: 'religion' was to be found in the 'means', whereas impulses, needs, and ends were always the same as all the other human ones.⁴²⁵ William James was quite appreciative of Leuba's newfound definitional criticism, while, true to his cause, Marcel Mauss expressed disagreement with the notion that the science of religion had its starting point in the study of individual consciousness.⁴²⁶

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 208.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 211

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁴²⁶ See Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James as Revealed in Unpublished Correspondence and Notes, Together with his Published Writings*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1935), 347. M. Mauss, review of 'Introduction to a Psychological Study of Religion,' by James H. Leuba, *L'Année sociologique* 5 (1900-1901): 199-200.

Leuba's utilitarian theory was further developed in his 1912 book *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future*. As he articulated it in the preface, the task of the psychologist was to discover the psychological processes underscoring 'the experience of salvation' with a view toward the 'scientific control of the factors entering into that experience'.⁴²⁷ As it should be clear, this position was a far cry from the one entertained in his doctoral research on conversion. For whereas there he had considered the experience of salvation as an essentially physiological process fully independent of reason and fully outside of its influence, he had now come to see understanding as a force that could be deployed to master the various 'factors' of the experience.

Working from data that he had collected through questionnaires over several years, Leuba concluded that what characterized religion was an 'an appeal...to a class of powers which may be roughly characterized as psychic, superhuman, and usually, but not necessarily personal'.⁴²⁸ In the period since his 1901 'Introduction' he also seems to have been converted to the voluntaristic point of view. Religion, he averred, was an 'expression of the will to live and to grow.' It was 'a particular kind of activity,' 'a type of behaviour.'⁴²⁹ However, despite his clamour about 'activity,' Leuba has very little to say about what people actually did in religion. For him, the majority of religious individuals had little concern for speculation. They believed what suited them best. James's 'will to believe' was not a prescription for how to act, but a description of what was already happening in all domains of life, not just in religion.⁴³⁰

People wanted to use God for particular purposes, which could be explicit or not.⁴³¹ Explicit results included the control of nature, the action of gods and spirits upon the mind. Non-explicit effects were 'the gratification of the lust for power and of the desire for social recognition', the mental stimulation that came from the belief that there is an invisible world, as well as the moralizing and socializing influence that religious conceptions usually have.⁴³²

⁴²⁷ James H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), ix.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴³⁰ It took him only a few months to arrive at this position. See James H. Leuba, 'The Contents of Religious Consciousness,' *The Monist* 11, 4 (1901), 555.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 31: 'The religious consciousness refuses to deal with intellectual problems.'

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 11-14.

According to this position, religion had a value and a function for the individual. Leuba agreed as much, though in practice he was wont to minimize its value in any specific area of human life with every chance he got.

One can clearly see this happening in the chapter on religious feelings. This time he no longer tried to identify the physiological state that underscored such feelings, but rather to write a brief history of emotions.⁴³³ His first move in this chapter was to take issue with the position established by Ribot, according to which fear was the dominant feeling in primitive religious life.⁴³⁴ For Leuba, there was nothing in fear that made it more suitable than other emotions for the establishment of religion. One could clearly imagine primitive people as having a certain degree of kindness, appreciation and even real affection for their divine Creators. This could be established both *a priori* as well as with reference to animals. Horses on the American plains ran chiefly for pleasure before the arrival of hunters. Animals that have not had a contact with humans usually showed no fear towards them.⁴³⁵

At any rate, if fear was dominant in the beginning, it was because of the 'circumstances of existence', and not because of an intrinsic relationship between fear and religion. Fear was the first organized emotional response, as well as the most biologically valuable in the beginning.⁴³⁶ In present day society, this was no longer the case. Fear had clearly been displaced by more tender feelings. One can clearly see the progression in the tone of religious revivals.

Whereas Jonathan Edwards had threatened sinners with the fire and brimstone of hell, the contemporary evangelist Moody spoke mainly of love and the joys of heaven.⁴³⁷ In questionnaire answers one can also read the disappearance of fear from religious life. Out of a specimen of three hundred, only two respondents declared themselves swayed by fear. Both

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 126. The same chapter was published in a slightly revised form as an article a month later. See James H. Leuba, 'The Development of Emotion in Religion,' *Harvard Theological Review* 5,4 (1912): 524.

⁴³⁴ This assumption was usually referred back to Petronius' verse: 'primus in orbe Deos fecit timor'. Ribot didn't subscribe to it fully, but thought that fear was mixed in with some form of attraction or sympathy. See Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, ed. Havelock Ellis (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd., 1903), 309. The French edition was first published in 1896. See Théodule Ribot, *Psychologie des Sentiments* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1896), 302. Hall also subscribed to the view that fear was constitutive of religion- some inferior ones at least. See G. Stanley Hall, 'A Study of Fears,' *The American Journal of Psychology* 8, 2 (1897): 232.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

of these, he declared, were clearly constitutional phobias who clung to obsolete Christian doctrines.⁴³⁸

But if fear was no longer the dominant religious emotion, that was not due to religion: 'to take it so would be to put the cart before the horse'. Religion did nothing but mirror what happened in society at large.⁴³⁹ People were no longer moved by fear not because religion had made them less fearful, but because the causes of fear have been removed: wild beasts, wars, and enemies were no longer imminent threats. Natural phenomena were understood and mastered. Intellectual education and reflection allowed men to take possession of their emotions. The practitioners of mind-cure and the Christian Scientists fought against it as against their foremost enemy.⁴⁴⁰

Historically, the decline of fear was accompanied by an increase in a nobler sentiment, namely awe. Awe was a recognition of greatness: 'it gives the first sense of a not unfriendly relation with the cosmos'.⁴⁴¹ But awe still had the disadvantage that all powerful emotions had: it arrested the thought, it limited the intellect and made one lapse into an animistic stage. A savage still lurked in the depths of most people. Even those that declared themselves irreligious still called awe a religious emotion.⁴⁴² However, he could hope in good tidings for the future: positive reactions (love, sympathy, tenderness) were already becoming the norm throughout society, as they were more suitable to the conditions of civilized existence.⁴⁴³

It should be said that Leuba is by no means original in this developmental scheme. Largely, it was borrowed from Ribot, with the exception that, as opposed to the latter, he did not seem ready to take it to its ultimate conclusion, namely that religion will ultimately have to be replaced by a 'religious philosophy'.⁴⁴⁴ What he would have liked to have instead was a religion that both conformed to science, and still furnished a believable 'idealistic element'.⁴⁴⁵ Positivism and ethical principles were in his view insufficient for such an ideal to be believable.⁴⁴⁶ His own future religion would work by focusing on a Bergsonian Creative Energy as it manifested itself in 'Humanity' and its achievements, and also in its heroes. Such

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 137-38.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁴⁴ See Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of the Emotions*, 317.

⁴⁴⁵ Leuba, *A Psychological Study*, 326.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 321.

a religion would have rituals, as well as ample scope for the expression of joy and sorrow, of 'weakness and imperfection', and for the human 'need for comfort and encouragement.'⁴⁴⁷

2.3 Edwin Diller Starbuck

Starbuck's career and his book on the *Psychology of Religion* (1899) have received significantly more attention from historians than Leuba or any other religious psychologist other than James.⁴⁴⁸ This, in a sense, is not surprising, given both the breadth of his study, its endorsement by James himself, as well as his seeming priority in the founding of the sub-discipline.⁴⁴⁹ This priority can however be questioned, as both him and Leuba started their doctorates in the same year (1893), working with similar tools, and with commensurate presuppositions. Though Starbuck was more forthcoming about his beliefs, both of them subscribed to a similar immanentist theology and both attempted to reform 'religion' on the basis of psychological principles.

As Christopher White has argued, such assumptions were typical hallmarks of an entire generation of liberal Protestants who struggled with the contradictory demands of a traditional Christian upbringing and their own scientific education.⁴⁵⁰ Despite the struggle however, they were optimistic enough that it could be overcome. In his autobiography, Starbuck evidently relished the opportunity to present himself in this contradictory fashion: as a 'warring between tenderness and toughness, between acceptance and doubt, between inner sensitivity and vigorous intellectuality, etc.'⁴⁵¹ He described his childhood in idyllic terms: a life among the Indiana pastures, replete with bucolic joys, kind parents, and the understated spirituality of a Quaker household.⁴⁵² After high school, he briefly turned to teaching. In an act of seeming conformism, he succumbed to a wave of revivalism and converted. The experience left him searching for more, as his 'heart had not been on the whole "given to the Lord". He experienced doubts and 'the dramatic battle...between Adam and the monkey'.⁴⁵³ As an undergraduate at Indiana University, his doubts were only deepened, fuelled by his scientific training, and by philosophy. Still, he struggled for the "'Unity of Opposites'". He

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁴⁴⁸ The earliest study is Booth's doctoral thesis from 1972. See Howard J. Booth, *Edwin Diller Starbuck: Pioneer in the Psychology of Religion* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981). See also Taves, *op.cit.*, 264-66 and White, *op.cit.*, 134-58.

⁴⁴⁹ James authored the book's preface.

⁴⁵⁰ White, *op.cit.*, 8.

⁴⁵¹ Starbuck, 'Religion's Use of Me,' 206.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 209. See also Edwin Diller Starbuck to Fannie Cox Farrel, 18 April 1935, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 215.

started attending Harvard in 1893. While there, after many a solitary walk, he finally had his 'conversion':

It was like a recoil from disturbing tensions, an uprush of animation, a sunburst of illumination..."I, a mind, a body-mind, am in and of a universe of meaning. The values of art, religion, human relations, and ideal strivings, are at one descriptively, with the formalized objects of thought and perception."⁴⁵⁴

This was the experience of *unus mundus*, at least as far as values were concerned. The doubting had a goal and he had attained it. At the same time, he could now understand his own sense of an 'Interfusing Presence'⁴⁵⁵ and his own calling: the 'irresistible urge', the "mission"...to try to render thinkable and usable the illusive realms of religion'. The Psychology of Religion was the force that pushed him forward, and he was its regenerated prophet.⁴⁵⁶

This fact seems to have escaped his most careful exegete. As White would have it, Starbuck and Leuba both had 'failed' conversions, and both struggled to find meaning in the puzzling and unseemly experiences of their youth.⁴⁵⁷ They found it difficult to reconcile the value they assigned to religion with the grotesque manifestations of evangelicalism. Starbuck in particular could only do so by separating the experiences from their contexts, turning into statistical tables and predictable sequences the forces that seemed absurd and illogical.⁴⁵⁸ Such tables seemed to confirm the religious psychologists' belief that educated, liberal Protestants were temperamentally less susceptible to conversions.⁴⁵⁹ This descriptive statement turned into norm when the time came to present educational goals: violent conversions led to confusions and to doubt. Gradual awakenings were patently better.⁴⁶⁰ In other words, their goal was a watered down, domesticated religiosity, but at the same time they also yearned for the harsher, more 'real' sentiments of the evangelicals and the mystics that they could not be.

The problem with this bird's eye view of the religious psychology's ideology is its sweeping generalization. Nor is the blanket usage of the term 'failure' to describe Leuba and Starbuck's

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴⁵⁷ White, *op.cit.*, 136-7.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

personal conversions justified, since neither of them uses it in their account. In the case of Leuba, it is even difficult to imagine what a 'failed' conversion might look like. Since conversions for him are essentially physiological processes running their course, the only way they could 'fail' would be for them not to take place at all, or to stop before ending, which is not the case. Concerning Starbuck, the implied 'failure' of his first conversion is more likely a narrative device meant to underscore his 'metaphysical illumination' at Harvard and his true calling to the 'psychology of religion'.⁴⁶¹ At the same time, there is no sense that Starbuck considered evangelical conversions as unseemly, or that he thought they always resulted in confusion and doubt. In fact, his conclusions in the *Psychology of Religion* bear testimony to the exact opposite conclusion.⁴⁶² What Starbuck did oppose in evangelical revivals was not their absurd character, as White would have one believe. Rather, he opposed the fact that they attempted to elicit conversions in the same way for everybody. They did not attend to the minutiae of individual difference. As he would himself put it in a later article, in conversion, individual nuances were paramount:

The word [conversion] cannot be rightly defined, for each case of conversion seems, in most respects, to be unique,—just as are poems or plots of plays, or scientific discoveries, or peculiarities of "personality", or sunsets.⁴⁶³

In his *Psychology of Religion*, Starbuck set about trying to grasp at least some of this individual uniqueness. To do so, he declared, one needed to deal with facts and with actual experiences. Only so could one, as he put it, 'catch at first hand the feelings of spirituality'.⁴⁶⁴ He began his study by examining what he called 'the line of growth in religion'. By this, he meant both conversion, as well as the milder transformations of character that took place in individuals during adolescence. The difference between the two was one of emotional intensity and nothing more.⁴⁶⁵ The method he chose, and which he popularized, was that of a questionnaire that attempted to put the respondent in the 'desired state of mind' which would elicit a narrative without fishing for answers. He averred that great care was taken to

⁴⁶¹ In an article on 'conversion' written after 1932, he wrote of a category that he called 'the state of being "thrice born"'. He included in it those people who experience a second conversion in their mature years. The examples he gave were of the Buddha and Seneca, but it is not unlikely that he would have included himself as well. See Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Conversion,' 5. Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

⁴⁶² Edwin Diller Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness*. 3rd edition (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1911), 357.

⁴⁶³ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Conversion,' 1.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 405.

minimize the effect of the 'personal equation'. Tabulating the answers and drawing charts was seen as the most effective way of minimizing his own influence on the material.⁴⁶⁶

Starbuck began circulating his questionnaire while still at Harvard, but in 1895 moved to Clark to continue his doctorate under Hall.⁴⁶⁷ His degree was granted in 1897, after what seems to have been a rather botched examination. In September 1897 he remembered the incident in a letter to Hall:

I am glad you found the thesis passable...especially after the complete flunk I made on examination. As it is, I fell grateful to the faculty for forgiving those miserable three hours of blank nothingness. I try to preserve my self-respect by looking on them as I do in the hours between 10 Pm and 6 am.⁴⁶⁸

Despite these misgivings, his thesis was probably not bad, and in his private notes, even Hall later agreed that Starbuck's research was first-rate and that 'we are still dependent upon this book [*Psychology of Religion*] for the great mass of our information about religious experiences, preceding and following the process of regeneration.'⁴⁶⁹

For Starbuck, conversion was a distinctly adolescent phenomenon that seemed to occur mainly between the ages of 10 and 25.⁴⁷⁰ As he speculated, there were both psychological and physiological reasons for this: conversion seemed to occur during the period of most rapid bodily growth, and also to coincide with the 'birth of rational insight' in the individual's consciousness.⁴⁷¹ With respect to motives, rational considerations seemed to play a small part: instinctive and subjective forces (fear, hope, conviction of sin) were more important

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁴⁶⁷ In 1896 he sent a letter to Hall that contained a long list of books he had read in preparation for his degree. He underlined those that he had 'read well'. From the point of view of the 'science of religions', the list contained: Clarke's *Ten Great Religions* (read well), Müller's *Science of Religion* (read well), his *Physical Religion* and *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Manual of a Science of Religions*, George Rawlinson's *Religions of the Ancient world*, Monier-Williams' *Brahmanism & Buddhism* (read well), Oldenburg's *Buddha* (read well), Robert Hardy's *A Manual of Buddhism* (read well), Auguste Barth's *Religions of India* (read well), Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Copleston's *Buddhism Primitive and Present* (read well), Tiele's *Outlines of a History of Religions*, Eugène Burnouf's *Introduction*, as well as a number of translated primary texts: Patanjali's aphorisms, The Dhammapada, Rig- Veda, The Koran, etc. See Edwin Diller Starbuck to G. Stanley Hall, 15 December 1896, in G. S. Hall Papers, B-1-6-11, Clark University.

⁴⁶⁸ Edwin Diller Starbuck to G. Stanley Hall, 29 September 1897, G. Stanley Hall Papers, B-1-6-11, Clark University.

⁴⁶⁹ See G. Stanley Hall, 'Notes on the Psychology of Conversion' [no date], I. G. Stanley Hall Papers, B1-4-1, Clark University.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

than objective factors (such as social pressure, teaching, imitation), if one left revival cases aside.⁴⁷²

The states of mind preceding conversion were different individually, but most found themselves on a continuum ranging from estrangement from God, sense of sin, restlessness, anxiety, uncertainty, helplessness and humility, etc. As these negative feelings predominated in consciousness before conversion, it was perhaps fair to say that conversion signified 'a process of struggling away from sin, rather than of striving towards righteousness'.⁴⁷³

In terms of feelings, women seemed more prone to purely affective experience (depression, sadness, etc.) while males showed a tendency to 'doubts and questioning'.⁴⁷⁴ Such differences doubtless told the tale of a 'lack of active temperament in women', of a passivity which made them accept more easily 'the help of the external institutional system in working out their life-problems'.⁴⁷⁵

At any rate, when combining all the data together, he found that in general, the sense of sin and depression predominated across the board, being as such '*fundamental factors in conversion if not in religious experience in general*'.⁴⁷⁶

Ultimately the cause for such feelings had to be sought in organic and temperamental conditions. Starbuck was not really interested in pursuing these temperamental differences himself, but was happy to take on board the conclusions of George Coe, a psychologist who was himself pursuing the topic of conversion at Northwestern University.⁴⁷⁷ Coe's study proposed that the people who were most likely to have a definite conversion experience were who were 'sensitivity predominant' variety and had a tendency to mental automatisms. His method included questionnaires as well as laborious interviews and sessions in which he attempted to hypnotise his subjects to test their suggestibility. He hoped that by a thorough

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 53-55.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 67. In his unpublished 'Notes on Conversion', G. Stanley Hall criticised Starbuck for precisely this point. He claimed that Starbuck had unwittingly suggested this point to his subjects by the way he worded his questionnaire. On the basis of some preliminary questionnaires, Hall thought that on the contrary, love and positive feelings were in fact fundamental. See G. Stanley Hall, 'Notes on Conversion', 7.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 71. Starbuck quoted from Coe's manuscript, as Coe's study would be published only in 1900. The suggestion to look for temperamental differences had come from Starbuck's first paper on the topic, as Coe himself acknowledged. See George A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900), 107. See also Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'Contributions to the Psychology of Religion,' *The American Journal of Psychology* 9, No.1 (1897): 110. On Coe's work see David Henry Bremer, 'George Albert Coe's Contribution to the Psychology of Religion' (PhD diss., Boston University, 1949).

account of each subject's temperament and suggestibility he could make all conversions conform to law. This was in patent opposition to Starbuck, whom he criticised for writing that a number of religious experiences 'seem to come in the most unaccountable ways'.⁴⁷⁸

As it will become clear, the latter point had a crucial importance for Starbuck because of the importance that he assigned to unconscious forces. In a typical conversion experience, emotional states seemed to descend through dejection and sadness until coming to a point of transition after which the feelings went up, the negative ones being replaced by joy and peace.⁴⁷⁹ For him, the point of transition was not taken to be always a moment. It could take a while before the change was completely wrought.⁴⁸⁰ Also, the descent into negative feelings did not always need to be complete (as was the case with the 'escape from sin' type of conversion that was usually the prerogative of older persons struggling with 'wayward lives').⁴⁸¹ It could take a positive form of *spiritual illumination*, this being the most typical form for adolescents. A significant difference from Leuba's account was also that a number of converts (even if a small one) seemed to accomplish their transformation by consciously willing it. For most, however, conversion came in the form of the 'bursting forth' of the new life.⁴⁸²

The presence of spontaneous illumination or awakening meant, for Starbuck, that what was happening in conversion was to a large degree the result of unconscious forces that interacted with, and were either retarded or helped by what was taking place within consciousness:

The picture seems to be that of a flow of unconscious life rising now and then into conscious will, which, in turn, sets going new forces that readjust the sum of the old thoughts and feelings and actions.⁴⁸³

The function of the will in conversion was to give the unconscious forces a direction of growth. These would then do the work and give back to consciousness the solution, in the same way that the solution to a problem one had worked on at night was found with ease in

⁴⁷⁸ George A. Coe, *op.cit.*, 108. See also Starbuck, 'Contributions to the Psychology of Religion,' 81.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 104. He was also less clear than Leuba as to whether it was all the result of mere physiological process or not: 'Whether the flow of physiological processes first gives rise to the thought product, or whether the incipient conversion holds a causal relation to the flash of new life and activity, cannot be determined.'

the morning.⁴⁸⁴ In the ultimate stages before conversion, self-surrender was necessary in order to let the nervous currents work out on their own the proper direction of growth. Self-surrender was necessary because the personal will could not always know the exact direction of personal growth. There was always an element of novelty, of 'unaccountability'.⁴⁸⁵

In effect, what the struggling adolescent felt in conversion was nothing but the birth-pangs of a new centre of personality. Conversion was a more complete and definitive process of what was going on normally in any human life: sudden awakenings, emotional shifts, or sudden breakings of habit- '*each of these experiences is a part of which conversion is the whole.*'⁴⁸⁶

The pain, the sense of incompleteness seemed to be nothing but the psychic correlates of what was happening in the brain during adolescence, namely the formation of new nerve centres and the build-up of high potentials of this energy, which for the moment could find no outlet of expression.⁴⁸⁷

When that outlet was found, what resulted was in a sense, a new person, a fully grown man or woman, ready to take his/her place in society. The effects of conversion could be said to have a salutary effect inasmuch as the new person renounced the narrow egotism of childhood and the dependence on society and parents. The convert became ready to take his/ her place in the larger life and to engage in fruitful activity for others: 'self-interest becomes transformed into love of God'.⁴⁸⁸

In terms of feelings, Starbuck showed more ambiguity than Leuba did in his conversion account. While he considered the sense of sin, the despair of conviction to be fundamental factors in religious experience, he did not think them to be fundamentally *religious feelings*. Rather, as he explained in one of his final chapters, properly *religious feelings* were a prerogative of the adult person. Such feelings included: dependence, reverence, *a sense of oneness with God*, faith, etc. The fact that dependence was at the top of the list seemed, as he explained, to offer some kind of empirical vindication of Schleiermacher, even though other similar feelings (reverence, oneness, etc.) were just as prevalent.⁴⁸⁹ The exact reason why these feelings were taken to be religious was only summarily explained.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 150, 199.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 393-94.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 332.

As Starbuck had it, their religiousness seemed to come from the fact that they expressed a 'relation between the self and the larger life outside'.⁴⁹⁰ As for childhood and adolescence, these two offered little terrain for the development of such noble feelings. The child was either credulous or otherwise had a narrowly utilitarian relationship with God: loving Him but also attempting to bargain and use Him for petty ends. This came from the fact that religion was '*distinctively external to the child rather than something which possesses inner significance*'.⁴⁹¹

As for adolescence, its function as a period of transition meant that *religious feelings* were hard to find—it was precisely at this time that such feelings started brewing. In the adolescent, religious instincts were either in abeyance⁴⁹² (while intellectual, moral and aesthetic interests took centre stage), or they were absorbed 'in that organic mass of feeling that is surging up during youth'.⁴⁹³ Such feelings were only précised and made clear later on.

As it should be clear from the foregoing discussion, despite his statistical tables and his quantifying methods, Starbuck was too much of an individualist to imagine that one could ever fully account for each person's own personal transformation. The effect of this individualism was that there was no way of saying that it was generally true that gradual awakenings were better than sudden conversions. Rather, it depended on individual temperament and on exterior conditions whether one was better suited than the other. However, this assumption was not a normative statement, since people always followed 'the laws written in their own beings' irrespective of the ideals that the churches or Starbuck held up.⁴⁹⁴ At the same time, White's suggestion that Starbuck held up the ideal of the gradual awakening as a reflection of his own liberal intellectual ideal over against the older emotional norms of revivalism is equally misguided. On the contrary, even if Starbuck did in some way think that rational subjects were more prone to gradual awakenings and that emotional subjects were more likely to undergo dramatic conversions, he identified himself with neither group. As I have pointed out, in his autobiography he clearly stated that he was both emotional and intellectual. While White reads this as an admission of an essentially divided will, I read it as an assertion of his own 'unity of opposites' and of the fact that he saw himself as above both categories—which in turn is what allowed him to understand them in others.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 274.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 410.

But if conversion itself was the achievement of unity and harmony working itself out in the physiology and psychology of adolescence, the question that remained unanswered was how essential was religion in this process. Starbuck was clear that religion provided an ideal, and that different religions authorized higher or lower forms of ideals. The worth of such ideals rested in their social value and in the way in which they successfully managed to guide one through the troubling period of adolescence.⁴⁹⁵ In other words, there was no need for them to be Christian, but they could equally be Buddhist, other-worldly, ethical, or philosophical.⁴⁹⁶ Ultimately, what the psychology of religion seemed to show, was the superfluity of religion.

2.4 William James

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James pondered a question that had also troubled Starbuck: how to reconcile the idiosyncrasies and particularities of individual 'experience' with the universalist discourse of science. In other words: is a 'science of religions' even possible? What would this science look like? What were its building blocks? The answer, in fact, lay once more with 'feelings' and with the individuals that had them.

But from the very start, James made little allowance for specifically 'religious' feelings. As he explained, religious feelings were only varieties of feelings one had usually in any other kind of human situation: 'Religious melancholy, whatever peculiarities it may have *qua* religious, is at any rate melancholy. Religious happiness is happiness.'⁴⁹⁷ And so on. The only way one could understand these emotions in religion was by comparing them with other similar emotions, not by pretending that they were 'out of nature's order altogether.'⁴⁹⁸

James seems to have stumbled upon this theory in a book titled *La religion* by French philosopher Étienne Vacherot, which he first read in 1869 and then again when he was preparing the Gifford Lectures.⁴⁹⁹ Vacherot was a prominent republican thinker during the

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 405. As he was careful to point out, almost all societies had customs of puberty that were meant to guide the budding member of society through this difficult and confusing period. At the same time, the only difference that he seemed to find between Christianity and other faiths was that as a 'mature' religion, the ideals it fostered were superior to what for example was preached in the 'Vedic religion', which seemed to authorize a more narrow individualism. See *ibid.*, 393.

⁴⁹⁶ See Starbuck, 'Conversion,' 1-6. Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

⁴⁹⁷ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. 10th edition (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd), 44.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁹⁹ William James to Charles Ritter, 21 January 1869, in Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James*, volume 4, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 358-9. See also William James to Henry James III, 8 February 1900, Skrupskelis and Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James*, volume 9, 140 and William James to Henry James III, 13 March 1900, in Skrupskelis, *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 9, 590.

1850s and 1860s. In 1852 he was dismissed from his teaching position at the École Normale for refusing to swear an oath to Napoleon III's regime. His rationalist and anti-Catholic stance was still in full swing in *La religion*.⁵⁰⁰

According to him, in order to decide whether religion is a transitory or permanent fact in human life it is not sufficient for history to show its constancy and universality. In addition to this historical view, one needs to establish psychologically whether religion is 'the expression of a faculty, a sentiment, or a permanent need of Humanity.'⁵⁰¹ His claim is that there is no such faculty or sentiment or need and that for example it is possible to have similar kinds of feelings in respect to other cultural products: art, poetry, philosophy or science. There is no need to suppose that one's tears for the death of Jesus are only genuine when one is convinced of his divinity. One could indeed have genuine tears for him also if he is only a man who shares in our common humanity.⁵⁰²

One's feelings are not inherent in the objects that excite them- they are inherent in human nature and they can be equally awakened by religion as by philosophy or art.⁵⁰³ Vacherot does not doubt that feelings are the essence of religion—but what he doubts is that there are *sui generis* feelings- that is feelings that somehow escape the laws of human psychology.⁵⁰⁴

For him, the purpose of this theory is that of ushering in a new era of human development, one in which the childish, infantile ideas of religion would be replaced by more mature conceptions of the universe—those of philosophy and of science. He contended that just as there is a childishness and maturity of the human spirit in general, there is also a childishness and maturity of religion which corresponds to the degree to which religions are more or less metaphysical and abstract.⁵⁰⁵ As such, the more intellectual a religion is, the more developed it is, but that does not change the fact that all religions correspond to a mere phase in human history—a phase which could and should be overcome.⁵⁰⁶

James lifted this theory of emotions from Vacherot but dropped the implication that if the human feelings were the same in any human affair there was no reason why they could not be

⁵⁰⁰ Vacherot later converted to monarchism and Catholicism. See Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 129-65.

⁵⁰¹ Étienne Vacherot, *La Religion* (Paris: Librairie Chamerot et Lawreyns, 1869), 269.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 278.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 282, 300.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 313.

awakened by philosophy or science, as much as by religion. At the same time, he flipped around the notion that metaphysical and theological acumen is what made a religion developed and mature. On the contrary, James made clear that in religion the emotions were paramount, while intellectual elaborations were secondary and did not always do justice to the lived experience that produced them.⁵⁰⁷

But though there were no particular emotions that made themselves felt in religion (but merely the usual storehouse of emotional responses to religious objects), he did agree that a certain *solemnity*, a certain *seriousness* did characterize religion—at least 'at [its] extreme development' if nowhere else.⁵⁰⁸ At the same time, he contended that religious happiness was not mere release and enjoyment (as Havelock Ellis had claimed), but preserved some bitterness mixed into the sweetness.⁵⁰⁹

He speculated that there seemed to be in our consciousness something like a special faculty, '*a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence*'—something more general than any of the particular senses—and which could be awakened both by the senses as well as by ideas and abstract conceptions.⁵¹⁰

James sought to elucidate this type of feeling by giving several examples of 'felt presences' gathered from his friends and from the *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*.⁵¹¹ As he explained, this feeling seemed to be at the origin of the usual fluctuations in the lives of so many religious people. It also seemed to be at the origin of our more cherished conceptions—of which rationalism gives only a *superficial* account. In his own words,

in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favour of the same conclusion.⁵¹²

At the same time, he also suggested (perhaps jokingly) that for the psychologist, the tracing of the organic seat of this feeling 'would form a pretty problem'. Nothing would for example, be easier than to connect it to the muscular sense: in such a view, *something* (i.e. an object)

⁵⁰⁷ William James, *The Varieties*, 415.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74-77.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 88.

would be taken as being real to the extent that it 'made our flesh creep'—or to the extent that it made our muscles innervate themselves.⁵¹³

For the rest of the lectures, James stayed clear from theorizing about feelings. He simply stuck to describing the emotional component in relation to the topic he was discussing (healthy-mindedness, the sick soul, conversion, saintliness, etc.) In terms of conversion, his description seemed to follow that of Starbuck, but with some noticeable differences.

Firstly, though conversion did mean a unification, a mending of the divided self, a change in the '*habitual centre of [one's] personal energy*', James doubted whether psychology could give an accurate answer to the questions of *how* and *why* this change happened in any particular case. For him, psychology could only provide a general description, which was at any rate doomed to 'fall back on the hackneyed symbolism of a mechanical equilibrium'.⁵¹⁴

James agreed with Starbuck that conversions were probably normal phenomena of adolescent growth which theology only made shorter and more intense.⁵¹⁵ He disagreed with Leuba's emphasis on the lack of intellectual notions in conversions. That was indeed true for some, but in other cases (like Tolstoy's), the lack of rational meaning was precisely what triggered the conversion experience.⁵¹⁶

So there were conversions and conversions, and some people never converted, either due to their intellectualism or some other inhibitory factor. But even some of these 'inhibited' people sometimes converted, and 'such cases more than any other suggest the idea that sudden conversion is by miracle'.⁵¹⁷ Some seemed to be able to accomplish it voluntarily (like the preacher Charles Finney). Others needed the subconscious to kick into gear, and some needed to reach a kind of emotional exhaustion (a state of apathy) before they acquired the higher emotions that attended regeneration.⁵¹⁸

In terms of 'fruits', James quickly pointed out that, visibly at least, there were none. There was no difference to be observed between the converted and non-converted, at least when it came to 'the usual run of 'saints', the shopkeeping church-members and ordinary youthful or

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 201: 'our explanations...get so vague and general that one realizes all the more the intense individuality of the whole phenomenon.'

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

middle-aged recipients of instantaneous conversion'.⁵¹⁹ Whatever 'fruits' there were, were for the individual only, though that did not diminish them in any way. One acquired a '*willingness to be*', a release from worry, a harmony, a peace, a joy that were quite considerable.⁵²⁰ In a different passage, he referred to such passions as *gifts*:

Conceive yourself suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it *as it exists*, purely by itself, without your favourable or unfavourable, hopeful or apprehensive comment.⁵²¹

Such a thing, he declared, was probably well-nigh impossible. One simply could not imagine a universe where no part was more important than the other, and where objects were void of any interest, meaning, value and so on. The point of this exercise was to impress the fact that whatever value, interest, and meaning one found in the world, came as a 'pure gift of the spectator's mind'. There was nothing inherently interesting or hateful or despicable about the world. We made things so based on our emotions. But the way in which we acquired our emotions towards the universe was a matter of mystery. At bottom, emotions depended perhaps on our organic constitution. Or perhaps not. Emotions were 'gifts, either of the flesh or of the spirit; and the spirit bloweth where it listeth; and the world's materials lend their surface passively to all gifts alike.'⁵²²

Such gifts were those that were obtained through conversion, no doubt. But for some at least, certain passions seemed to be a part of their character, as was the case with heroes, reformers, and saints. These had an 'inborn genius for a certain emotion' which allowed them to sweep aside any inhibitions and obstacles they might find in their way. Emotions were 'the steam-pressure' that drove such characters, and 'given a certain amount of love, indignation, generosity, magnanimity, admiration, loyalty, or enthusiasm, or self-surrender, the result is always the same.'⁵²³

As James put it in the lecture on philosophy, 'feeling is the deeper source of religion [...] and philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue.'⁵²⁴ That such translations were necessary, that people could not operate at the

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

level of 'dumb feeling' alone, this much was a given. But as he had it, such rationalizations had to be made in a comparative way—and starting from the facts of experience- and not a *priori*, as theologians and philosophers had done it until then.

At any rate, it was doubtful whether any theologian did anything else than simply re-state the facts of individual experience in a more generalized language—and with little use in rendering religion universal or making its value unfold from the mere propositions of pure reason. Ultimately, the *feeling* part of religion could not be accounted for by the operations of reason: 'there is always a *plus*, a *thisness*, which feeling alone can answer for.'⁵²⁵ However, philosophy in its new guise 'as science of religions', could still be useful as a pruning tool (cutting away accidental accretions) and as an instrument through which to examine various over- beliefs and mediate between religious systems and believers.⁵²⁶

Despite these, that is, despite the systems and over-beliefs, James agreed that at bottom that feelings that inspired them were 'almost always the same'.⁵²⁷ In almost all the cases examined, one was dealing with 'sthenic' affections, that is with emotions which helped one overcome 'temperamental melancholy'. Such feelings came as a solution to human uneasiness and fragmentation: they provided an exit from the drama of existence through the instrument of a connection with 'the higher powers'.⁵²⁸ Ultimately, in religion one became conscious of a 'More' that was coterminous with, and of the same nature as oneself. Salvation meant finding a way to identify with this 'More', whenever the '*lower being [had] gone to pieces in the wreck*'⁵²⁹

James's text was at once both a pinnacle of the 'psychology of religion' as well as its most thorough refutation. On the one hand, his goal from the very start had been to provide an account of the variety of individual experiences. To Frances Rollins Morse he wrote in April 1900:

The problem I have set myself is a hard one: 1st to defend (against all the prejudices of my "class,") "experience" against "philosophy" as being the real backbone of the world's religious life...to make the hearer or reader believe what I myself invincibly do believe, that altho all the special manifestations of religion

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 436.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 437.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 481.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 484

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories) yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function.⁵³⁰

On the other hand, he seemed to leave open the question of what those experiences were of. He called them 'religious', but only provisionally—'*for the purpose of these lectures*'—and with the caveat that his own definition was as arbitrary as all the others that had been shot down by Leuba in his 1901 article.⁵³¹ This seemed to suggest that what he was in fact working towards was not a 'science of religions', but rather an account of his own over-belief, even if an over- belief whose components (individual experiences) were deliberately left to stand out by themselves in the course of the narrative. Stated bluntly, this over- belief was that certain emotional 'states of transformation' had a healing and restorative effect upon those who were afflicted by pain and misery.⁵³² Religion was thus a kind of medicine, but a personal medicine whose mechanism of action remained unknown and possibly beyond the pale of rational investigation. All that his 'science' could do was point in its direction and try to evoke it through personal accounts.

2.5 The Intimate Senses

By 1904 Starbuck was trying to redress the offhand way in which he had dealt with 'religious feelings' in his *Psychology of Religion*. In the latter he had agreed with Leuba that the sense of sin, the despair of conviction corresponded to physiological states. But these, as he pointed out, were not particularly 'religious feelings'. Religious feelings pertained to maturity alone, but he never explained what exactly it was that made them religious (as opposed to merely social), nor had he tried to present the physiological law that presumably underscored them.

It was in a 1904 review of James' *Varieties* that he first broached the issue of the epistemological and axiological value of religious feelings. Starbuck had several critical points to make. Foremost among them was James's selection of material from the more intense and eccentric examples of religious life at the expense of the mass of humanity which, he thought, had as much if not more to say about the development of religious sentiment.⁵³³

⁵³⁰ William James to Frances Rollins Morse, 12 April 1900, Skrupskelis and Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 9, 185-86.

⁵³¹ William James, *The Varieties*, 47-48.

⁵³² The notion that James was studying 'states of transformation in the *Varieties* is taken from Sonu Shamdasani. See Shamdasani, 'Psychologies as ontology-making practices,' 33. For the influence of the medical worldview on James' life and thought, and his equation of evil with disease see Emma K. Sutton, 'Re-writing "the laws of health": William James on the Philosophy and Politics of Disease in Nineteenth-Century America' (PhD diss., University College London, 2013).

⁵³³ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'The Varieties of Religious Experience,' *The Biblical World* 24, 2 (1904): 104.

His second criticism, however, had to do with the issue of feeling. James, he declared, had really not been consistent with his own theory of emotions when he had claimed the primacy of feeling in religious experience. Feeling, in fact, according to the James-Lange theory was nothing but the conscious report of the deeper reactions to the environment that were taking place inside the organism. 'Feeling was the internalizing of activity or will', he wrote, quoting Dewey. They were just as much by-products of life-processes as was reason. Both of them gave an account of the inner life, of one's relation to the environment as well as an estimate of one's adjustment to that environment.

Starbuck's particular twist to this was to claim that feelings were as much as source of knowledge as reason. The only difference between them was that reason dealt with the discrete facts of experience which were determined by the five senses and the activity of cerebrum, whereas feelings gave an account that was 'immediate, whole, unanalyzable' and which found its source in the sympathetic nervous system and in the 'organic' sensations.⁵³⁴

Starbuck's claim was that if one took feelings to be criteria for conduct and hints of life-movements, then religion would be found 'essentially in the active response the individual makes to the things of life'.⁵³⁵ In such a case, extreme forms of sentimentality would be an indication that the experience was becoming or already was superficial—presumably because excessive sentimentality was taken as being paralyzing and not conducive to action. This position, he claimed, was implicit in James' book.

A second point he made was that if feeling did constitute this kind of inarticulate (and *inarticulable* form of knowledge), then the notion of 'higher powers' could be dispensed with as being unessential and a mere after-thought. Indeed, he claimed, any other object could do in its stead, provided it was 'general and intangible enough to represent an all-embracing and indefinable state'.⁵³⁶

James conceded some of these points in a letter he sent to Starbuck in August 1904. Even though he agreed to the general criticism that he had unduly emphasised extreme cases, he claimed that he was after all justified: 'it would never do to study the passion of love on examples or ordinary liking or friendly affection, or that of homicidal pugnacity on examples of our ordinary impatience with our kind.' In terms of 'higher powers', he wrote that he was

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

not sure if Starbuck was not right after all. But at the same time, he could not 'see clearly over that edge'. As for the question of feelings as sources of knowledge, he encouraged him to pursue it and said he looked forward to the article and the book.⁵³⁷

For unknown reasons, Starbuck never published the announced book on religious feelings. His only publications on the topic in subsequent years were an article in the second issue of Hall's *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* (1904), and a much later version published in *The Journal of Religion* in 1921.⁵³⁸

In his 1904 article, Starbuck contended that the basic fact of life was a 'tendency to reaction' in the presence of a multitude of stimuli.⁵³⁹ Of the numerous possible responses some were selected because they fitted the need of the organism and were passed on through heredity. There were then specialized means of taking note of 'complex elements of life', especially those that happened beneath the reach of consciousness. Feelings were exactly such a specialized instrument for taking note of 'the meaning of life movements'.⁵⁴⁰ The example that he used was that of hunger and satiety. These were 'subjective' feelings that nevertheless described an actual objective state of the organism. They differed from more sharply defined senses (like vision) only to the extent that the data coming from the latter could be broken down and analysed into discrete and quantifiable units. Hunger was however, of more qualitative nature. A feeling like hunger

seizes upon the outer world at the points at which this touches the subjective life, and couches its reading always in terms of well or ill-being, whether it is the amoeba selecting between yeast plant and harmful food substance, or the religionist wrestling with the problem of immortality.⁵⁴¹

Religion, in this reading, was a '*feeling adjustment* to the deeper things of life'.⁵⁴² Starbuck thought he could find evidence for this conception in the fact that many religions attempted to do away with ordinary sense-impression, and to negate everything specific from the field of

⁵³⁷William James to Edwin Diller Starbuck, 24 August 1904, Skrupskelis and Berkley, eds., *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 10, 458-59.

⁵³⁸ The topic was also made the subject of a book by E. Leigh Mudge, one of Starbuck's students at the University of Iowa. See E. Leigh Mudge, *The God Experience: A Study in the Psychology of Religion* (Cincinnati: The Caxton Press, 1923).

⁵³⁹ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'The Feelings and their Place in Religion,' *The American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* 1, 2 (1904): 173.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 179.

consciousness. Mystics and Buddhists were a case in point, as was the predominance in religious experience of marks of 'organic tension' and somatic reaction: swoons, trances, hallucinations etc.⁵⁴³

Religion was thus a kind of instinctual groping about, but a groping that found what it needed. But Starbuck did not specify what it was that one adjusted to through religion. Nor did he explain the criteria by which to separate good instinctual responses from bad ones, or, differently put, good religions from bad religions.

These issues were not clarified in the next article either. By 1921 however, he had re-christened these feelings 'intimate senses' and had established that there were five of them: kinaesthetic, organic, pain, temperature, equilibrium.⁵⁴⁴ He specified again that these differed from traditional five senses because they were less apt at discriminating qualities, but that they nevertheless allowed for direct and unmediated accounts of reality. They could be seen to function primarily in art and religion and to furnish information that dealt with values.⁵⁴⁵

He found evidence of the work of these senses in the symbolic language of religious texts and practices. These seemed to appeal predominantly to smell, taste, touch and pain receptors deep in the body. The language of the intimate senses made it possible to elucidate quite literally 'the refined odor' of the soul or the meaning of the 'laying on of hands'.⁵⁴⁶ Such symbolic expressions and practices were means of accounting for the information that was being received through the body, via the autonomic nervous system and the basal ganglia. Once again, he found vindication for these ideas in the animal kingdom:

By controlled observation and experimentation it is found that when hogs are given free access to a great variety of foods they will select, guided by a refined hog-wisdom that no one so far has been inclined to ascribe to so lowly a beast...such foods and in the right quantity, as will excel the accumulated wisdom of chemists and physiologists in devising "balanced rations."⁵⁴⁷

A similar cunning of reason underscored man's emotional responses in religion. Starbuck also sought to devise experimental means of testing the action of the 'intimate senses'. He enlisted

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵⁴⁴ Edwin Diller Starbuck, 'The Intimate Senses as Sources of Wisdom,' *The Journal of Religion* 1, 2 (1921): 130.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 133-34.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 135-36.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

the help of several students 'trained in introspection' and had them read poems and Biblical passages. The students were then asked to rate the vividness of each image or word in the text in terms of both intimate and non-intimate senses. The reading of the Beatitudes was quantified in the following list⁵⁴⁸:

Figure 2: The Effect of the Beatitudes on the Intimate Senses, E. D. Starbuck, 'The Intimate Senses as Sources of Wisdom,' *The Journal of Religion* 1, 2 (1921): 139.

For Starbuck, such tables disclosed the way in which religion and art connected directly to the life of the body through the organic sensations they called forth. But he left little room for cultural or social distinctions among the various religious or artistic products that he examined. Rodin, Jesus, The Upanishads, Shakespeare, all worked through the 'intimate senses'. The only difference between them appeared to be quantitative: more kinaesthesia here, less pressure there, etc. At the same time, such seemingly quantitative differences disclosed the qualitatively different worlds behind them. The theory did indeed appear to allow for pluralism: different people sought to adjust themselves to different realities and he conceded that this suggested 'that there is more than one sort of objective reality'.⁵⁴⁹ In turn this raised a number of questions: how many realities were there? How did one know which one to adjust to? How did one distinguish between the good one(s) and the bad one(s)? There was little attempt on Starbuck's part to deal with these questions. Concerning the last one, his only comment was to claim that mystical ecstasy was most likely on the bad side, because it implied a renunciation of adjustment to the outer world in favour of mere inner cultivation.⁵⁵⁰

This statement seemed to gainsay the purported immediacy and wisdom of the 'intimate senses'. They in fact required cultivation or at least some kind of education in order to be properly exercised. This much was implicit in the fact that the students in his study had to be 'trained' in introspection. But Starbuck also cited the results of E. Leigh Mudge (1879-1962), a former doctoral student of his, who in his study on 'the God experience' had found that whereas children had a predominantly visual experience of God, older and more educated people tended to forego the visual for more organic and 'intimate' experiences.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 138-39.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 141

⁵⁵¹ E. Leigh Mudge, *The God Experience: A Study in the Psychology of Religion* (Cincinnati: The Caxton Press, 1923), 17. Mudge's study was based on his PhD research, which was completed at the University of Iowa in 1916.

Starbuck in fact never gave up his pedagogical ambitions, and in the last part of his career he was almost exclusively occupied with the furtherance of children's education through literature. He saw literature as capable of inculcating religious and civic sentiments in a way that traditional Biblical instruction did not provide.⁵⁵²

But at the same time, he based this emotional approach to education on what seemed to be a narrow physiological determinism. Towards the end of his life Starbuck was writing enthusiastically about what he called 'the third revolution in psychology', that is, the 'discovery that the centre of personality lies in the processes symbolized by the hypothalamus, basal ganglia, the autonomic nervous system, the glandular function'. In other words, 'we do not think; we think we think.'⁵⁵³

In conclusion, the position that Starbuck arrived at was a new kind of medical materialism, which differed from the old kind that was scathingly reviewed by James in the *Varieties* only in that it did not draw disparaging conclusions about religion. Religion, for Starbuck, was thus wired into the nervous system. It was not a pathological aberration. The consequences of this position were that neither religious people, nor theologians, nor philosophers, nor even psychologists had anything more to say about the value of what they did. The value of what they did was to be assessed ultimately by physiologists.

2.6 The Difficult Consensus

Starbuck's 'intimate senses' represented the most extreme attempt to bring together the two most cherished assumptions of most religious psychologists: the priority of emotions and the fact that such emotions disclosed a relation to something objective and real that stood outside the subject's narrow individuality. His penchant for physiological reductionism was not, however, taken up more broadly by other religious psychologists in the post-*Varieties* era.

⁵⁵² To a correspondent who asked for his assistance in compiling a volume of biographies of great religious leaders he wrote: 'Speaking for myself alone, who am at least one hundred per cent, I think, religious, I don't wish to win the youth of America to any particular type of belief and attitude; while you seem bent on keeping them Christian. No, I would wish to help youth into being world citizens, into a saving sense of the unspeakable depth and meaning of the life that is with them and then guided by their own finer feelings and by the Soul of the All Real that is about them and within them, to reach their own personal convictions about creeds and doctrines and dogmas.' See Edwin Diller Starbuck to Clarence R. Athearn, 19 June 1940, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California. In a previous letter, Athearn had derided Starbuck's individualism in religion: 'Reality is transcendent as well as immanent, and hence must meet objective as well as subjective tests. Do you accept the proposition that the Nazi interpretation of religion is true for the Nazis? Their conception of religion seems to work satisfactorily so far as they are concerned.' See Clarence R. Athearn to Edwin Diller Starbuck, 5 July 1940, Edwin Diller Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

⁵⁵³ Edwin Diller Starbuck to Albert Wiggam, 18 January 1943, Starbuck Papers, University of Southern California.

The psychological study of 'conversion' waned gradually in the first decades of the twentieth century. This reflected a growing lack of consensus over what actually constituted 'religion', as well as over the explanatory strategies used to account for it. G. Stanley Hall wrote his own contribution in a long, rambling chapter in his second volume of *Adolescence* (1904). The main ideas were a digest of the Leuba and Starbuck accounts, but drowned in a mass of digressions, commentaries, historical and ethnographic material, and above all, exhortation.⁵⁵⁴ His main contribution was to underline the formative effect of the sexual instinct, and the multiple ways in which religion transformed *eros* into *agape*.⁵⁵⁵ Hall saw conversion as a normal transformation of the narrow egotistical self of the child into a new social and relational self. It was a process, and it was best performed slowly. Hall had little patience for sudden conversions.⁵⁵⁶ He disliked 'the pathology of sin' that was imposed on youths by the Churches, and the 'virus of Orthodox theology' that made young people succumb to depression and despair.⁵⁵⁷ Religion belonged to the heart and the instincts, and it is these that had to be cultivated in the budding youth in order for conversion to be effective.⁵⁵⁸ Turning from education to culture and biology, Hall used conversion as the hermeneutical key that unlocked almost anything he could lay his hands on: the metamorphosis of grubs, Plato's myth of the cave, Dante's *Commedia*, and even the entire Bible were all 'conversion "writ large."'⁵⁵⁹

More interesting were his comments on the 'science of religions'. Hall quoted Tiele's observation that 'the science of religion is not a natural but a mental science'⁵⁶⁰ and took this to mean that psychology was the *sine qua non* of any understanding and teaching of religion. For him, the different religions of mankind were all one, if appraised '*sub specie aeternitatis*'.⁵⁶¹ He celebrated the resurgence of Schleiermacher's ideas among contemporary psychologists and sociologists. Schleiermacher's great merit, he observed, was to put forward the notion that 'religion was the highest expression of man's inner states'.⁵⁶² For Hall, this statement meant more than a mere authorization of the human element in religion. It meant

⁵⁵⁴ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. vol. 2. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921), 281-362.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 304. He scolded James for having worked only with such 'abnormal' and even 'teratological' cases in the *Varieties*. Hall, *op.cit.*, 393.

⁵⁵⁷ Hall, *op.cit.*, 317. Just like Starbuck (who most likely got the idea from him), Hall wanted the education of children to focus on the development of the 'mythopeic imagination'. *Ibid.* 318.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 331-33.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 325. See also C.P. Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion. Part I*, 216.

⁵⁶¹ Hall, *Adolescence*, 326.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 326.

the concomitant elevation of psychology to the position of an ultimate soteriology and a latter day dispensation:

Indeed not only great religious movements and awakenings, but psychology itself, consists in realizing in the immanent here and now all the prophesies, dreams, standpoints, and ideals that have seemed remote, supernal, and alien.⁵⁶³

If the churches allowed 'conversion' to go flat, psychology had to take the reins and start preaching it.⁵⁶⁴ But this was not all it could do. Its role was to be that of a harbinger of a new gospel that would 'sublate' the old faiths from around the world into a new religious synthesis.⁵⁶⁵ In Hall's prophesy, psychology of religion was thus destined to become the religion of psychology.

2.7 James Bissett Pratt

By 1907, James Bissett Pratt could write in his first book that he felt no need to dwell on conversions because they had been 'so exhaustively treated by others'.⁵⁶⁶ Pratt, who had just completed his PhD under James, chose to focus instead on the notion of belief.⁵⁶⁷ The importance of belief was underscored in his opening gambit. This told of how if a Martian landed on Earth, the thing that would strike it the most would be the fact that almost everybody on the planet believed in gods no one could see or even fully imagine.⁵⁶⁸ Pratt divided beliefs into three types: primitive credulity, intellectual assent, and emotional belief. Their order was both historical as well as developmental, and Pratt used this schema to trace both the history of various religions as well as the maturation of religion in the individual. His most interesting contribution however, came from a questionnaire that sought to elucidate why people believed in his day. Most people, his results concluded, believed not because they were gullible or because they reasoned out their beliefs, but rather because they had a living sense of God's presence.⁵⁶⁹ Pratt traced this type of belief to what he called 'the feeling background':

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁵⁶⁶ James Bissett Pratt, *The Psychology of Religious Belief* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 222.

⁵⁶⁷ For Pratt's intellectual formation see James Bissett Pratt, 'Zia,' 92-106. James Pratt Papers, Williams College.

⁵⁶⁸ Pratt, *The Psychology of Religious Belief*, 4.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 255.

that heterogeneous mass of rich, subjective, psychic material which surrounds the clearly illuminated focal point of consciousness and owing to its indefinite nature is not susceptible to scientific description.⁵⁷⁰

He described this background as an original chaos pregnant with possibilities and also as representing the genetically inherited wisdom of past generations. His account called to mind Starbuck's own ruminations on the topic:

The organism—our nature as a whole—of which the feeling background is the expression, is essentially right; it is fitted to the universe in which it finds itself.⁵⁷¹

This seemed to imply that religion was a kind of instinct, but Pratt claimed he did not mean this in a technical sense, though he did not clarify the non-technical meaning.⁵⁷² Just like his older colleagues, Pratt attempted to secure a solid, biological foothold for religious experience, in a way that appeared at first glance to reconcile the intimate nature of experience with a 'larger Life' construed ambiguously as perhaps both social and metaphysical.⁵⁷³

But their position was open to criticism, as Edward Scribner Ames showed in his 1910 *Psychology of Religious Experience*.⁵⁷⁴ Ames was educated in his native Midwest, at Yale, and obtained his doctorate in 1895 at the University of Chicago. He began teaching philosophy there in 1900.⁵⁷⁵ Even though he was a minister in the nearby Disciples of Christ Church, Ames's work was fully voided of any transcendent claims.⁵⁷⁶ Rather, he adopted a functionalist position, concerned with working out the implications of the hypothesis that religion was 'the consciousness of the highest social values'.⁵⁷⁷

His criticism of Starbuck and Pratt dwelt on the primacy that they ascribed to the feeling side of religion. Such a primacy, he averred, could not be maintained (as Starbuck had done) on

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁵⁷⁴ Edward Scribner Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience* (London: Constable & Co. Limited, 1910), 321.

⁵⁷⁵ See Van Meter Ames, ed. *Beyond Theology: The Autobiography of Edward Scribner Ames* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

⁵⁷⁶ God, in his conception, was nothing more than the 'Common Will idealized and magnified and presented in personal symbolism'. Edward Scribner Ames, 'The Validity of the Idea of God,' *The Journal of Religion* 1, 5 (1921): 465.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vii.

the basis of a supposed distinction in function between the sympathetic and the central nervous system. Physiology contradicted this supposition.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, both Starbuck and Pratt failed to distinguish between 'feelings' and the subconscious, even though there was reason to doubt that the two were identical. Ames claimed he was sympathetic to their reaction against the older types of intellectualism in religious conceptualization, but in his view, feelings were not the whole story.⁵⁷⁹ Instead, feelings were only the subjective account of deeper, instinctual processes of adjustment. Their function was to signal 'the value of the activity in which the organism is engaged'.⁵⁸⁰ Such activities were crystallized in habits and customs, but habits and customs could be 'illuminated and controlled by intelligence'.⁵⁸¹ The higher forms of religion were supple enough to support and encourage such modulations of activity and hence also of the corresponding feelings.

As it should be clear, there was essentially little difference between this position and those of Pratt and Starbuck. In fact, the only clear difference was that for Ames there was no longer any ambiguity about the life that religion bespoke and furthered. For this was no longer a divine, capitalized Life, but only the 'thoroughly socialized human life constantly moving forward through the free and harmonized activity of the individual members of society'.⁵⁸² Ames had nothing original to say about conversion, but he reiterated conscientiously its stages from other writers (the 'sense of sin', the seeming suddenness of the resolution, the joy of regeneration, etc.)⁵⁸³ He made it clear that he had a low opinion of them: they were a condensation and an intensification of a process that normally took years to accomplish (i.e. education). 'Getting religion' was in fact nothing other than being socialized through education. To attempt to do this suddenly was, to use a simile, like trying to learn Sanskrit overnight.⁵⁸⁴ The result was likely to be a jumble. A St. Paul, an Augustine could be converted because they had exceptional (i.e. neurotic) constitutions. Also, he claimed, their conversions were by no means essential for their spiritual development. So it was doubly wrong to regard their experience as normative.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁸ Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, 325.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 336.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* 258-65.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 265.

In 1929, this distrust of sudden conversions by Ames and other religious psychologists was seemingly vindicated by Elmer T. Clark's large scale questionnaire study, which showed that only a small percentage of adolescents actually had definite conversions experiences. The rest (more than two thirds) had grown gradually into religion.⁵⁸⁶ As Clark pointed out however, he could not be certain if his categories mapped fully onto those used in other studies. Still, he ventured the conclusion that his results nevertheless indicated that undue attention had been paid to a category that represented an exception rather than a rule. As he wrote: 'more than 93 per cent of the persons who to-day call themselves religious have never undergone any such experience, but became religious through a process of growth'.⁵⁸⁷ However, Clark was not the first to point this out. Almost a decade earlier, Pratt had made the exact same remark, though in connection with a stronger accusation. For Pratt, it was not only the case that sudden, emotionally charged conversions did not really happen all that often. Rather, even when they did happen, they happened to people who had been taught to follow a theological model which emphasised the need to feel the 'sense of sin', and to surrender in order to be converted.⁵⁸⁸ Psychologists like Leuba, Starbuck, or James had entered into a vicious circle when they had uncritically adopted the model:

The theologians by their teachings have induced a largely artificial form of experience; and the psychologists coming after, have studied the experience thus induced and formulated its laws, thus making Science verify Theology.⁵⁸⁹

Pratt did not seek to thereby challenge the category of conversion but to enlarge it with more comparative material, from different Christian denominations, and from different cultural areas (e.g. India). By doing so, he aimed to foreground the volitional kind of conversion which had been minimized by James and Starbuck. But even the volitional type was quite rare in fact. For the majority of people, conversion was a gradual, uneventful, and commonplace affair that happened without notice, like a change of musical tastes.⁵⁹⁰

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to trace the development of the notions of 'feeling' and 'conversion' in the work of several psychologists of religion working in the late nineteenth and early

⁵⁸⁶ Elmer T. Clark, *Psychology of Religious Awakening* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 47-8.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁸⁸ James Bissett Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness: A Psychological Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 153.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

twentieth century America. As I have pointed out, most of these saw their contribution as a reaction to the perceived intellectualism of earlier attempts to construct a science of religions. In their view, such a science was meaningful only to the extent that it dealt with what they thought was the primary data for any religion: the actual experience and feelings of individuals. All agreed that in some way, feelings were more primary than creeds and intellectual constructions. But they differed in the way they interpreted this primacy. For Leuba, the primacy of feelings in conversions was a way of highlighting the essentially physiological nature of the process. For Starbuck and Pratt it was a way of maintaining an open and direct channel with the cosmos. For James, it was a means of foregrounding the 'More' and ultimately, the uninterpretable nature of experience. For Ames, it disclosed the individual's indissoluble link with society. But for all of them, such interpretations were possible only because of the postulated possibility of a divorce between experiences and their theological interpretations. That the psychologists' own interpretation was not indifferent, that it had practical as well as theoretical consequences, was not just assumed, but actively and enthusiastically proclaimed. There was a seeming contradiction here, as on the one hand, older theological constructions were taken to have had no essential effect on religious experiences, while on the other the newer psychological theories were hoped to radically alter those same experiences. But religious psychologists did not hope to really alter the experiences, but merely to curtail them by measuring them against the yardsticks of society, of statistical or physiological normality, or even against the pragmatic standard of their 'fruits'.

As James's friend Lutoslawski declared at the 1909 International Congress of Psychology, the only yardstick the psychologists did not use, was that of the believers themselves. For Lutoslawski, 'the brain', or the 'subconscious' were hardly more likely explanations for conversion than God, especially since this was the source that the believers themselves assigned to it, and since the believers' narratives were all the psychologists could use in their theoretical constructions.⁵⁹¹ James was in fact the only one to point out that what such theoretical constructions amounted to was really nothing more than the theorists' own overbelief stated in a general language. He hoped that by comparing these beliefs, by sifting through them, one could indeed create a 'science of religions', a set of statements that everybody could assent to. But he also hinted that such comparisons were sometimes

⁵⁹¹ W. Lutoslawski, 'Psychologie des conversions,' in *VI^{me} Congrès international de psychologie tenu à Genève du 2 au 7 août 1909 sous le présidence de Th. Flournoy : rapports et comptes rendus*, ed. Edouard Claparède (Genève: Librairie Kündig, 1910), 169. See also 'Quatrième séance de Psychologie religieuse,' *ibid.*, 169.

impossible because of the impossibility of translation.⁵⁹² This was indeed a way of admitting that experience was not really simple, or at any rate, that it was difficult to separate it from the language in which it was couched.

When spelled out, such an admission posed intractable problems for the category of 'conversion'. For, as Pratt argued in 1920, in its more extreme sense, the 'conversion' that religious psychologists in fact described was by no means a natural, universal phenomenon, but rather the specific and rare phenomenon of certain branches of Protestant theology. But on the other hand, in its mild sense, 'conversion' blended indistinguishably into mere biological and psychological growth. This conundrum seemed to suggest that 'conversion' could not in fact be used to re-construct the science of religion without dissolving the latter into a specific theology or into general psychology. But 'conversion' was not the only category that religious psychologists had at their disposal. 'Mysticism' could be an equally compelling candidate, and one that seemed to escape the narrow parochialism of American Protestantism. The next chapter will show the development of the category of mysticism in the first decades of the twentieth century, looking in particular at examples from France and Switzerland.

Chapter 3: Mysticism

3.1 Introduction

In 1912, William Ernest Hocking, a leading American philosopher, wrote: 'every treatment of the psychology of religion tends for obvious reasons to become a psychology of mysticism.'⁵⁹³ A decade earlier, William James had declared in his Gifford lectures that mysticism played a foundational role in any religious experience.⁵⁹⁴ Even before that (and certainly since then), books and articles coming from the pen of psychologists had

⁵⁹² William James, *The Varieties*, 387. In connection with the different stages of Buddhist contemplation that he outlined in the lecture on 'mysticism', James commented: 'In the fourth stage the indifference, memory, and self-consciousness are perfected. [Just what "memory" and "self-consciousness" mean in this connection is doubtful. They cannot be the faculties familiar to us in the lower life.]'

⁵⁹³ William Ernest Hocking, 'The Meaning of Mysticism as Seen Through its Psychology,' *Mind* 21, 81 (1912): 44.

⁵⁹⁴ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 366.

proclaimed that mystical figures were an invaluable source from which to draw insights about the workings of the human mind, and about the meaning of religion.

For the psychologists of religion, the problem with mysticism was that, even more than conversion, it was caught up in a wide network of competing meanings, which had to be reformulated or swept aside in order to create a psychology of mysticism. The plurality of 'mysticisms' that could be found in the late nineteenth century meant that when it came to psychology, we are confronted not with a psychology of mysticism, but rather, with a psychology of mysticisms, or even (given the plurality of psychologies around) with a number of psychologies of mysticisms. Notwithstanding this confusing situation, the term mysticism had nevertheless a solid and enduring appeal for psychologists of religion, because it folded within it a number of appealing characteristics: it was a relatively new creation, but had at the same time a seemingly centuries-old patina; it was vague, but nevertheless redolent of the mysteries and extremes of experience, which the psychologists felt called upon to explain and clear-up; it had an important social dimension, in that it seemed to encapsulate an entire range of superstitions and pathological behaviours that psychology's civilizing function had to oppose; it was apparently trans-cultural and had the further advantage of being a marginal category in the other sciences of religion(s). The latter point is evident in the fact that the term 'mysticism' is only seldom used by Müller in *Psychological Religion*, and it's even rarer in Tiele's work. It is also completely absent from the chapter that discusses the key-terms of the discipline in Albert Réville's *Prolégomène de l'histoire des religions*.⁵⁹⁵

In this chapter, I will try to make some order out of the apparent chaos of competing psychological explorations of mysticism, and also point to the fact that there was a noticeable change in the psychological understanding of mysticism that occurred after 1902. We can describe this change as a movement away from seeing mysticism as essentially a single ecstatic state, and into an understanding of it as a process, which quite possibly spanned an entire life.

The chapter begins with an examination of the changing semantics of the term 'mysticism' and its cognates in French and German during the nineteenth century. This discussion provides the background for the rest of the sections, which track the theoretical models propounded by psychologists for the understanding of mysticism. The rest of the chapter

⁵⁹⁵ See Réville, *Prolégomène*, 145-320. The earliest comparative text on mysticism written by a historian of religions that I have found is Edvard Lehman, *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom*, trans. G.M.G. Hunt (London: Luzac & Co., [1904] 1910).

outlines the main theoretical models propounded by psychologists of mysticism, starting with Ribot and his school, and continuing with German ethnologists and ethno-psychologists, proponents of a cosmic approach to ecstasy, and three psychologists who approached mysticism as a process. As in the previous chapter, my main aim is the close reading of these psychological texts, with a view towards understanding how they defined the mystical or ecstatic experience, and how this definition affected their overall understanding of religion and its future.

3.2 The meanings of mysticism

In order to understand something of the cultural location of mysticism at the turn of the century, it is first necessary to pinpoint, as briefly as possible, the semantic shifts that occurred during the nineteenth century.

In English, the term 'mysticism' as a self-standing noun appears in the first decades of the eighteenth century, bearing two meanings: firstly, a sense captured by the expression 'mystical theology' and denoting a practice closely allied with biblical hermeneutics, and the understanding of the hidden, allegorical meaning of scripture; secondly, a derogatory sense, meaning enthusiasm and false religion. The allegorical meaning can also be found in the entry on 'mystique' in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.⁵⁹⁶ As Louis Bouyer has pointed out, the notion that 'mystical' related to the understanding of the hidden meaning of scripture can be traced back all the way to the Church Fathers. According to Bouyer, for the Church Fathers, 'mystical' could be at times applied as well to the liturgy or the Eucharist, as well as to a kind of religious experience of knowing God, but in a way that emphasised the close relations between these three meanings.⁵⁹⁷

The derogatory meaning of mysticism was carried over into the second half of the eighteenth century, being used in debates against Quakers and Methodists. This negative meaning is attested by an entry on 'mystics' in the 3rd edition (1797) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as well as by its use in other British and American dictionaries.⁵⁹⁸ At the same time, a different strand of interpreters, starting with the Anglican Thomas Hartley in 1764, began to see

⁵⁹⁶ See 'Mystique, Sens' in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens des lettres*. ed. D. Diderot (Paris, 1765), 923-924. See Leigh Eric Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern "Mysticism,"' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, 2, (2003): 273-302. See also OED, s.v. 'mysticism.'

⁵⁹⁷ See Louis Bouyer, 'Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word,' in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods (London: The Athlone Press, 1980), 42-55.

⁵⁹⁸ Schmidt, *op.cit.*, 277- 281.

mysticism not as a particular sect, but rather as the spiritual essence of all religions. This strand served as the background for the reinvention of mysticism as a universal category in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Anglo-Saxon world. As Leigh Eric Schmidt has argued, this change of perspective can be seen in the replacement of the entry on 'mystics' with one on 'mysticism' in the 8th edition of the *Britannica* (1858), and in the consequent admission by its author that mysticism was a feature of a great number of texts, from the *Bhagavad Gita* to Swedenborg.⁵⁹⁹ The 8th edition essentially transcribed Robert Alfred Vaughan's flippant definition of mysticism from his 1856 *Hours with the mystics*, proclaiming it to be 'a form of error...which mistakes the operations of a merely human faculty for a Divine manifestation.' In Vaughan's *Hours*, one character further elucidated that mysticism was 'the religion of internal as opposed to external revelation,—of heated feeling, sickly sentiment, or lawless imagination.'⁶⁰⁰ This negative appraisal was carried over into several successive editions as well.

In the 9th edition of 30 years later, Andrew Seth began by declaring that mysticism was 'a phase of thought or rather perhaps of feeling... [an] endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things'.⁶⁰¹ In spite of the initial indecision as to whether it was feeling or thought that ruled the mystic's world, the rest of the article made the case that mystics were indeed rational to the point of being overweeningly confident in human reason. The mystics were, it is true, also reckoned to be passive, sensuous, feminine and unethical. Interestingly, this bundle of 'negative' characteristics (contrasted as they were with the positive, ethical and practical influence of 'religion') was ascribed not to some interference from the emotions, but rather to the crude and hubristic activity of rationality itself. With Kantian gusto (though without his language), Andrew Seth understood the mystic as the prime example of reason trying to out-do itself and failing.

In France, a universalistic concept of mysticism can already be found in the entry dedicated to the topic in the *Encyclopédie moderne*, edited by M. Curtin and printed between 1824-1832. 'As there have been alchemists among all peoples,' the *Encyclopédie* declared, 'all religions have had their mystics.'⁶⁰² Rather than being the province of any special sect,

⁵⁹⁹ 'Mysticism,' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 8th edition, quoted in Schmidt, *op cit.*, 282.

⁶⁰⁰ See also Robert Alfred Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics: A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion*, 6th edition (London: Gibbings & Co., 1893), vol.1, 22-23.

⁶⁰¹ Andrew Seth, 'Mysticism,' *Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and General Literature*, Ninth Edition, vol. XVII (New York: Henry G. Allen and Co. Publishers, 1888), 128-135.

⁶⁰² See 'Mysticisme,' in *Encyclopédie moderne, ou Dictionnaire abrégé des sciences, des lettres et des arts*, 26 vols., ed. M. Courtin, vol. 16 (Paris: Bureau de l'Encyclopédie, 1824-32), 616.

mysticism was, as it were, 'a secret yearning' of the human soul, an exaltation of the faculty of love to the exclusion of the two other faculties (sense and intelligence) that formed a harmonious union in most people. Mysticism was 'a sentiment of love, vague and infinite' that was at the origin of all religions.⁶⁰³ Politically, mysticism could be a dangerous impulse, resulting in a rejection of laws, anarchy and violent excesses. It could also, however, be a force of good, and the Quakers and Moravian brothers were among those commended for their peaceful virtues. By a strange turn of events, the author noted, the sanguinary sect of the Anabaptists, when transported unto a new continent, had given rise to the wisest republic known to history: America.⁶⁰⁴ The author of this piece also noted that a resurgence of mysticism could be observed in France, where it had assumed 'the bizarre name of romanticism,' and where it coloured the pages of Chateaubriand, Lamartine and formed the basis of the philosophy of Joseph de Maistre.

In 1835, Charles Schmidt defended his doctoral thesis at the Protestant University of Strasbourg, dealing with the mystics of the fourteenth century and prefaced by an introduction to the topic of mysticism in general. Relying on a copious German theological literature, Schmidt argued that since mysticism was rooted in human nature, it could best be comprehended by an appeal to the science of the soul or psychology.⁶⁰⁵ Psychology, in this case, boiled down to the attempt to understand the inner conflict that made men into mystics. The question was one of a conflict between desire and possibility, between ideas of perfection, liberty and divinity and the painful realization that the world was broken up, imperfect and ruled by necessity. Following Kant, Schmidt argued that mysticism was born out of inner dissatisfaction with the limits of knowledge. The mystic aspired to know what lay beyond the limits of experience, he wanted to make a science out of what could not possibly be known, but only taken on faith. Unable to resolve the conflict between reason and sentiment, or the real and the ideal world, the mystic thus resolved to follow only the path of sentiment and of an imagination that substituted itself to the faculty of reason. What the mystic desired was an illusory union with the divine, illusory because it could not be accomplished in this world. Mysticism was ultimately an error because it smashed the unity of the human person, since what it proposed was a unilateral development of only two faculties. As he put it:

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 611.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 616.

⁶⁰⁵ Charles Schmidt, *Essai sur les mystiques du quatorzième siècle, précédé d'une introduction sur l'origine et la nature du mysticisme* (Strasbourg: Imprimerie de G. Silbermann, 1836), 9.

Through mysticism the divine is materialised, the invisible is profaned, religion no longer rests in anything but sentiment and imagination; it is no longer the harmonious tendency of all our forces toward the author of all things; it does not enlighten our intelligence nor does it sustain our virtue.⁶⁰⁶

For Schmidt, mysticism was ultimately the result of a diseased constitution, and he recommended that the topic be studied by physicians and physiologists.⁶⁰⁷

A Catholic interpretation of mysticism can be found in the respective entries on the subject in *Encyclopédie catholique* (1839-48) and in *Encyclopédie populaire* (1856-57). In the *Encyclopédie catholique*, the topic of mysticism was an occasion for a brief apologetic of the Christian contemplative life, with which the concept was equated. While its author acknowledged that there were forms of 'false mysticism,' his examples of such falsity were all drawn from Catholic spirituality (Quietists, Fraticelli, Beghards) and there was no sense of a wider, universal family of mystical practice.⁶⁰⁸

In the *Encyclopédie populaire*, 'mysticism' and 'mystery' were folded into a single entry. Mystery was taken to be a quality of the Christian doctrines, which the human intellect could not completely penetrate. Mysticism on the other hand pertained more to the heart. It was the system which regulated contemplative life, or the exercise of piety (*mysticité*). The universality of the mystical faculty was acknowledged, but so was the fact that without the compass of the Catholic Church, the mystic was in fact a mystagogue doomed to perdition. Such was the fate assigned to Gnostics, members of 'Indian sects,' Plato, Swedenborg, Madame Guyon, and others.⁶⁰⁹

Mysticism was taken by Victor Cousin to be one of the four main philosophical systems (along with sensualism, idealism and scepticism) whose interaction and succession he analyzed in his *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie moderne*, delivered originally between 1815-1821 and then reworked in successive editions. According to Cousin, mysticism was a kind of compromise between philosophy and religion, an attempt to enlarge upon the

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁰⁷ See Schmidt, *op.cit.*, 29.

⁶⁰⁸ See 'Mysticisme,' *Encyclopédie catholique: répertoire universel et raisonné des sciences, des lettres, des arts et des métiers, formant une bibliothèque universelle*, 18. vols., ed. M l'abbé Glaire et al. (Paris: Société de l'encyclopédie catholique, 1839-48), vol. 14, 765-66.

⁶⁰⁹ See 'Mystère, mysticisme,' *Encyclopédie populaire*, 2 vols. ed. Isidore Mullois (Paris, 1864-65), vol.1, 1064-65.

spontaneity and the inspiration that gives rise to both of them.⁶¹⁰ Though a big fan of inspiration, Cousin's claim was that such inspiration needed to be developed by reflection. God could only be reached by reason, that is: by thinking. The mystic, on the contrary, despaired of reason and tried to grasp God in a direct fashion. He did so either by exalting and exaggerated feelings or by attempting to go beyond himself, in ecstasy. However, by renouncing reason, the mystic in fact renounced the only possible intermediary between man and God. His efforts were doomed to end in folly or in the sub-human state of ecstasy, sub-human that is, because it was a state from which consciousness had been abolished.⁶¹¹

The popularity of Cousin's philosophy in nineteenth century France meant that his ideas about mysticism were also widely discussed. For example, the article on 'Mysticism' in *La Grande Encyclopédie*, published between 1885 and 1901, is in large measure a digest and criticism of the Cousinian understanding of the topic.⁶¹² For the author of this entry, Cousin's understanding of mysticism as a philosophical system was far too narrow. On the contrary, he thought mysticism was a far more general disposition, which could be mapped out at either a philosophical, religious, or even an ethnopsychological level (e.g. the Germans were taken to be more mystical than the French).

In the German context, one finds an exceptionally rich discussion of mysticism, which runs the entire length of the nineteenth century. It is doubtful whether a single volume would be sufficient to cover the range of debates about mysticism from this period. Instead of attempting to summarize this wealth of material, I will merely point out some of the main axes that guide the debates, and then map out, chronologically, the semantic changes undergone by the term in one of the popular nineteenth century Germany encyclopaedias, the *Brockhaus*. It is important to note, first of all, that in German there are two terms that can be used to translate the English 'mysticism.' These are *Mystik* and *Mystizismus* (in the nineteenth century it appears with the form *Mysticismus*). Mostly in the first half of the nineteenth century, there are attempts by some Christian theologians, as well as by Romantic thinkers, to establish a distinction between the two terms. While the distinction was never fully established (the *Brockhaus* for example lists the two terms as synonymous after the middle of

⁶¹⁰ See Victor Cousin, *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie moderne, Deuxième Serie*, vol. II (Paris: Didier, Larange, 1847), 102.

⁶¹¹ See Victor Cousin, *Lectures on the True, The Beautiful, and The Good*, trans. O.W. Wight (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854), 102-22.

⁶¹² See E.-H. Vollet, 'Mysticisme,' *La Grande Encyclopédie: inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts*, vol. 24, ed. M.M. Berthelot et al. (Paris: Société anonyme de "La Grande Encyclopédie, 1885-1901), 670-75.

the century), its main point was usually to claim that *Mystik* was the true form of mysticism, while *Mysticismus* was its false, negatively connoted counterpart. In the *Brockhaus* encyclopedia (whose entries I will summarise further down), the topic is discussed under the rubric of *Mysticismus* until 1853, at which point they are replaced with entries for *Mystik*, with the mention that the latter is identical with *Mysticismus*. There were however thinkers who held on to the distinction, well after the middle of the century. Eduard von Hartmann, for example, made use of the *Mystik/ Mysticismus* pair in his 1882 *Die Religion des Geistes*, where he used it to distinguish between a true mysticism (*Mystik*), enlightened about the unconscious origins of its state of feeling, and a bad mysticism (*Mysticismus*) that refused to forego its 'repulsive exclusivity' and did not want any knowledge mixed into the void of its feeling.⁶¹³

Thus, authors who wanted to recast mysticism in a positive light, whether it was the Romantic Novalis, the Catholic Joseph Görres with his 4-tome *Die christliche Mystik*, Carl du Prel with his *Philosophy of Mysticism*, or Eduard von Hartmann and his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* often rallied behind *Mystik* and not *Mysticismus* in their writings.⁶¹⁴ Clearly, there were radically different assumptions operating under the guise of this usually undefined term in the works of these four authors: an attempt to vindicate the miracles, the supernatural abilities of the Christian saints, as well as the possibility of demonic-mystical downfall in the case of Görres, an openness towards the mysterious relationships hidden under the surface of things in Novalis, the psychological study of dreams, somnambulism, and other 'altered states,' with a view towards illuminating the 'transcendental subject' for du Prel, or the involuntary emergence of thoughts or feelings from the all encompassing Unconscious in the case of von Hartmann. Novalis also appeared to equate mysticism and the mysterious, as for example in the following line: 'What is *mysticism*?—What must be treated *mystically* (mysteriously)?' Concerning Görres, it should be noted that he was working with a rather broad understanding of mysticism, comprising not only the process of uniting with God, but

⁶¹³ See for example Charles Schmidt, *Essai sur les mystiques du quatorzième siècle*, 25. Grävell, *Der Werth der Mystik: Nachtrag über die alte Mystik und den neuen Mysticismus* (Merseburg: Bei Franz Kobitzsch, 1822), 24. One could add that to this day *Mystizismus* has a negative connotation in German. See Eduard von Hartmann, *Die Religion des Geistes* (Berlin: Carl Duncker's Verlag, 1882), 46.

⁶¹⁴ For Görres see Jon Vanden Heuvel, *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1776-1848* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 310-19. Joseph Görres, *Die christliche Mystik*, 4 vols. (Regensburg: Verlag von G. Joseph Manz, 1836-1842). Incidentally, Görres calls all forms of mysticism *Mystik*, including the demonic ones. For du Prel see Carl du Prel, *Die Philosophie der Mystik* (Leipzig: Ernst Günters Verlag, 1885). Andreas Sommer, 'Crossing the boundaries of mind and body: Psychical Research and the Origins of Modern Psychology,' 136-42. For von Hartmann's statements on mysticism see Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, 3 vols., vol. 1, trans. William Chatterton Coupland (London: Trübner and Co., 1884), 354-372.

practices like divination, theurgy, and magnetism. Görres did not think such practices to be necessarily demonic, as they could, for example, involve merely natural properties or contact with the spirits of light.⁶¹⁵ Despite these differences, there are also similarities between these three views, as they were all reacting in various ways against an Enlightenment scepticism directed against the study of occult faculties.

Another essential axis of debate has to do with the polemic against Pietism (some early nineteenth century authors basically equate Pietism with mysticism), with the location of authors like Eckhart, Suso or Tauler within German intellectual history, or with the value of mysticism for contemporary Protestant life. Particularly important here is the work of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), whose critique of mysticism was widely debated in the late nineteenth century, not least of all by a young C.G. Jung, as we shall see in the next chapter.⁶¹⁶

One more axis of discussion deals with the use of mysticism in works that purport to offer a social diagnosis of the times or cultural critique, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. This social-cultural axis is not restricted to the Germany. In France in 1890 Frédéric Paulhan, a contributor to Ribot's *Revue Philosophique*, published an extended study in which he tried to define the characteristics of the new spirit (i.e. the new mysticism) that animated his contemporaries, and which had effects in the realm of religion, literature, social theory, etc. The mark of the new mysticism for Paulhan was precisely the fact that it was not only mystical but also scientific—in other words it was an attempt to reconcile emotional needs with a scientific worldview. He argued that Theosophy and Spiritualism (both of which claimed to be sciences) could be seen as eminent examples of the new spirit.⁶¹⁷

A notable representative of this socio-cultural critique in Germany was the physician Max Nordau, who penned a long chapter on mysticism in his 1892 work *Degeneration*.⁶¹⁸ Nordau took the Romantic definition of mysticism as the intimation of obscure, mysterious relations between phenomena and used psychology and neurological determinism to argue that the

⁶¹⁵ See Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*. Edited and translated by David W. Wood (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 143 *et passim*. See Görres, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, 15-19.

⁶¹⁶ This 19th century German theological literature on mysticism is summarised in Lisa M. Cerami, 'Ineffable histories: German mysticism at the *Jahrhundertwende*' (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010), 71-94.

⁶¹⁷ See Fr. Paulhan, 'Le Nouveau mysticisme,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 30 (1890): 480-522.

⁶¹⁸ See Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, 5th edition (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 45-144. For a discussion of the use of mysticism by other cultural critics of the day see Cerami, *op.cit.*, 29-63.

belief in such intimation was common, being in fact a symptom of a weak mind, and of a deficit of attention. For him, the minds of the dim-witted mystics were a jumble of associations and representations that they combined haphazardly and were unable to order. Still, in spite of their presumably crippling mental handicap, the mystics were capable of producing art, and of establishing cultural trends-hence Nordau's claim that mysticism offered a hermeneutical key with which to analyse the work of contemporary artistic currents (i.e. Symbolism, Pre-Raphaelitism).

With these several axes in mind we can now proceed to look more closely at the way in which mysticism is defined in the *Brockhaus* throughout the nineteenth century.⁶¹⁹

The term 'mysticism' is absent from the first edition of 1809-1811, but it pops up starting with the second edition (1812-1819).

1817: Mysticism is defined as an 'aberration of the religious feeling,' rooted in 'unbridled fantasy' and 'extravagant sentiment.' Despite this primary, negative connotation, the author also intimated that certain newer authors wanted to use mysticism more broadly, to refer to all that belonged to the feeling side of religion (as distinguished from the rational element). In this sense, he noted, mysticism was inextricably linked with religion. Furthermore, he conceded that during the scholastic period, when religion was treated merely as an intellectual topic, mysticism had had a salutary influence on the promotion of piety. The brief entry (covering about half a page) also sketched out a tradition of mystical writers, which stretched back to Neo-Platonism, and included the names of Dionysus the Areopagite, Johannes Tauler and Thomas à Kempis.⁶²⁰

1820: This entry added another, one might say, artistic dimension to the previous entry: there was, the author suggested, a kind of poetical mysticism, which allowed one to grasp the eternal spirit that underscored the multitude of images, colours and sounds of the world. This was an approvable form of mysticism, and not the 'great mysticism' that the author felt the

⁶¹⁹ I have not been able to identify the authors of the entries that follow. Even when a list of contributors is provided, as in the 1864-68 edition, the names are not linked to specific articles. See *Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände. Conversations-Lexicon*. 11th edition. vol. 15, (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1868), xxv.

⁶²⁰ *Conversations-Lexicon oder encyclopädisches Handwörterbuch für gebildete Stände*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart: A. F. Macklot, 1817), 627.

need to disparage for its 'crippling of the spirit, for leading the understanding astray, and for prejudicing judgement.'⁶²¹

1824: Mysticism is defined as the belief in the world of spirits (angels, demons, discarnate souls) and the consequent madness of imagining that a secret, supernatural influence of these can be secured, either through the medium of piety, or via magical means. Regarded mysticism as the natural result of unenlightened piety, rooted in inflated sentiment, overactive fantasy, and a lack of intellectual formation (*Geistesbildung*.) Distinguished between a true mysticism, respectful of the enlightening activity of science, and a contemptible mysticism, which he equated with *Schwärmerei* and other enthusiastic pitfalls. Philosophy, seen as the striving for clarity and for a solution to the world enigma, was the exact antithesis of the obscurity and obscurantism of mysticism.⁶²²

1846: This edition attempted to offer a layered, historical interpretation, though it essentially followed the schema that was laid out in 1817. It started by pointing out that in contemporary discussion, mysticism was often used in the sense of a propensity for the arcane, a belief in the mysterious. In its theological meaning, the author noted that, originally, mysticism was opposed to the Gnostics (the purveyors of knowledge), and used to denote those who strove to acquire the grace of God or union with the divine by ascetic practices and contemplative living. 'Oriental Pantheism,' by which the author meant the emanationist doctrine of Neo-Platonism, was also briefly mentioned, as well as the work of mystics like Tauler, who opposed an inner exaltation of feeling to the aridity of scholastic discourse. Mysticism was declared to be eminently the religion of feeling (*Gefühlsreligion*). Interestingly enough for the modern reader, mysticism was not deemed to be a religion of experience (*Erfahrung*). On the contrary, the author condemned mysticism for not paying attention to the remarks of experience and understanding. Experience was reckoned to be an appanage of rational religion (*rationale Religion*)—for, as the author commented, there was no experience properly so called, without the reflective control of the understanding. Mysticism however, rejected such reflective control, and relied only on imagination, which led it naturally to flights of fancy, and all manner of errors.⁶²³

⁶²¹ Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände (Conversations-Lexicon), 5th edition, vol. 6, (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1820), 686-87.

⁶²² Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände (Conversations-Lexicon), 6th edition, vol. 6 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1824), 653-56.

⁶²³ Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände (Conversations-Lexicon), 9th edition, vol. 10 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1846), 93-94.

1853: Once again, this entry put forward the contemporary and negative usage of the word, which it contrasted with the theological meaning of an inner illumination and commerce with God. Mysticism was defined as 'a type of deceit by feeling' (*eine Art von Gefühlsschwindel*) coupled with a disorderly play of fantasy. The entry expanded the historical schema given in previous editions. The origin of mysticism was now said to be found in the mysteries of antiquity. Christianity was thought to have given little encouragement to mysticism, due to its focus on the practical good, and to its insistence that beliefs be subordinated to the dogma. This was in stark contrast to the subjective attitude of paganism. Nevertheless, the mystical attitude was smuggled in by Dionysus the Areopagite. Later on, it was developed by Eckhart, Tauler and others who anticipated the Reformation through their insistence on an ascetic morality, and by an indirect opposition to the corrupted state of scholastic spirituality.

A new historical strand was also introduced into the mix, namely that of the *Naturphilosophie*, commenced by the likes of Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella in the 14th and 15th centuries, and then continued by alchemists, Rosicrucians, and the followers of Jacob Böhme and Swedenborg. Finally, this entry introduced for the first time a non-European form of mysticism: Sufism. An interesting element of this entry was the suggestion that the writings of mysticism offered a rich source of material for psychologists who wanted to investigate the relationship between different mental faculties, as well as for historians who desired to study the first, muddled stirrings of various ideas (religious, ethical, scientific) that would later on get a clearer conceptual form.⁶²⁴

1884: No longer exclusively the stuff of religious deviation, mysticism was described as applying to those who claimed to have unmediated contact with God, and to have received divine revelations. This usage is supposed to derive from the ancient habit of describing those baptized into the faith in a way that was analogous to the initiates of the Pagan mysteries. As this entry would have it, the 'mystics' were those who, through the mysteries of Christianity, had attained to fellowship or 'union' with God. According to the author of this entry, the church continued to maintain that an unmediated relationship with God was potentially accessible to any pious believer, even though in practice this was a privilege bestowed only on very few—mainly the prophets and the apostles—while the majority of pretended mystics were reckoned to be frauds or victims of hallucination. In the Neo-platonic realm, mysticism

⁶²⁴ Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie für die gebildeten Stände (Conversations-Lexicon), 10th edition, vol. 10 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1853), 789-90.

was regarded as an attempt to infuse some energy into a dying Greek folk-religion, by way of visions, oracles and other supposed exchanges with the supernatural world.

Reversing the claim established by an earlier edition, mysticism, at least in its embodiment in the works of Hugo of Saint Victor, was now seen as being an 'an inner experience' of God's love, albeit one that put little stock in the activity of the understanding. The historical schema from previous editions was largely maintained and expanded through the introduction of a section dealing with the mysticism of the reformers. The negative evaluation of mysticism that had been a staple of previous editions was now dismissed with the remark that in the rationalistic period it was common to equate mysticism with any assertion of the mysterious or the supernatural in religion. This rationalistic, anti-mystical mood was reckoned to have gained a new lease of life in the late nineteenth century (through the works of Ritschl, as the next edition of 1895 clarified). Once again, both this edition and the one following it included only one form of non-European mysticism, namely Sufism.⁶²⁵

In conclusion, a general trend is established in the course of the nineteenth century, which succeeds in creating a historical tradition of mystical authors, as well as in universalising the category. As we have seen, throughout most of this period, mysticism is seen as referring primarily (and sometimes negatively) to a religion of the heart, an intimate experience of the divine. As the Brockhaus entries show, this negative understanding of mysticism was primary until the end of the nineteenth century, when it was joined by another strand arguing that the category also covered a type of legitimate and unmediated contact with divinity. At the same time, as we have seen with regard to the work of Charles Schmidt and the Brockhaus entry from 1853, one can also find disparate claims that psychology might have something to say about mysticism. We will now turn to what psychology did have to say about mysticism towards the end of the nineteenth century.

3.3 Ecstasy

As psychology constituted itself as a science of experience, it needed to show that it could explain all human experiences. 'Mysticism' had to be brought within its remit, either to be subsequently discarded as pathological, or in order to advance the universalistic claims of the psychology of religion.

⁶²⁵ Brockhaus' Conversations-Lexicon. Allgemeine deutsche Real-Encyclopädie, 13th edition, vol. 12 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1885), 30-31. See also Brockhaus' Konversations-Lexicon. 14th edition, vol. 12 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1895), 129-130.

In 1899, Hugo Münsterberg posed the issue in no ambiguous terms, in an article on 'Psychology and Mysticism' published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. For him, the problem with mysticism (which he defined as 'the belief in supernatural connections in the physical and psychical worlds') was that it refused to sit tightly and wait until 'psychology can analyze its inner experiences.' On the contrary, mysticism acted as a 'rival' to scientific psychology: 'It [mysticism] has at all times, by preference, rioted in the proclamation of mental facts which did not fit into the descriptions and explanations of a sober empirical psychology.'⁶²⁶

While Münsterberg tried to convince the 'mystics' (by which he appeared to mean psychical researchers and spiritualists rather than the likes of St. Theresa) to submit to mechanistic psychology, other scientific psychologists tried to construct a more detailed framework for understanding the particularities of mysticism. Such a construction was predicated on the assumption that mysticism could be divested from its epistemological and ontological contexts (whether Christian, Islamic or otherwise), and reduced to a state of intense emotion, usually devoid of cognitive content—ecstasy. As Grace Jantzen has shown, this type of decontextualized reading was actually rooted in the theories of Schleiermacher and Schelling—in the notion of 'an intense feeling or immediate consciousness of the Deity, in which there is complete merging of subject and object in a preconceptual unity'—rather than in the works of the Christian spiritual tradition.⁶²⁷ The latter, Jantzen explains, would have regarded the psychologists' focus on extreme or odd psychic states as completely out of tune with a practice that was rooted in Biblical exegesis, in church tradition, and which had as its goal the transformation of life through charity. In the 'mystical' writings of authors like Bernard de Clairvaux or Julian of Norwich (which Jantzen analyses in her paper), experiences such as ecstasy were always considered secondary—in no way were they considered to be the essence of the spiritual path or even their goal and culmination.⁶²⁸ Nevertheless, this is exactly how mysticism was conceptualized by a large number of psychologists of religion. As opposed to the writings that we examined in the last chapter, it is less easy to track the direct impact of Schleiermacher upon the psychologies of mysticism, not because it is less pervasive, but because the emotional understanding of mysticism was (as we have already shown) so widespread as to require no introduction or further explanation. It should also be noted that Schleiermacher's own conceptualization of

⁶²⁶ Hugo Münsterberg, 'Psychology and Mysticism,' *The Atlantic Monthly*, (July 1899): 67.

⁶²⁷ Grace M. Jantzen, 'Mysticism and Experience,' *Religious Studies* 25, 3 (1989), 314. Jantzen analyses William James' account of mysticism, though her account of the psychological misreading of mysticism can also be extended to cover many of the other psychological accounts of mysticism.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 304-308, 313-15.

mysticism was both less subjective and more social than one might suppose as first glance—in other words, the kind of simplistic understanding that Jantzen ascribes to him is more likely a function of the reception of Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century, than of his own writings on the topic.⁶²⁹

3.3.1 Théodule Ribot

In 1883, Théodule Ribot, the doyen of French psychology, discussed ecstasy in his book on the *Diseases of the Will*. For Ribot, ecstasy boiled down to a state wherein the will had been annihilated, but some intellectual function still remained. He claimed there was no essential difference between mystical (i.e. religious) ecstasy and any other type (e.g. profane, morbid, cataleptic). Such ecstatic states could either come naturally (being the result of constitution) or were obtained through 'artificial processes.'⁶³⁰ The result of these exciting causes was a state of physical immobility. The ecstatic was:

sometimes motionless and mute, sometimes expressing the vision that possesses him by words, songs, and attitudes. He rarely moves from his position. His physiognomy is expressive; but his eyes, even though open, do not see...Sounds no longer affect him. General sensibility is extinct; no contact is felt; neither pricking nor burning causes pain.⁶³¹

In the realm of the psyche, the correlate of this physical state was an almost complete abolition of consciousness. As the latter could only exist by perpetually changing, by discontinuity, the intense focus of the ecstatic made it grind to a halt:

If the normal psychic activity be compared to a circulating capital, continually modified by receipts and expenses, it may be said that here the capital is massed in one sum; diffusion becomes concentration, the extensive is transformed into intensive.⁶³²

Ribot's model of the mind was based on the idea of a limited amount of psychic capital that had to be distributed among various functions that the organism wanted to perform. In the

⁶²⁹ For an analysis of Schleiermacher's pronouncements on mysticism and of how he was misinterpreted by some Protestant theologians, see Christine Helmer, 'Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory,' *The Journal of Religion* 83, 4 (2003), 517-38.

⁶³⁰ Th. Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, trans. Merwin-Marie Snell (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1915), 94. For the original French version, see Th. Ribot, *Les Maladies de la volonté* (Paris: Librairie Germer Baillière, 1883), 123-24.

⁶³¹ Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, 95.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 102.

case of the ecstatic, the capital was hijacked from everything related to activity, and placed in the service of a single, abstract representation, such as God (minus a little that was saved for basic overhead, such as respiration). He suggested that this kind of non-diversified investment led to mental bankruptcy of a particular sort (even though it did result in some interesting intellectual returns, like Plotinus's or St. Theresa's writings), because it implied a complete loss of ego, and an elimination of free choice. To keep the metaphor, it was like losing the entire board of directors along the way.

Ribot illustrated his point with long quotations from St. Theresa's autobiography, particularly the passages where she described the four degrees of prayer (or 'prayer' as he wrote). He even commended the saint for the value of her psychological observation. As opposed to Münsterberg, Ribot was less concerned with the rival psychology of the mystics, which he seemed to think could be easily suppressed by merely bracketing the metaphysics that came with their descriptions (i.e. by putting 'prayer' in inverted commas).

In 1896, he took up again the issue of mysticism and its pathology in his *Psychology of the Sentiments*. The chapter in question was concerned with the broader topic of the 'religious sentiment.' According to Ribot, each religious belief has two elements: an intellectual one (an object) and an accompanying emotion. As he makes clear, no other emotional manifestation depends more on the intellect than the 'religious sentiment,' because every religion depends on a conception of the universe and on a particular metaphysics.⁶³³ In fact, one could not even trace the history of religious sentiment without reference to the intellectual element.

For him, this history was one of increasing abstraction: the fearful savage whose imagination was concrete, whose rites were sanguinary, whose motives were utilitarian (to propitiate divinities so as not to be struck down) was gradually replaced by more humane specimens who dealt in more abstract language, who recognized a moral order and was inclined to more tender feelings. In the final stage of this history, the religious sentiment tended to decline, becoming a religious philosophy, rather than a fully fledged sentiment. However, feeling had its revenge precisely at these periods of dogmatism and affective aridity. At such points, mysticism appeared as a kind of non-dogmatic, sentimental efflorescence, which tended to unity, rather than the divisiveness of dogma.

⁶³³ Théodule Ribot, *Psychology of the Sentiments*, 311.

The purpose of Ribot's historical sketch was to serve as a guide to a pathology of religious sentiment, which can be discerned whenever the sentiment turns into violent passion or when it acquires chronic character. In this new account, ecstasy was taken up into a more detailed pathological nosology, where feeling became a primary constituent.

According to him, the pathology of religious sentiment rests totally on fear and love. What he means by this is that the varieties of religious disease can be reduced to two types of afflictions: one which is depressive or asthenic and another which is exalted or sthenic. The emotional criterion for the former is 'fear in all its varieties,' while the intellectual criterion is 'possession by a fixed idea.' This latter class includes all kinds of melancholic individuals obsessed with their sins, anxious over imaginary crimes, or terrified by the prospect of Hell. It also includes demonomaniacs: those people who feel possessed or otherwise influenced by malicious spirits. In its exalted form, the pathological sentiment is related to joy and megalomania, and usually leads to ecstasy, a transitory state, characterised by an intense emotion (love, rapture) and a restriction of the area of consciousness, which becomes dominated by a single arch-representation. In its more stable form, ecstasy becomes theomania, which is the exact antithesis of demonomania, i.e. a state in which the subject feels himself possessed by God.

In 1908, the *Mercure de France*, a literary gazette, sent out a questionnaire to leading European intellectuals, asking the question: 'Are we witnessing a dissolution or an evolution of the religious idea and the religious sentiment?'⁶³⁴ Ribot's answer stated that religion was too deeply burrowed inside human nature for it to become obsolete. At the same time, he noted that a great number of people who were honest in their thinking and their feeling were animated by a vague kind of religiosity, a mystical propensity that manifested itself in a form of religious dilettantism. He thought he saw this dilettantism in the way that his contemporaries switched from being Buddhists to Gnostics, to Catholics, to 'Brahmanists' (sic!), and in the way their religious impulses were sometimes transformed into aesthetics: literature, music, or painting. Such 'dreamy religiosity' could have a dissolving effect upon too 'rigid formulas' and catalyze the transformation of religious sentiment. This kind of assessment of the contemporary situation shows that Ribot was prepared to accept a kind of

⁶³⁴ See Frédéric Charpin (ed.), *La Question religieuse: enquête internationale* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1908).

benign, mediocre kind of mysticism, which might even have a positive (albeit dissolutive) influence on religion.⁶³⁵

In a later article (published only a year before his death), Ribot grouped ecstasies among the more general category of the inactives, of those who strive for a life without hassle, without expenditure, and who desire peace above all else. The most extreme among these were what he called quietists: people who had a general disgust towards existence, who wanted to surrender their ego to an impersonal contemplation. For him, these were the Buddhists, the Spinozists, and the extreme pessimists of all times. Their ruling intellectual ideas need not even be religious but could be aesthetic, cosmological, or even scientific. What characterized them above all is an ardent desire for the immutable, for repose, as well as a perversion of their instinct of conservation.⁶³⁶

While quietists and ecstasies may have been pathological in their desire for immutability and dissolution, there is however, nothing necessarily religious about their pathology. Rather, their pathological character seemed to be a direct consequence of their desire for inactivity, for repose and a turning away from the 'moving capital' of the active life, psychic or otherwise. For Ribot thus, the question of the pathology of ecstasy would seem to devolve ultimately upon a particular human type.

3.3.2 André Godfernaux

Ribot's musings about ecstasy were continued by his student Godfernaux. André Godfernaux was born in 1864, studied psychology with Ribot, and later became a successful playwright, before being killed by the flu in Cannes at the age of 41.⁶³⁷ His doctoral dissertation, entitled *Feeling and Thought and Their Principal Physiological Aspects* was published in 1894. In his dissertation, he adopted a more democratic view of ecstasy than his master. For Godfernaux, ecstasy was not a malady of a specific kind of person. Rather, it was a complete transformation of consciousness, which could affect anyone.⁶³⁸ This transformation amounted to an invasion of consciousness by an emotional state. This invasion had indeed a

⁶³⁵ 'M. Th. Ribot,' in *La Question religieuse*, 15-17.

⁶³⁶ Th. Ribot, 'L'Idéal quiétiste,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 80 (1915): 453.

⁶³⁷ See R. de Bury, 'Les Journaux,' *Mercure de France*, (1 June 1906), 446. Godfernaux authored a popular comedy together with Tristan Bernard, called 'Triplepatte.' In his eulogizing review of this play, Remy de Gourmont thought that Godfernaux and Bernard had managed to offer not just one of the best comedies in years, but also to bring to life a chapter of Ribot's *Disease of the Will*. See Remy de Gourmont, 'A propos de "Triplepatte,"' *Mercure de France* (1 June 1906): 476-477.

⁶³⁸ André Godfernaux, *Le sentiment et la pensée et leur principaux aspects physiologiques: Essai de psychologie expérimentale et comparée* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1894), 49.

variety of degrees, but it was the 'pure ecstasy' that gave the law of development to all intermediary states.

In motor terms, 'pure ecstasy' was a state of physical immobility, one in which all action was concentrated on the inside. Critical faculties were lost and thinking became more and more coloured by the affective state. In this state, the subject could think that he was approaching absolute truth, but it was a truth which had nothing to do with thinking, and was hence incommunicable. The majority of mystical formulas were nothing but incoherent utterances, which merely denoted this invasion of affectivity. Dogmas and religious truths were to a large extent adaptations of these ecstatic utterances by changing religious milieus, which took the trouble to systematise them and to make them fit to the opinion of the majority.⁶³⁹ But as the associations of ideas are endless, so dogmas too must change to accommodate them, and only the ones that are vague enough survive the longest. Godfernaux's description differs from that of his teacher only in the extent to which it dwells on a mock Schleiermachiian theology, which seeks to derive dogmatic truths from the seemingly incoherent utterances of the mystics.

A few years later, in an article on mysticism published by the *Revue Psychologique* (1902), Godfernaux returned to this description to give it a stronger physiological flavour. Individual *religious feeling*, he argued, was in fact nothing but coenaesthesia, i.e. the awareness of one's vital tone, or of the rhythmic oscillations of energy that are taking place within the body.⁶⁴⁰ The mystics (or the ecstatics) were those that had a high level, or an excess of life energy. At the opposite pole, the sad, the depressed, are those that had a low vital tone. Most people were somewhere in the middle, but in the end, everybody was more or less a mystic.

This was in fact the special province of mysticism for Godfernaux: the heightened awareness of the changes that go on inside the body, of an entire 'order of occult relationships' which are impervious to the senses and to discursive reason. Through coenaesthesia, one had a direct relationship to the universal life and its vicissitudes, be they beneficial or hostile.

If this primordial relationship was obscured for many people, it was because for a majority of them, it was masked by the preoccupations of practical life. However, happiness and quality

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶⁴⁰ A. Godfernaux, 'Sur la psychologie de mysticisme,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 53 (1902): 164.

of life were dependent upon our own interior relations, not upon exterior things. One could strive for this deeper relationship with the body through meditation and reflexion.⁶⁴¹

For Godfernaux, it seems, mysticism was not always pathological. Some degree of ecstasy was in fact only an index of a healthy life, and should be cultivated. At the same time, mysticism might play an important social role in the future. As he argued, our ideas about the active life and the necessity for work might prove to be preconceived ideas in a future where mechanization will render obsolete the need for human workers. Society, for him, was fast approaching that time, and he quoted the recent words of an economist that 5 or 6 million workers were already out of work because of the mechanization of industry. In such a society, mysticism would prove to be a veritable palliative to certain 'social difficulties.'⁶⁴² However, Godfernaux also pointed out that there was still such a thing as false mysticism (the theologians, it would seem, were not altogether wrong). This was the kind which could usually be recognized by its excessiveness and hallucinatory nature, and it was ultimately rooted in a cerebral disorder. Godfernaux did not hesitate to enjoin theologians to take this physiological distinction to heart, and to align their research with that of the alienists and brain physiologists.⁶⁴³

3.3.3 Ernest Murisier

Another author who contributed a sustained argument for the pathology of ecstasy was the Swiss Ernest Murisier. Murisier was born in 1867 as the son of a pastor. He studied theology at the Faculty of the Free Church of the Vaud canton and spent a year in Paris, studying with Théodule Ribot. At 26, he was given the chair of philosophy at the University of Neuchâtel, where he remained until his early death in 1903.⁶⁴⁴ In 1901, he published *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, a book that became a landmark for the French psychology of religion.⁶⁴⁵ The influence of Ribot on this monograph was substantial: not only was the whole study dedicated to the French master, but two out of its three chapters (corresponding to the two

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 165. William James reviewed the work positively in 1894. See William James, review of *Le Sentiment et la pensée*, by André Godfernaux (1894), in William James, *The Works of William James*, vol. XVII, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt *et al.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 494-97.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁴⁴ Th. Flournoy & E. Claparède, 'Ernest Murisier, 1867-1903,' in *Archives de psychologie* 3 (1903), 320. [Obituary of Ernest Murisier], *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 56 (1903), 111. See also Pierre Bovet, 'Ernest Murisier, 1867-1903,' *Revue de théologie et de philosophie et compte rendu des principales publications scientifiques* 37, 1 (1904), 42-74.

⁶⁴⁵ The study was based on several articles that originally appeared in the *Revue philosophique*. See E. Murisier, 'Le sentiment religieux dans l'extase,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 46 (1898), 449-472; 607-626. E. Murisier, 'Le fanatisme religieux: Étude psychologique,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 50 (1900), 561-593.

main diseases he outlined, ecstasy and fanaticism) were developed out of suggestions made by Ribot himself in the *Psychology of the Sentiments*.

Murisier began his study by announcing that the constitution of a science of religions would most likely be seen in the future as one of the capital accomplishments of the time. Needless to say, he considered religious psychology to be an essential though understudied element of that science, together with history.⁶⁴⁶ Turning to his own topic of research, he argued that the disorders of religious sentiment sprang from the double nature of the religious fact itself: i.e. both individual and social. Pathology, he argued, was present whenever one of the two elements was exacerbated at the expense of the other: too much 'individualism' led to mysticism and ecstatic detachment, whereas too much 'sociability' resulted in fanaticism.⁶⁴⁷ For Murisier, one of the main feature of the ecstatic was the attempt to extinguish all of his social feelings. He summarised the ecstatic quest by pointing to the words of Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck's: 'I have nothing to do on the outside.'⁶⁴⁸ Afflicted by a 'great deal of incoherence and instability, a perpetual conflict of psychical elements which do not harmonise themselves and which result in a general feeling of discomfort,' the mystics searched for a principle of unity and of stability which could deliver them from their present plight. In this, they were only following the dictates of their self-preservation instinct.⁶⁴⁹ The mystics were indeed sick, in both body in mind: they were malnourished, they suffered from prolonged insomnias, they were depressed and confused. This instability, this chronic suffering had an overwhelming influence on their religious emotions. Their very corporality was their biggest enemy, and for this reason they sought to be delivered from it.⁶⁵⁰

The mystics' concerns were not metaphysical, but practical. Their issues pertained to the passions they could not control, and the body that did not obey. They did not seek answers to obscure theological questions. They sought practical solutions to their present afflictions. If they were troubled by any dogmas, it was because they saw them as contradicting their desire for unity, for deliverance from painful multiplicity. For this reason, they were often puzzled by the question of the Trinity. How could God make them whole, if he was Himself made up of Three Persons?⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁶ E. Murisier, *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*. 2nd edition (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1903), 1-2.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-9.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

The affective state of the mystics (their religious sentiment) was as varied as their impulses and their generally disordered psyche. As Murisier explained, the religious sentiment could acquire a variety of expressions (some no doubt symbolic), which varied according to the person's sex, temperament, character, age, etc. Its essence was neither love nor fear, but something more primary: a religious need (*le besoin religieux*).⁶⁵² In this, they were not unlike certain kinds of somnambulists who require to be hypnotised repeatedly. Like the somnambulists, the mystics suffered from an excessive need of direction—an idea which Murisier no doubt borrowed from Pierre Janet.⁶⁵³ When this was not given them, they often resorted to various means of divining God's will for them, i.e. opening the Bible at random and reading the first lines.

The mystic's ultimate propensity however, was to systematise the contents of a disorganised consciousness, to acquire a state of equilibrium. It would be ideal if the mystic could attain to this state without any loss to his personality, if his religious idea could systematise and reign over all the other ideas. This coordination was unfortunately never attained, except at the price of a simplification and an utter destruction of personality. The interior battle between various desires, ideas and representations was only won at the cost of the destruction of all desires and ideas.⁶⁵⁴ This was usually accomplished through ascetic exercises. The latter were either negative (mortifications meant to weaken worldly attachments) or positive (meant to re-enforce the religious idea.)

In the final stages of ecstasy even the ruling representation disappeared and all that remained was a lingering emotion (pure love). This process, Murisier explained, was quite in keeping with the general law of regression, according to which the intellect is affected by a disease before the affective faculties.⁶⁵⁵ Ultimately, the feeling disappeared as well, and all that remained was a general state of indifference.

For Murisier, the value of pathological description is that it allowed him to render more precise certain tendencies that were quite current in normal religious practice. Firstly, the need for direction, for guidance which he found exacerbated in the mystics was only one element of normal piety: religion always implied some measure of dependency, and even those free spirits who manage to escape all external authority only did so because they

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 34. See *infra*.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

managed to submit themselves to a higher form of authority. Secondly, the imitation of a model, be it Jesus Christ or some other given religious model was at the basis of all subjective religion.

The difference between the ecstatic who imagined himself on the cross (and who managed to induce in himself the pain and the agony of crucifixion) and the believer who strove to walk in Christ's footsteps was one of mental character and moral make-up. Thirdly, the systematization that was so excessive in the life of ecstatic and prevented him from adapting to the ever-changing conditions of life need not lead to such a negative outcome. On the contrary, systematization could function also as a force that worked to fortify the individual, by providing the latter with a psychological unity (given for example by the idea of an ever-present God) in the face of renewed challenges.

'Personality' as he Murisier put it, 'is not an entity, but a coordination of states that change constantly'. While the social milieu could contribute to the stability of personality, religion was for most people (when working on a healthy constitution) the idea that managed to bring their various states together. Religion served to edify the person. This was perhaps, the positive, superior form of ecstasy, which allowed people to remain themselves while striving to adapt to the changing conditions of existence.⁶⁵⁶

As this description shows, for Murisier the reason why ecstasy is pathological is because the subjects whom it attracts are already pathological. Their attempts at curing themselves, at finding a way out of their disorganized constitution are only successful to the extent that they manage to cure themselves from themselves, i.e. to simplify their personalities until nothing is left, save an utter state of indifference. And while same idea could in some cases to fortitude and in others to dissolution, it remains unclear how to distinguish between the two, other than by the vague criteria of 'adaptability' and 'sociability.'

Some of Murisier's reviewers noted the difficulty of distinguishing in his work between what was pathology and what was the normal religious sentiment. Godfernaux, for example, questioned whether the author's position wasn't that religious sentiment was always pathological, regardless of how attenuated it might be.⁶⁵⁷ Murisier protested vigorously.⁶⁵⁸ In Switzerland, Flournoy welcomed the study, and stated his hope that the author might also

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶⁵⁷ See Godfernaux, 'Sur la psychologie du mysticisme,' 161.

⁶⁵⁸ E. Murisier, [Letter to the *Revue Philosophique*,] *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 53 (1902): 343.

dwell on the 'normal' part of religious experience in the future.⁶⁵⁹ In the U.S., George Albert Coe gave the book a lukewarm review, noting that what the psychology of religion needed were empirical studies, wherein the material was gathered first hand by the psychologist. Interestingly, the book did not go unnoticed by the French historians of religion associated with the fifth section. Jean Réville gave it a long review in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*. He argued that Murisier's claim that the psychological part of the science of religion had not yet been explored was somewhat exaggerated. Sabatier's *Esquisse* or Otto Pflleiderer's *Religionsphilosophie* were for Réville attempts to do just that. And since Murisier's study was a psychology based on historical material, he could no refrain from observing that as a historian, he felt that more detailed studies were necessary for each individual mystic, before general conclusions could be derived. For him, Murisier's argument took too simple a route.⁶⁶⁰ Marcel Mauss also produced a review for *L'Année sociologique*. He argued that mysticism and religious fanaticism could be found in all religions and were not necessarily pathological phenomena. He also deplored the author's lack of discernment in the choice of his sources, and did not hesitate to push the Durkheimian sociological agenda, by pointing out that ecstasy was a collective phenomenon in primitive society.⁶⁶¹

3.3.4 Ethnologists and ethno-psychologists

Ribot and his disciples, were, as we have seen, concerned with theorising the notion of mysticism by reducing it to the problem of ecstasy, and by describing the latter in terms of the psychology of consciousness, and in the language of personality dissolution, simplification or affective invasion. All of the three authors surveyed had based their theories primarily on the texts of Christian mystics. Parallel to the work done by Ribot and his disciples, another group of authors from the same period dwelt at length on the problem of ecstasy, without reference to the concept of mysticism however, and from the standpoint of ethnology and ethno-psychology.

In 1894, Otto Stoll (1849-1922), a professor of geography and ethnology in Zürich, published a book entitled *Suggestion and Hypnosis in Ethno-psychology*.⁶⁶² Stoll's interest was not in

⁶⁵⁹ Th. Flournoy, review of *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, by E. Murisier, *Archives de psychologie* 1 (1901).

⁶⁶⁰ Jean Réville, review of *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, by E. Murisier. *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 44 (1901): 439-442.

⁶⁶¹ M. Mauss, review of *Les maladies du sentiment religieux*, by E. Murisier. *L'Année sociologique*, 5 (1900-1901): 197-99.

⁶⁶² Otto Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus in der Völkerpsychologie*. 2nd edition (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit & Co., 1904).

ecstasy as such, but rather, in turning suggestion and hypnosis into central categories of ethnological analysis. His method consisted in the conscientious application of the psychology of suggestion drawn from the works of Bernheim, Liébault, or Forel to whatever ethnographic or historical material happened to be at hand.⁶⁶³ He drew on an impressive range of materials, spanning most of the known world, and comprising, among other things: Siberian shamanic rituals, incubation rituals in China, yoga in India, fire-walking in the south of India, magical beliefs in Australia, sorcery and hallucination in Tibet, Greek oracles, Egyptian oracles, dancing mania in medieval Europe, witch trials in the 18th century, etc. All of these were, as one might expect, the product of suggestion. Ecstasy was, as it were, a kind of by-product of the hermeneutical exercise, and Stoll never directly defined it. From his usage of the word, one can deduce that the meaning was quite different than the ones that we have surveyed above. He seemed to imply that the term was almost synonymous with hypnosis, a hypnosis that could be induced through means such as psychic contagion, the suggestive power of the cultural milieu, poisoning (e.g. with tobacco) combined with suggestion, singing or dancing.⁶⁶⁴ For Stoll, this ecstatic state could be accompanied by hallucinations or visions, as well as by movement and powerful negative feelings (i.e. anger).⁶⁶⁵ In fact, one of the compound terms he repeatedly employed was *Mordekstase* (murder ecstasy), which he identified, for example, with 'running amok,' with the frenzied killing of an innocent bystander by a group of nineteenth century 'Russian fanatics,' with the 'murder epidemic' of the French Revolution or with the 'murder sickness' of an indigenous people from South America.⁶⁶⁶

Another author who explored the topic of ecstasy was Thomas Achelis (1850-1909).⁶⁶⁷ He was born in a small town outside of Bremen, studied philosophy and philology in Göttingen, and became a gymnasium teacher in Bremen. From 1898 to 1904 he edited the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, one of the first attempts to disseminate the new science of religion in Germany. In 1902, he published *Ecstasy in its Cultural Meaning*. The book was, as he himself noted, less of a scholarly study, than a popular account meant to impress upon his readers the power and cultural value of the 'heightening of consciousness' represented by

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1-15.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 72, 83, 108-106, 133-138.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 110, 4611-65, 484-491, 588, 646.

⁶⁶⁷ Richard Kühl, 'Thomas Achelis (1850-1909)', in *Personenlexikon der Sexualforschung*, ed. Volkmar Sigusch, Günter Grau (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2009), 22.

ecstasy.⁶⁶⁸ Nonetheless, it was widely read and quoted by specialists. Achelis drew freely on a medley of ethnopsychology, crowd psychology, contemporary ethnological accounts and the work of contemporary psychologists like Ribot, Wundt, Forel and Max Dessoir. One could guardedly describe his principal point as going in the direction of a biological Durkheimianism, with ecstasy playing the part of collective effervescence.⁶⁶⁹ Such ecstasy, Achelis observed, served an important social and ethical function, because it created a state of mental excitation that allowed the individual to lose track of the narrowness and selfishness of the I and to become identified with the species (*Gattung*). It was, as he put it, 'an important socio-ethical ferment.'⁶⁷⁰ However, as opposed to Durkheim and his school, Achelis's participatory ecstasy united the individual with the species, and not with society. Another main difference with the Durkheimian theory was that he saw ecstasy not simply as an effect of societal coming together (though it could be the result of the psychic contagion dreaded by crowd psychologists). Achelis assumed that, in its main lines, ecstasy came about either as a result of purely physiological (i.e. narcotics, fasting) or psychological causes (suggestion, hypnosis, self-hypnosis).⁶⁷¹ These points were not lost on Marcel Mauss, who reviewed the work in *L'année sociologique* in 1902.⁶⁷² Mauss declined the competence to comment on the psychological merits of the work, but seemed to deplore the mishmash of psychology and 'sociology' and the enumerative nature of the work. For his part, he argued in favour of the notion that ecstasy brought the individual into contact with his own society, its collective representations, and not a human species generally construed. In Mauss' definition of the phenomenon, ecstasy was a state of collective suggestion, which merely 'survived' in contemporary society, but whose true home was in the heart of primitive societies.

A criticism of the theory that ecstasy was identical with the hypnotic state (or could be brought about by hypnosis) was put forward in 1906 by Paul Beck, a teacher in Leipzig, and author of the study *Ecstasy: A Contribution to Psychology and Ethnology*.⁶⁷³ Beck criticised contemporary experimental psychology for its attempt to understand psychic life by analysing it into a handful of constituent elements (sensations, will impulses, feelings). He

⁶⁶⁸ Th. Achelis, *Die Ekstase in ihrer kulturellen Bedeutung* (Berlin: Verlag von Johannes Råde, 1902), v.

⁶⁶⁹ For Durkheim description of effervescence see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (London: The Free Press, 1995), 218-220 *et passim*.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 195-97.

⁶⁷¹ See for example *Ibid.*, 14, 124, 169.

⁶⁷² M. Mauss, review of *Die Ekstase, Kulturprobleme der Gegenwart, I*, by Th. Achelis, *L'année sociologique* 6 (1901-1902): 176-180.

⁶⁷³ See Rudolf Eisler, *Philosophen-Lexikon: Leben, Werke und Lehren der Denker* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1912), 863.

thought such an approach was similar to the attempt to understand life by merely analysing its constitutive chemical processes. It was, he suggested, like trying to understand a lion by pointing out that it was composed of relatively few chemical elements.⁶⁷⁴ In contradistinction to this chemical-cum-psychological thinking, he proposed to follow the biological method, and to regard psychic life as a unity, by pointing to the general state of consciousness, and not to its constitutive elements.⁶⁷⁵

This view had immediate consequences for the description of ecstasy. Seen from the unifying angle that he proposed, ecstasy appeared as a different form of consciousness, whose main attribute was the more or less complete erasure of the distinction between subject and object, or the I and the not-I.⁶⁷⁶ In reality, ecstasy was a name for a spectrum of more or less intense states of consciousness, bordered on one end by normal consciousness, and by a Cambrian, fish-like consciousness on the other. However, frequently throughout his work, he simply referred to it in the singular, as the *Urbewußtsein*, the primordial consciousness, whose appearance represented a psychological activation of an ancestral, undifferentiated psychic condition. Just how serious he was about this ancestral consciousness could be seen from his attempt to relate certain common elements of the description of mystical ecstasy (like the feeling of weightlessness or the vision of an overwhelming light) to the imagined experience of semi-blind aquatic creatures swimming in a Tethys sea.⁶⁷⁷

Beck argued that the *Urbewußtsein* was a state beyond representation. Metaphysically conceptualized, it was like the blind, striving Will of Schopenhauer. The fact that the ecstatic did not possess any representations was the argument that he offered against the suggestion-hypothesis offered by Stoll. Suggestion meant being under the spell of a representation and the elimination of the latter meant that suggestion could not be the case.⁶⁷⁸

Beck also raised the question of the relationship between the ecstatic *Urbewußtsein* and religion. On the one hand, he found his description of ecstasy to be almost identical to the way in which the essence of religion was described by, for example, Schleiermacher, or by Buddhist texts. With regard to Schleiermacher in particular, Beck used passages from *The Christian Faith* and *On Religion* to argue that the father of liberal theology had used 'the

⁶⁷⁴ P. Beck, *Die Ekstase: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Völkerkunde* (Bad Sachsa im Harz: Hermann Haacke Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906), 1-2.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. He claimed that this general state of consciousness (*Gesamtlage des Bewußtseins*) was the psychological equivalent of the biological term 'living conditions' (*Lebensverhältnisse*).

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 66-68.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

feeling of dependence' as a shorthand for the dissolution of the I/non-I distinction, and not in order to claim that religion was a particular feeling like love, fear, yearning, etc.⁶⁷⁹

On the other hand, there was no necessary relationship between ecstatic state and the concepts of religion, be they God, Nirvana or the death and resurrection of Christ. Concepts, even those like God, which seemed to have no other function than to explain ecstasy, were only accidentally connected with the experience. There was always, he argued, an element of irrationality to the way in which religion got dogmatically coded.⁶⁸⁰

This meant that it was up to the psychologist to decide whether the description of religion given by the believers and theologians lined up with what they knew to be going on within a given religious experience.⁶⁸¹ With Schleiermacher it was a happy coincidence, inasmuch as the theologian had realized that the experience was primary, and not its dogmatic elaboration. Beck did not doubt that, psychologically seen, Schleiermacher's experience had been identical to that of Jesus, Paul, or the mystics. But the difference was in the interpretation: Schleiermacher (and Beck with him) had been able to see their own subjectivity in what the others had seen only an objective metaphysical universe.⁶⁸²

3.4 The Cosmic Approach

Some investigators of the ecstatic phenomenon regarded the psychological perspectives discussed above as offering a far too narrow (and indeed erroneous) interpretation of the scope of human psychic potential. They chose to look at ecstasy not as a pathological or quasi-pathological, dissolutive experience, but as a superior state that disclosed something of the cosmic atmosphere in which (some) humans already lived, and of the future that lay in store for all of humanity.

3.4.1 F. W. H. Myers

By far the most important exponent of this approach was Frederic W. H. Myers (1843-1901), a founding member of the Society for Psychical Research, and one of the most original thinkers in the history of psychology.⁶⁸³ Myers was born Keswick in 1843, studied at Cambridge, and later became an Inspector of Schools in 1872. In an autobiography written in

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 250

⁶⁸³ The definitive biography of Myers is Trevor Hamilton, *Immortal Longings: FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life after Death* (Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2009).

1900 (a year before his death), he outlined the major turning points in his inner life: a youthful period when he was fully under the spell of the Hellenic culture he had imbibed since his childhood, a return to Christianity in the late 60s, a interlude of agnosticism followed by the gradual discovery and development of his mature belief in the immortality of the soul in the 1870s. Myers felt that this new belief, which he based on his work as a psychical researcher, was not necessarily incompatible with Christianity, though it added a scientific dimension to the tenets of the old faith. The main tenet of his faith was the immortality of the soul, which Christ had announced, and which Myers took it as his life's work to prove. But Christianity was a different matter:

The Christian scheme is not cosmical; and this defect is felt as soon as one learns to look upon the universe with broad impersonal questioning, to gaze onward beyond the problem of one's own salvation to the mighty structural laws on which the goodness or the badness of the Cosmos must in the last resort depend.⁶⁸⁴

A paragraph further, he added: 'Religion in its most permanent sense, is the adjustment of our emotions to the structure of the Universe; and what he now most need is to discover what that cosmic structure is.'⁶⁸⁵

Myers thought evidence of that underlying structure could be gathered through observation and experiments with automatisms, dreams, sleep, hypnosis, trance, hysteria and other similar phenomena. For him, such states functioned as 'psychoscopes,' revealing the nature of the psyche as well as the existence of a transcendent Self, which was not bound by death, and which extended far beyond the limitation of normal, waking consciousness.⁶⁸⁶

Myers coined the term 'subliminal' to cover all that went outside the margin of ordinary consciousness. He claimed that the subliminal Self was not a discontinuous assemblage of memories, sensations and thoughts, but rather, that it formed a continuous unity, a larger Self, which could not fully manifest itself in an organism that had evolved for life on this planet.

Certain operations of the subliminal Self (clairvoyance, hypermnesia, panmnesia, telepathy, telaesthesia, ecstasy) showed the direction in which humanity could develop in the future. They were, he wrote, 'co-ordinations of faculty unfitted indeed for man's self-preservation

⁶⁸⁴ Frederic W.H. Myers, [Autobiographical Account], 7, Papers of Frederic W. H. Myers (1843-1901), Trinity College, Wren Library, Cambridge.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁸⁶ See Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 126-27. Sommer, *Crossing the boundaries*, 145-48.

upon this planet, but which it may be worth his while to develop experimentally, when once that preservation has been secured.⁶⁸⁷ At the same time, he claimed such operations upended the distinction between unconscious and consciousness. As he wrote in an essay in *Phantasms of the living* (1886):

Well, besides these sub-conscious and unconscious operations, I believe that *super-conscious* operations are also going on within us; operations, that is to say, which transcend the limitations of ordinary faculties of cognition, and which yet remain—not *below the threshold*—but rather *above the upper horizon* of consciousness, and illumine our normal experience only in transient and clouded gleams.⁶⁸⁸

In an earlier essay (published in 1884) Myers had used the term 'super-conscious' to indicate the fact that unconscious cerebration (or what he would later call subliminal consciousness) was superordinate to normal consciousness, not subordinated. As he put it then,

We shall, I venture to say, come to regard this term less and less as expressing a *subsidiary*, more and more as expressing a *substantive and primary* operation of our intelligence; and we shall come, perhaps, to find *super-conscious* as necessary a term as *sub-conscious*, if we would indicate the true relation to each other of the processes in which our being consists.⁶⁸⁹

In the posthumously published *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), Myers argued that 'conscious human faculty' could be seen according to the analogy of 'a linear spectrum whose red rays begin where voluntary muscle control and organic sensation begin, and whose violet rays fade away at the point which man's highest strain of thought merges into reverie or ecstasy.' It was, he argued, in the ultra-violet range of the psychic spectrum that a 'cosmic prospect' truly opened up.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality And Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), 21.

⁶⁸⁸ Frederic W.H. Myers, 'Note on a suggested mode of psychical interaction,' in Edmund Gurney, Frederic W.H. Myers, Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the living*, vol. II (London: Trübner & Co., 1886), 285.

⁶⁸⁹ See F. W.H. Myers, 'On a telepathic explanation of some so-called spiritualistic phenomena,' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 2 (1884): 219. Myers' distinction between the sub-conscious and the super-conscious was discussed by Percy Gardner, 'The sub-conscious and the super-conscious,' *The Hibbert Journal* 9 (1910-11): 477-96.

⁶⁹⁰ Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality*, 18.

If ecstasy was thus a 'super-conscious' psychic state, in what did it consist? How did it relate to other similar states or mental operations? And what part did the subliminal Self play in this theoretical construction of ecstasy? These questions are not easy to answer. On the one hand, Myers offered a seemingly clear definition of ecstasy in the Glossary that he attached at the beginning of *Human Personality*:

Ecstasy—A trance during which the spirit of the automatist partially quits his body, entering into a state in which the spiritual world is more or less open to its perception, and in which it so far ceases to occupy its organism as to leave room for an invading spirit to use it in somewhat the same fashion as its owner is accustomed to use it. See *Possession*.⁶⁹¹

This was, in the context of the psychological views already surveyed, an original definition. On the one hand, the late Myers was more at ease with resorting to overtly metaphysical terms (spirit, spirit-world) than were other contemporary psychologists. On the other hand, the fact that he linked ecstasy with possession (and in fact discussed both together in the same chapter) seemed to confound the problem even more. Was ecstasy even an independent state, or merely the corollary of possession? And what was possession anyway?

Part of the answer to this question lay (as much as for other psychological investigators) in the materials used. As it was clear from Chapter IX of his book, Myers described ecstasy and possession mainly with reference to mediums' experience, or to accounts of precognition, clairvoyance, or telepathy that he culled from the work of other psychical researchers. His ecstasy seemed fit to describe a certain stage in Mrs Piper's trance, when, upon being left by the control, her spirit (or, as he put it, 'her subliminal consciousness') would for a while roam through the spheres, and report back on what it saw there.⁶⁹² But would the same notion of ecstasy apply as well to the mystics of the Catholic Church, to St. Paul or the Buddha? Myers seemed to think that it did, and he also added that ecstasy was the best documented of all religious experiences, as well as the most common amongst them. But he offered no proof of that, or of the fact that it was always connected with possession.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁶⁹² Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality*, vol. II, 250.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 260.

At any rate, from the external position of the observer it was difficult to specify if ecstasy or possession was the case in a given situation.⁶⁹⁴ For Myers, both ecstasy and possession were analogous with what happened in other similar states: ecstasy was not unlike a clairvoyant dream; possession was not unlike what happened during cases of partial or total personality disintegration, when an *idée fixe* lodged itself into the mind, or when a different personality gradually assumed control of the supraliminal consciousness.

Myers' theory depended on the assumption that certain mental processes bespoke either a disintegration of personality, or a higher synthesis. Possession and ecstasy belonged to the latter category. However, in practice, it was easy to confuse a case of true possession with a case of mere control by a split-off secondary personality. The standard in this case, was that in true possession the percipient actually obtained new knowledge.⁶⁹⁵

In his view, in possession a percipient's body could be controlled either directly by another spirit or by another spirit through the percipients' subliminal consciousness, or one could be possessed directly by one's subliminal self.⁶⁹⁶ Geniuses, for example, were fully '*self-possessed*' (or rather, one might say, possessed by the self).⁶⁹⁷

The phenomenology of ecstasy was, on the contrary, not so well fleshed out. As I've already hinted with regard to the medium Mrs. Piper, Myers claimed that the spirit that went out during her ecstatic trance was probably identical with her subliminal consciousness. This meant that, at least in some cases, ecstasy was a kind of brief identification with the whole subliminal self acting and perceiving in the spiritual world. Ecstasy was thus the astral equivalent of what a genius was down below.

But this identification of the spirit and the subliminal consciousness could not work in all cases. At least one wonders how it worked when the subliminal consciousness was itself the possessor or when it acted as an intermediary for the possessing spirit. The latter case would imply a split of the personality (one part transmitting messages, and the other part exploring the stars) that would have gone against Myers' integrative thesis. On the other hand, one could probably have possession without consequent ecstasy, or the two conditions could alternate, as in the case of Mrs. Piper. The corollary of this is that one could also, in some

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

cases, have ecstasy without possession, though this raised the question: why group these two conditions together, if they were actually distinct?

The reason for this grouping might have something to do with Myers' claim that both ecstasy and possession were ultimately extreme forms of telepathy, like two opposite lanes of a cosmic highway, whereby information travelled to and fro between incarnate and discarnate entities.⁶⁹⁸

3.4.2 Richard Maurice Bucke

Another exponent of the cosmic understanding of ecstasy was the Canadian psychiatrist Richard Bucke, whose account of 'cosmic consciousness' was made famous by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.⁶⁹⁹ Bucke was born in England in 1837, but grew up in Canada, where his parents relocated in 1838. From the age of 16 onwards he led the life of a Western adventurer, working on steamboats, on farms, and as a gold miner, travelling as far as Salt Lake City and San Francisco. He returned to Canada in 1857, studied medicine at McGill, and graduated in 1862.⁷⁰⁰ In 1877, he became Superintendent of Asylum in London, Ontario, keeping that position until his death in 1902. His *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* was published in 1901, a year before his death.

The book was developed out of Bucke's own mystical experience, which took place while on a trip to England in 1872. This experience of 'illumination' or 'Brahmic bliss,' convinced him that the cosmos was infused with divine presence, that the human soul was immortal, and that the human mind was in a process of continuous evolution. Rather than turning to Christianity for an explanation of his experience, Bucke developed a personal, optimistic and naturalistic ontology, heavily influenced by evolutionism, psychology and his own literary taste.

He argued that there were three types of consciousness in the living universe, each developing out of the one preceding it, and each offering a qualitatively different understanding of the world. The lowest rung of this consciousness ladder was occupied by simple consciousness, which the higher animals also possessed, followed by self-consciousness, which was a prerogative of (most) humans, and the third step of cosmic consciousness, which only a few men (and even fewer women) had ever attained.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 194-95.

⁶⁹⁹ See William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 384.

⁷⁰⁰ See Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (Philadelphia: Innes & Sons, 1905), 6-8. See also James H. Coyne, *Richard Maurice Bucke: A Sketch* (Toronto: Henry S. Saunders, 1906).

The development of these levels of consciousness was explained through a kind of psychology of accumulation, whereby each cognitive revolution was deemed to be the result of a build-up of psychological products from the preceding state. Some of the main terms of this psychological account were borrowed from the work of George Romanes (1848-1894), a follower of Darwin and noted evolutionary psychologist.⁷⁰¹ Bucke simplified much of Romanes' account of the 'origin of human faculty,' and re-wrote it in terms of 'consciousness' (adding as well his own cosmic consciousness to the process).

For Bucke, the process of development started with simple perceptions or percepts, which were processed repeatedly by the brain until their repetition resulted into a generalisation into receipts.⁷⁰² This generalisation was possible because of the consequent development and improvement of corresponding nerve centres. Receipts and percepts were all that one found in the simple consciousness of higher animals, very young children and some primitive races. Gradually, however, receipts accumulated until they spilled-over into concepts. Concepts were deemed to be the prerogative of humans, and their appearance coincided with the emergence of self-consciousness and of language. The next mental revolution happened when the mind went from concepts to intuitions. At that point cosmic consciousness came into being.⁷⁰³

Cosmic consciousness represented a new evolutionary departure, and Bucke fully expected that it would become more generalized in the future. This conclusion was a sure one given the postulate of continuous mental evolution, but even he agreed that it was difficult to estimate the rate of progress towards it, given the scant information that one had about the people who obtained comic consciousness in the remote past. Nonetheless, he estimated that about five times more people got it in his time than they did about a thousand years previously.⁷⁰⁴

He argued that cosmic consciousness, the abolition of private property and the establishment of aerial navigation would usher in a new era of prosperity, freedom from oppressive social

⁷⁰¹ See George John Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Man: Origin of Human Faculty* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888).

⁷⁰² The term 'recept' was coined by Romanes to signify a class of psychological objects that bridged the gap between percepts and concepts. Receipts were, as he put it, 'a *re-cognition* of things previously *cognized*.' They were generalized perceptions, but differed from concepts in that they were not yet named, and also because the mind had a passive attitude towards them. They were born out of mere repetition of percepts, and were not actively created by the mind, as concepts were. See Romanes, *op.cit.*, 36.

⁷⁰³ Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness*, 9-15.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

conditions, as well as the demise of organized religion.⁷⁰⁵ The latter point was evident from the specification of some of the main elements of cosmic consciousness: the sense of immortality, a disappearance of the feeling of sin, the loss of the fear of death, the understanding of the immanent divinity of the cosmos.⁷⁰⁶ With these at hand, man became *de facto* religious. Religion became inscribed into his being and churches were thereby rendered unnecessary.

These positive effects made it all the more urgent to specify the conditions under which cosmic consciousness appeared. Bucke's account of the conditions for the appearance of the new consciousness was influenced by his understanding of the strict interdependence of psychology and physiology. In consequence, not everybody was deemed suitable for the cosmic departure: a good heredity was paramount, a good intellect, and handsome features. From his own analysis of cases of cosmic consciousness, he also predicted that the average age at which it occurred was 35, which made sense physiologically and psychologically, as this was when the pinnacle of maturity was reached.⁷⁰⁷

The bulk of Bucke's account was taken up with descriptions of cases of cosmic consciousness, which ran the gamut from the Buddha, Christ, Paul, Mohammed, to Socrates, Dante Balzac, Pushkin, Walt Whitman and a host of anonymous contemporaries. He did not necessarily consider all of these to be equal in their possession of the novel psychic state, as he also explained that within the realm of cosmic consciousness there was vastly more individual variation (in terms of spiritual level, intellectual power) than there was in the realm of self-consciousness.⁷⁰⁸ So, even if one got to win the cosmic lottery, one had not guarantee of leaving home with the jackpot. In addition to the clear-cut cases of cosmic consciousness, Bucke also estimated that 'innumerable men and women' found themselves in a liminal state, a twilight, wherein, without being actually illumined by the sun of the new consciousness, they nevertheless caught some of its fleeting rays. He thought that many cases of mid-life (i.e. around the age of 35) conversion belonged in this category, while conversion in the young only took place within the realm of self-consciousness.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 60-63.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 312-313.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 212. The existence of such a 'twilight' made little theoretical sense, given that cosmic consciousness, as he described it, was *qualitatively* different from self-consciousness.

A more interesting point had to do with the relation between cosmic consciousness and other faculties that Bucke thought were in the process of development, like telepathy, telekinesis, or clairvoyance. He speculated that such faculties could be the germ of future evolutionary development that ran parallel to the one that he outlined under the name of cosmic consciousness. He saw no reason why humanity would not develop into several different races in the future, corresponding to the psychic germs that could already be observed: 'a cosmic conscious race; another race that shall possess seemingly miraculous powers of acting upon what we call objective nature; another with clairvoyant powers[...]another with miraculous healing powers; and so on.'⁷¹⁰

3.4.3 Hyper-consciousness

Another author who proposed a superior form of consciousness to account for the mystical-cum-ecstatic psyche was a certain Jean Henri Probst-Biraben (1875-1957). He was a freemason, occultist, Sufi, and school teacher in Algeria and France.⁷¹¹ In 1906 and 1907, he contributed several articles on the topic of Islamic mysticism to the *Revue Philosophique*, which were read and cited by religious psychologists.

Probst-Biraben argued that the study of universal mysticism would profit greatly from knowledge of Sufi authors. The latter, in his view, were much more likely to illuminate some of the dark corners of mystical practice than their Christian brethren, since they were not forced to silence by the rigors of an Orthodox theology: 'Islam had no Inquisition, has hardly known councils.' The Sufis were often left to their own devices by the representatives of Orthodoxy.⁷¹² From his own direct knowledge of Sufi milieus in the north of Africa, as well as from the study of classical authors (Ghazali and Ibn Arabi) on the subject, he resolved to draw an image of the psychological process involved in the attainment of ecstasy, as well as to sketch out the metaphysics of mysticism.⁷¹³ He argued that the mystics were pantheists, and idealists, who regarded the phenomenal world with distrust. Mysticism was the opposite of religion. The latter placed the emphasis on the divine word, on a morality that could deliver one to heaven or hell, and on a world that was distinct from its Creator. The mystics, by contrast, were experimentalists, who argued for the development of a sense for the

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁷¹¹ See Irène Mainguy, 'Probst-Biraben (1875-1957), franc-maçon haut en couleur, martiniste, théosophe et soufi,' *Renaissance Traditionnelle*, 151-152 (2007): 260-85.

⁷¹² Probst-Biraben, 'Contribution du soufisme a l'étude du mysticisme universel,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 61 (1906): 522.

⁷¹³ Probst-Biraben, 'L'extase dans le mysticisme musulman. Les étapes du soufi,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 62 (1906): 490.

noumenal world. Their experiences took them beyond good and evil. If they accomplished morally good acts, that because they followed an ethical code, but because they could not do otherwise. Their proximity to the divine bid them to act out only out of love, which resulted in good actions.

For the mystics, words were merely adapted for use in the phenomenal world, could not adequately convey their experience.⁷¹⁴ If the Sufis and others like them often spoke symbolically, this was because they strove to excite the curiosity of phenomenal seekers, to set them on the path. For him, it was wrong to assume that the symbolism of sexual union that was frequently encountered in mystical writings was a sign of pathological erotomania, as some psychologists had suggested.⁷¹⁵ Probst-Biraben found no inkling of such pathology among the Sufis he knew, most of whom were also married and led normal family lives.⁷¹⁶

This was not to say, however, that the Sufi life did not entail a strict ascetic discipline. On certain days, or at specific hours during the day, the Sufi would retire to a secluded corner of the mosque, or to a cell in the madrasa, in order to practice meditative techniques, particularly *dhikr*. Probst-Biraben borrowed the terms of his psychological description from Ribot: the result of ascetic practices was a restriction of the field of consciousness, and an elimination of the normal heterogeneity of consciousness for a qualitatively different homogeneity.⁷¹⁷ He even allowed for the fact that ecstasy was the result of an 'inhibition of the will,' though it was not clear how he reconciled such a position with the notion that a great deal of will (an 'exaltation' as he put it) was necessary for anyone who adopted the ascetic path.⁷¹⁸

The result of the ascetic exercises was a state that was neither unconsciousness, nor the irruption of the Unconscious à la Hartmann, or of the subliminal consciousness of Myers.⁷¹⁹ Rather, it was a state of 'hyper-consciousness,' whereby the mind of the mystic was delivered

⁷¹⁴ Probst-Biraben, 'Contribution du soufisme,' 521-23.

⁷¹⁵ For an account of the 'erotomania school' see Georges Berguer, 'Revue et bibliographie générales de psychologie religieuse,' *Archives de psychologie*, XIV, 53, (1914): 45-48.

⁷¹⁶ Probst-Biraben, 'Contributions,' 524.

⁷¹⁷ Probst-Biraben, 'L'extase,' 492.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 496. For Ribot, this posed no theoretical problem, because he had severed the association between mysticism and asceticism that was traditional for Catholic theologians (and for the Sufis if one is to believe Probst-Biraben). This meant that, as I have shown above, he did not regard ecstasy as a state that pertained to a complex series of exercises, which required a strenuous and wilful, participation of the highest order. Rather, he regarded it as the result of a specific constitution.

⁷¹⁹ One can question how much Probst-Biraben understood of Myers' theory, for in a different article he described the ecstatic state as 'the liberation of the superior subliminal, the supraliminal, which I have called hyper-consciousness in a different article.' See Probst-Biraben, 'Le mysticisme dans l'esthétique musulmane: l'arabesque, ascèse esthétique,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 64 (1907): 71.

into a superior ontological regime, governed by different psychological laws, while the usual control and action mechanisms that consciousness usually performed were delegated to 'secondary centres.' The idea of 'hyper-consciousness' was developed from Ribot, who had also claimed that ecstasy was a state of heightened consciousness, though with the corollary that for Ribot heightened consciousness resulted in no consciousness. It was like overloading a jet-engine and making it flame out.⁷²⁰ Probst-Biraben heeded Ribot's claim that ecstasy was 'an infraction of the laws of the normal mechanism of consciousness,' hence the suggestion that whatever happened at those supersonic mental speeds belonged to a different kind of psychological physics. We can thus regard the proposal of the hyper-consciousness as a significant threat to the very foundation of scientific psychology: that a uniform system of laws governed the totality of human experience.

3.5 The mystical process

In 1902, the philosopher Émile Boutroux (1845-1921) argued that to study ecstasy as an isolated phenomenon was to get an incomplete image of what mysticism was about. While ecstasy was indeed the culminating point of the mystical life, he claimed that one had to keep in mind that mysticism was still 'a life, a movement, a development with a definite character and direction.'⁷²¹ A number of psychologists of mysticism working in the first decades of the twentieth century sought to take this suggestion to heart. They started looking at mysticism not merely as it appeared through the lens of a singularly intense state, but rather, as it transpired in the development of the entire biography of a given mystical character. The development of this new approach to mysticism as a process required the development of different hermeneutical tools, derived from historical practice, or from a long and sustained interaction with what were taken to be contemporary mystical characters. The stake in these theoretical reformulations was not only the ability of psychology to encompass the more extreme forms of psychological experience, but its ability to encompass a whole human life, to discern its law of development, its fluctuations and periodicities.

3.5.1 Henri Delacroix

One of the first authors to take up Boutroux's suggestion was Henri Delacroix. Delacroix (1873-1937) grew up in Paris in a Catholic family. He studied at the *lycée* Henri IV (with Henri Bergson among others) and obtained a PhD in philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1900.

⁷²⁰ Ribot, *Diseases of the Will*, 102.

⁷²¹ See Émile Boutroux, 'La Psychologie du mysticisme,' *Revue Bleue: Revue politique et littéraire*, 11, tome xvii (15 March 1902): 322. The article was published in English in 1908. See E. Boutroux, 'The Psychology of Mysticism,' *International Journal of Ethics*, 18 (1908): 183. I have taken the quote from the English translation.

After several teaching stints in the provinces, first as a high school teacher in Pau (1899-1900), then as a philosophy lecturer in Montpellier (1900-1906) and in Caen (1906-1909), Delacroix returned to Paris and took a position in philosophy at the Sorbonne, and from 1919 in psychology.⁷²²

Delacroix's doctoral thesis was titled *Essay on Speculative Mysticism in Germany in the 14th Century* and was the result of several years of study in Germany. In it, Delacroix tried to reconstruct Meister Eckhart's mystical theology and to track down the intellectual sources of Eckhartian metaphysics. He presented his dissertation as part one of an ambitious and never accomplished project of reconstructing the origins of German idealist philosophy.⁷²³ The published part took the reader on an intellectual journey that started with Neo-Platonism, moved through the works of John Scotus Erigena, and then analysed the beliefs of a host of obscure heretical sects in 13th and 14th century northern Europe. A large chunk of the work was dedicated to an analysis of the ideas of Meister Eckhart. A projected second volume was supposed to deal with Eckhart's disciples (Tauler, Suso) and with Flemish mysticism as well as with the influence of mysticism upon the art, literature and life of 14th century Germany.⁷²⁴

Delacroix's thesis had nothing to do with psychology, and he in fact proceeded to take a line of argumentation that was at odds with the prevalent psychological view of mysticism. In brief, he claimed that Eckhart and his disciples were philosophers, and that the best way to understand their philosophical contribution was by a painstaking analysis and intellectual contextualization of their works.⁷²⁵ Delacroix did not doubt that mysticism was always dependent on an emotional disposition, but he did doubt that it was always an irrational theology of sentiment. He coined the expression 'speculative mysticism' to distinguish the philosophical mysticism that he was investigating from the more practical and sentimental kinds of mysticism that he thought could also be encountered in the history of religions.⁷²⁶ Speculative mysticism was distinguished not only by its propensity toward

⁷²² See Noemí Pizarroso López, 'De la historia de la filosofía a la psicología del misticismo. Los primeros trabajos de Henri Delacroix,' *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 34, (2013): 83-84. For additional biographical details see also Noemí Pizarroso, 'Henri Delacroix's Psychology of Religion in Context: Between Secular Religious Sciences, William James' psychology and Marcel Mauss' sociology,' *Piper: International Psychology, Practice and Research* 5 (2014): 13-19.

⁷²³ Henri Delacroix, *Essai sur le misticisme spéculatif en Allemagne au quatorzième siècle* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1900), 1-5.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

rational explanation of the world and of its relationship to God, but also by its rejection of mystery and of dogmatic tradition. The speculative mystic attempted to explain everything rationally, and predicated the possibility of such an explanation on the essential identity of the human and divine minds.⁷²⁷ It was in this postulate of the identity of the real and the rational, and in the reliance on intuition as an explicative principle that Delacroix saw the philosophical nature of speculative mysticism. For him, Meister Eckhart was an idealist *avant la lettre*. If one suppressed the personal nuances of his language, one could see that he was in fact much closer to Hegel or Fichte than to St. Thomas Aquinas.⁷²⁸

Delacroix's thesis received accolades from his friends and supporters, notable among these being his former teacher Bergson, and his friend Marcel Mauss. The latter, in fact, could barely contain his disdain for the 'Sorbonne windbags' who failed to award Delacroix the vaunted 'mention très honorable,' the highest form of academic recognition for a dissertation.⁷²⁹ The reason for not giving him that distinction was probably the result of the curt exchanges between Delacroix and Émile Boutroux (who was on the examining committee) during the oral defence.⁷³⁰ At the same time, both Boutroux and another examiner objected to the conceptual, rationalistic way in which Delacroix had presented mysticism.⁷³¹

In the early 1900s, Delacroix 'converted' to the psychological point of view, as one of his earliest interpreters pointed out.⁷³² Starting in 1902, he began taking down observations of the mentally ill patients at the Clinic in Montpellier and also experimented with hypnosis. In 1905, he was appointed chief of the experimental psychology laboratory of the Montpellier Clinic, but the historical record is not clear on what that appointment entailed. At any rate,

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁷²⁹ Marcel Mauss to Henri Delacroix, 6 April 1900, Henri Delacroix Papers, Sorbonne, Box 27.

⁷³⁰ A summary of the viva discussions was published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. See 'Thèses de Doctorat,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 8, 3 (1900): 7-12. As it was traditional, Delacroix also presented a Latin thesis together with his major dissertation. The subject of the small thesis was the book *Aenesidemus* by Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761-1833), in which Schulze critiqued Kant. Brochard, another one of Delacroix's examiners made the colourful critique that Delacroix's Latin was 'barbaric and hirsute, sometimes unintelligible' (*Ibid.*, 7). Such an appraisal could perhaps also explain why Delacroix failed to get the highest accolades for his work, over and above the argument with Boutroux.

⁷³¹ A point that was also made by some of the reviewers. See for example, Th. Schoell, review of *Essai sur le mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne au quatorzième siècle*, by Henri Delacroix, *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 47, (1903): 241. Récéjac, like Boutroux, also thought that mysticism was something completely different than philosophy. See E. Récéjac, review of *Essai sur le mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne au quatorzième siècle*, by Henri Delacroix, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 50 (1900): 104-105.

⁷³² See Maurice Pradines, 'L'œuvre de Henri Delacroix,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 46 (1939): 113.

Delacroix only fulfilled that role for a year, moving on to Caen a year later.⁷³³ The articles that he published in this period show less of an interest in pathological psychology, but rather demonstrate Delacroix's abiding interest in mysticism, as well as the fact that he had began engaging with the work of religious psychologists.

In 1903, Delacroix published a review of William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*.⁷³⁴ Delacroix raised several objections to James' method. He pointed that out that though he too believed in the individual's personal invention in matters of religion, he did not agree that the individual was all there was. At the very least, all individual believers were rooted in a milieu and in a tradition from which they borrowed and to which they themselves contributed. He made clear that this statement did not mean that he subscribed to the theory that made religion an essentially social fact, thus signalling his non-adherence to the sociological school of Durkheim and Mauss. On the contrary, what Delacroix wanted was a historical account that used primitive myths, legends and art in order to investigate the transformations of religious experience through the ages. In this respect, he indicated that significant progress had been made by Marillier in his article on 'religion' in the *Grande Encyclopédie*. In other words, he was subscribing to Tiele's version of the science of religion, according to which the only way to grasp religious feeling was by studying the specific forms in which it was incarnated.⁷³⁵

Delacroix claimed that James' account of religious experience lacked precisely such a historical dimension. For him, what James had described was essentially 'a very limited and very modern experience.'⁷³⁶ There was no reason to suppose that the personal form of religion that one found in the *Varieties* could also be projected into the distant past. A third kind of objection had to do with the thesis that religion was an essentially emotional affair. Despite not being able to offer a counter-theory of the emotions, Delacroix claimed that it was impossible to have affect without intelligence, or to separate the emotion from the intellectual elements that it contained. In his view, there was a certain obscurity in James' presentation of religious sentiments, as James had both claimed that feelings were prior to beliefs and also maintained that humans were thinking beings, and that the intellect could not

⁷³³ See Pizzaroso López, 98. Pizzaroso, 22.

⁷³⁴ Henri Delacroix, review of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 11, 5 (1903): 642-69.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 664.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 663.

be excluded from any of their functions, feelings included.⁷³⁷ Delacroix demanded whether, in addition to thinking that religious theory was born out of inner experience, one could not also claim that it was born out of a desire to explain exterior realities. One did not necessarily have to exclude sentiment from such exterior questioning, as sentiment was necessarily a part of human consciousness. Finally, he pointed out that the sorts of feelings that James had described in the *Varieties* (either feelings of ill in a divided self, or of well-being in those who experienced union with the divine) appeared to be based on certain conceptions of the world. They were not pure feelings at all.

James replied that same year, with a letter in which he wrote: 'Your compte rendu seems to me full and fair and excellent. I am a little surprised at the only serious criticism you make, for I didn't suppose that my text laid itself open to the charge of so completely ignoring intellectual factors.' James went on to point that he thought he had made it clear in the *Varieties* that an intellectual belief could determine feeling, and that in religion, intellect and feeling could have a 'spontaneous collaboration.' He also agreed with the notion that he was describing a modern kind of experience, and claimed that was explicit in the text. James ended by noting that 'I am perhaps too much an enemy of intellectualist metaphysics, but I think you also agree that intellectualism has been allowed too despotic a sway in academic circles, where religion has been the question.'⁷³⁸

Delacroix reprised some of his objections in the following years, expanding them to encompass the work of other American psychologists of religion. In 1904, at Leuba's request, he authored a review of Leuba's two recent articles on the 'fundamental tendencies of Christian mystics' for the *American Journal of Religious Psychology*.⁷³⁹ Leuba's argument reconstructed the fundamental tendencies of Christian mystics and offered an interpretation of ecstasy as a trance state, similar to hypnosis. His articles (which together made up a small book) were an attempt to synthesise and sometimes refute the leading psychological explanations of mysticism: the erotomania hypothesis, hysteria, psychasthenia, the simplification hypothesis of Ribot and Murisier, Godfernaux's coenaesthesia. In general, his writing style made it difficult to understand what position he was actually advocating, which

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*, 666-67.

⁷³⁸ See William James to Henri Delacroix, 7 October 1903, Henri Delacroix Papers, Paris, Sorbonne, Box 27.

⁷³⁹ H. Delacroix, review of 'Fundamental Tendencies of the Christian Mystics,' by James H. Leuba, in *The American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, 1 (1904-1905): 87-89. See also James H. Leuba, 'Les tendances fondamentales des mystiques chrétiens,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 54 (1902): 1-36; James H. Leuba, 'Les tendances religieuses chez les mystiques chrétiens,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 54 (1902): 441-87.

led to misunderstandings and debates.⁷⁴⁰ But the articles were nevertheless important in that they contained suggestions that were later taken up by other psychologists of mysticism, such as Delacroix himself as well as Pierre Janet.

Leuba's point of departure was the mantra of the American psychology of religion: the primacy of the affective experience. He suggested that it was necessary to keep the experience separate from the interpretations given by mystical philosophy.⁷⁴¹

Briefly put, Leuba argued that the mystics were animated by certain basic desires for affective support and sensual (and sexual) enjoyment, which they satisfied in a pathological way through their imaginary encounters with God. In the mystical character, these desires were coupled with an overactive moral sense and an infantile intelligence that was further weakened by meditations, ascetic exercises, and by an ideology that gave primacy to the affective experience of divinity. In the ecstatic trance, the mystic obtained a state of almost complete unconsciousness. Believing that God was that about which one could affirm nothing, the mystics interpreted such unconsciousness as unification with the divine, when in reality it was merely a deification of their own unconsciousness.⁷⁴²

In his review, Delacroix criticised Leuba's understanding of mysticism as a non-intellectual enterprise and pointed out that there were speculative mystics for whom the trance was 'the apperception of an entire logical system.' He also reprised the criticism that he had made against James, noting that it was inaccurate to regard experience as pre-theoretical or non-intellectual. For Delacroix, traditional categories and ideas played an important part in moulding the actual mystical experience.⁷⁴³ Leuba responded briefly and somewhat insincerely. He claimed that Delacroix's criticism that his theory did not fit speculative, intellectual mysticism had missed its mark, inasmuch as he had not claimed to have described all forms of mysticism, and certainly not the speculative kind. This was untrue, as Leuba had in fact strayed into Delacroix's speculative territory, by introducing Meister Eckhart into the

⁷⁴⁰ Brenier de Montmorand accused Leuba of misusing and misunderstanding the notion of erotomania, and of reducing mysticism to sexual pathology. In his reply, Leuba claimed that he did not claim that the mystics were simply erotomaniacs, but also great moral characters and ascetics. See B. de Montmorand, 'L'érotomanie des mystiques chrétiens,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 56 (1903): 382-93. James H. Leuba, 'A propos de 'L'érotomanie de mystiques chrétiens,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 57 (1904): 70-71.

⁷⁴¹ Leuba, 'Les Tendances religieuses,' 442.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 481.

⁷⁴³ Delacroix, review of Leuba, 89.

mix. At the end of the missive, Leuba admitted nonetheless that he 'conceded the critique somewhat.' (*J'ai donné quelque prise a la critique*)⁷⁴⁴

Delacroix offered similar arguments in a more general review of the work of American psychologists published in 1905.⁷⁴⁵ He noted that the notion espoused by the Americans that religion was explained by religious experience was a kind of *petitio principii*. It was assuming as an explication something that had to be itself explained. Once again, he put forward the idea that experience was not at all independent of tradition, as the latter constituted the conditions of possibility for the experience. He pointed to Høffding's work in his *Religionsphilosophie* as an example of someone who agreed with this position, and who offered suggestions on how to bring this social dimension of religion into psychology.⁷⁴⁶ He also brought out again the issue of the primacy of the affective, noting that the affective turn in psychology was motivated not only by psychological but also by theological considerations. Delacroix thought that it was fully conceivable that one could work out a non-affective psychology of religion that would look at the same material and give equal weight to the subconscious, but focus more on 'external experience' and the intelligence.⁷⁴⁷ This statement became one of the foundations for Delacroix's next major work, *Studies in the History and Psychology of Mysticism* (1908).

3.5.1.1 Studies in the History and Psychology of Mysticism

By 1905, Delacroix had already begun working on the book that would make him one of the foremost representatives of the psychology of mysticism. When the book later appeared in 1908, William James wrote to Delacroix to say that he thought it was destined to become 'the book on Mysticism.'⁷⁴⁸

We can track some of the formation of that book's argument through a presentation that Delacroix made to the *Société Française de Philosophie* in 1905. The presentation and the subsequent discussion were published in the society's bulletin.⁷⁴⁹ Delacroix argued that the psychological study of religious phenomena needed to go beyond looking at modern

⁷⁴⁴ See James H. Leuba to Henri Delacroix, 4 April 1904, Henri Delacroix Papers, Paris, Sorbonne, Box 27.

⁷⁴⁵ Henri Delacroix, 'Une École de psychologie religieuse,' *Revue Germanique* 1 (1905): 226-235.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 232-33.

⁷⁴⁸ See William James to Henri Delacroix, 31 January 1908, Henri Delacroix Papers, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de la Sorbonne, Paris, Box 27.

⁷⁴⁹ See Henri Delacroix 'Le développement des états mystiques chez Sainte Thérèse,' *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 6 (1906): 1-42. This presentation was incorporated into chapter two of the *Studies*. See Henri Delacroix, *Études d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme: Le grands mystiques chrétiens* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908), 61.

experiences, or making superficial comparisons between individuals plucked from different historical periods. Instead, such a study needed to look at historical religious experiences in a systematic and detailed way.

Speaking of St. Theresa in particular, he deemed it necessary to investigate historically the sources for her life and experience and to elucidate the intellectual influences upon her work. Joined to this, he thought it necessary to look at how the saint's consciousness was transformed during the various stages of her mystical journey. Following Boutroux, he thus claimed that mysticism was a process and not a single state. For St. Theresa, this process comprised three different stages: (1) in a first stage, St. Theresa looked for and obtained union with God, passing through different degrees of prayer that gradually brought her to ecstasy or the abolition of individual consciousness and its replacement with the consciousness of the divine presence; (2) during a second, antithetical stage, the saint was plunged into a state of ecstatic anguish, which Delacroix claimed had often been overlooked by interpreters of mysticism, who tended to see only joy in ecstasy. For him, this state showed that the union of human and divine had not been properly realized in the former stage. The second stage represented the assertion of the human self (*moi*), which showed itself to be incompatible with the divine. (3) In the final and third stage, the saint was delivered unto a state of complete possession by God, which Delacroix called 'theopathic.'⁷⁵⁰ The triadic structure was generally maintained in the *Études*, though at one point in the book he added a fourth stage that appeared to be the result of dividing stage (1) into two: a period of anxiety, of malaise at the beginning of the mystical path, and a subsequent stage, that began abruptly, and in which the mystic experienced the divine beatitudes.⁷⁵¹

In the final, 'theopathic' stage, the mystic was able to solve the opposition between the practical and contemplative life. With God now always within her, she had no more ecstasies and no more painful states. Contemplation and action could now co-exist in her as she had now become a kind of divine automaton (*automate divin*).⁷⁵² The lynchpin of this triadic, Hegelian process was the notion of the subconscious, whose role Delacroix further elucidated

⁷⁵⁰ On the 'theopathic state' see also James, *Varieties*, 335.

⁷⁵¹ See *Études*, 346.

⁷⁵² Delacroix, 'Le développement,' 1-6. See also Delacroix, *Études*, 70.

in the *Studies* of 1908. It should also be said that in 1905, Delacroix avoided making the identification 'God=subconscious' that he would later make in the *Studies*.⁷⁵³

The *Studies* offered Delacroix an opportunity to unfold his historical material in a way that his schematised 1905 account could not do. It also gave him a chance to explain his choice of subjects and method with greater clarity. Delacroix argued that in order to grasp the meaning of mysticism, one had to frequent the 'great mystics.'⁷⁵⁴ Though he offered no clear list of criteria for who was to be included in this group, he implied that these were people who had developed a new way of life, a life that expressed a 'constructive logic.' The mystics were also people who had the language and the intelligence to articulate their discoveries and to justify them to the world.⁷⁵⁵ Frequently, such great mystics were historical rather than contemporary figures. Delacroix justified his historical methodology by claiming that the phenomena of great mysticism were rare psychological occurrences. Even when such phenomena did happen in contemporary times, they usually occurred in monasteries, away from the prying eyes of the psychologist. Nonetheless, he referred to Augustin Poulain's *Les graces d'oraison* as evidence that contemporary mystics tended to be quite modest and second rate.⁷⁵⁶

Delacroix thus set out to analyse the experiences of three Christian mystics, drawn from different time periods and different milieus: Saint Theresa, the 16th century Spanish saint, Madame Guyon, the 17th century founder of Quietism, and Henry Suso, the 14th century German Dominican friar. The primary reason for selecting these three was that they had left behind enough personal documents (in the form of autobiographies and letters) that would allow him to reconstruct their actual experiences.⁷⁵⁷ A second reason was that their personal documents allowed him to gauge more precisely the way in which tradition and originality intermingled in the life of the mystics. In other words, Delacroix was using such documents to broach the problem that he had accused the Americans of ignoring, namely the relation between experience and the larger social milieu. The method that Delacroix used to accomplish this was close reading and intellectual history. In the case of St. Theresa, for example, he concluded that 'inner construction was preponderant' and that the 'exterior was

⁷⁵³ I have borrowed the 'Hegelian' description from Albert Bazaillas, one of Delacroix's discussants in 1905, who also expressed reservations about its accuracy. See Henri Delacroix, 'Le développement,' 29.

⁷⁵⁴ Henri Delacroix, *Études*, ii.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, v.

only an occasion, a solicitation.⁷⁵⁸ What he meant by this was that the different prayer stages she articulated, the different 'mansions,' were her own constructions, and that he could find no evidence that she had borrowed them from the books she read, or from her spiritual directors. In fact, he argued that the major influence in her spiritual life was that of the Jesuits, who enjoined her to focus on the humanity of Jesus and on the value of mortification. He also claimed that the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola could have played a part in fomenting the appearance of interior words and visions.⁷⁵⁹

The subconscious, as stated earlier, formed the centre of Delacroix's psychological description. For him, the mystical process was a process whereby the mystic's self was gradually enveloped and taken over by the subconscious. God was the name the mystics gave to this powerful invasive power:

The divine, such as has been revealed by our study of these phenomena is thus a latent power of unification and organisation, which appears in the beginning as foreign to the self, via the division of consciousness by which it is revealed, and which progressively envelops and replaces the forms of action and thought that constitute personal consciousness.⁷⁶⁰

Ecstasy was only a brief stopover on the path, a momentary respite from the self, but the mystic's aim was to generalise the ecstatic state, to attain a 'divine somnambulism.'⁷⁶¹ This process of 'depersonalisation' was not a smooth one, as the mystic's self often refused to give way, which resulted in the particular state of ecstatic pain, noted above. The mystics who did see the process through to the end, and who obtained the theopathic state, always went through a conversion crisis. By introducing the notion of 'conversion' into his theoretical mix, Delacroix thus signalled that his psychology of religion was in agreement with the work of Americans, and particularly James. Indeed, in the *Varieties*, James himself had suggested that St. Theresa's mysticism implied a conversion or 'a formation of a new centre of spiritual energy.'⁷⁶²

For Delacroix then, the mystics were a variety of 'divided selves' who had managed to heal their division by allowing the subconscious to take over. He argued that 'conversion, thus

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, x, 237.

⁷⁶² See James, *Varieties*, 399.

understood, was the threshold of the high religious life.' In the chapter dealing with conversion in his 1922 book *La Religion et la foi*, Delacroix further elaborated this notion, claiming that conversion always oscillated between two major forms: a juridical form that did not fundamentally alter the subject, and a mystical form, which resulted in a disappearance of the personality, and its replacement with the divine.⁷⁶³

But at the same time, for some mystics, the whole process could be completely halted before it reached its full bloom. Such was, for him, the case with Indian mystics, who, pursuant upon an ideology of complete nihilism, sought out and obtained merely the destruction of the self, a kind of 'psychological suicide.'⁷⁶⁴ The Indians obtained only unconsciousness, as Leuba had suggested was the case for all mystics.⁷⁶⁵

Delacroix's understanding of the subconscious was indebted to F.W.H. Myers, whose conception he filtered through Pierre Janet, Flournoy and Ribot. On the one hand, Delacroix declared his opposition to Myers' metaphysics of the subliminal, i.e. the hypothesis of an independent and immortal subliminal Self. He claimed that Myers had overstepped the bounds of psychological science, and also stated he was unconvinced by the evidence for telepathy.⁷⁶⁶ On the other hand, Delacroix's description of mysticism was clearly influenced by Myers' vision of a higher synthesis of the personality that was, for example, manifested in the genius (as a Self-possession).⁷⁶⁷ But in the case of Delacroix's mystical geniuses, this possession was done by a purely personal and human subconscious. Following Flournoy, he argued that, as a psychologist, he had to exclude any notion of transcendence.⁷⁶⁸ At the same time however, he doubted whether psychology could be fully neutral with respect to meta-theological questions. In his review of the American psychology of religion in 1905, he claimed that Flournoy had exaggerated the neutrality of the discipline. In reality, the likes of James and Starbuck had used their psychological arguments as a way of bolstering the objective value of religion. They had not altogether excluded transcendence because they argued in its favour.⁷⁶⁹ For his part, he took the exact opposite route, arguing that if one could

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9. See also Henri Delacroix, *Études*, 120, 309, 420. See Henri Delacroix, *La Religion et la foi* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1922), 343.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xi,

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 361, 415.

⁷⁶⁶ See Henri Delacroix, 'Myers: La Théorie du subliminal,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 13, 2 (1905): 257-82.

⁷⁶⁷ Delacroix also referred to the mystics as 'geniuses.' See Delacroix, *Études*, 342.

⁷⁶⁸ See Delacroix, 'Le Développement,' 23. Delacroix *Études*, 62.

⁷⁶⁹ Delacroix, 'Une École de psychologie religieuse,' 227.

give a complete psychological description of mysticism, one would thereby render dogmatic discussions pointless.⁷⁷⁰

Another point of disagreement with Myers concerned the topic of pathology. Like Myers, Delacroix regarded the genius and the mystic as higher forms of the synthesis of personality. But contrary to Myers, he believed that they were not thereby free from pathological accidents. The question for Delacroix then, was how to reconcile the systematising power of the mystical process with the results of psychologists like Pierre Janet, who claimed the mystics were little more than hysterics or psychasthenics.⁷⁷¹ His solution was to affirm both at the same time. As such, Delacroix claimed that the mystics were neurotics, but that their neurosis was underscored by a 'specific mental state' (*état mental particulier*), without which there could be no artistic or religious genius.⁷⁷² Pathology explained a great deal, but it did not explain everything. Their organising, systematising force was able to surpass any obstacle that lay in its path, including illness.⁷⁷³

Two further issues were of particular importance in Delacroix's psychological description: (1) the collaboration of the mystic's consciousness and (2) the teleology of the mystical process.

(1) Conscious collaboration, for Delacroix, was evident in the mystic's asceticism, in the religious exercises that every mystic underwent. The majority of these exercises were calculated to effect a 'disappropriation' (a term which he had borrowed from Madame Guyon) of the self and to prepare the way for the subconscious to take over.⁷⁷⁴ But at the same time, such exercises also worked on the subconscious, preparing the latter to be a religious subconscious as well as, most importantly, an orthodox subconscious.⁷⁷⁵ The latter was an important part of the mystical process, which determined the subsequent success or condemnation of the mystic. Not all of them managed to successfully train their subconscious into orthodoxy, as the example of Madame Guyon demonstrated.

From the psychological point of view, what all mystics got in their illuminative ecstasies was a state of confused intuition. While this intuition was void of intellectual content, the mystics also adhered to a discursive notion of God, i.e. a God that had been the product of tradition and of reasoning. Delacroix claimed that the distinction between the discursive and the

⁷⁷⁰ Delacroix, *Études*, xix.

⁷⁷¹ See *infra*.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 342.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁷⁷⁴ See *Ibid.*, 327.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

intuitive forms of thinking came from the mystics themselves.⁷⁷⁶ In the contemporary period, the same distinction was put forward by Bergson, for example in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. For Bergson, who was Delacroix's teacher and who also tried to push his work forward, intuition was a way of grasping reality in the absolute, without recourse to symbols. He regarded intuition as the fundamental method of metaphysics.⁷⁷⁷ Delacroix however, appeared to adopt a different understanding of intuition, since the latter was for him fundamentally obscure and non-intellectual.

Nevertheless, the mystical journey that Delacroix articulated was predicated upon the mystic's attempt to bring these two mental products (confused intuition and the discursive notion of God) into communication, or otherwise put, to make the interior God of experience coincide with the exterior God of tradition.⁷⁷⁸ Consequent upon this theory, Delacroix reasoned that different people had different types of subconscious: there was an artistic subconscious, as well as a religious and moral unconscious.⁷⁷⁹

(2) The teleological function of the mystical process was derived by Delacroix from the work of Théodore Flournoy, and particularly from the latter's *From India to the Planet Mars* (1899).⁷⁸⁰ Flournoy's book grew out of his engagement with psychical research in late nineteenth century Geneva, and in particular with a medium whom he called Héléne Smith. In her trances, Héléne Smith claimed to remember her past incarnations as the Indian princess Simandini, Marie Antoinette, as well as the ability to enter into communication with the inhabitants of Mars. Flournoy called these experiences 'somnambulistic romances' and interpreted them as a form of subconscious compensation, a kind of fantasy revolt against the modest condition into which she was born.⁷⁸¹ He introduced the concept of cryptomnesia as an explanatory paradigm, defining it as 'the fact that certain memories reappear without being recognized by the subject, who thinks he sees in them something new.'⁷⁸² At the same time, Flournoy also claimed that Mlle. Smith's subconscious possessed a teleological function that was evident in a whole series of manifestations that he referred to as 'teleological

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 360. See Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), 3rd. edition, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 1-9.

⁷⁷⁸ Delacroix, *Études*, 363, 370-76.

⁷⁷⁹ Delacroix, *Études*, 224

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 410.

⁷⁸¹ Théodore Flournoy, *Des Indes à la planète Mars: Études sur un cas de somnambulisme avec glossolalie*. 3rd edition (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1900), 23. See also Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 127-29.

⁷⁸² Flournoy, *Des Indes à la planète Mars*, xii.

automatisms': moments of hypermnesia, inspirations, presentiments, intuitions and divinations.⁷⁸³ He derived the teleological aspect of such experiences from the fact they had a *telos*, a purpose. They were not merely random manifestations of subconscious fantasy but they were future oriented and useful.

Delacroix took this circumscribed understanding of subconscious teleology and made it into a feature of the mystic's entire life. This teleology was the result of the combined action of conscious and subconscious forces.⁷⁸⁴ In other words, it did not come solely from the subconscious, because the mystic always prepared the way for it, had expectations about the result, and rejected as demonic the manifestations and impulsions that did not fit into the logical schema of how things should proceed.

In conclusion, Delacroix's account of mysticism was an attempt to offer a synthesis between the science of religion as had been articulated by Tiele and Marillier, the American psychology of religion, the French psychopathological tradition, and Flournoy's psychical research. As we have seen, Delacroix criticised the Americans for their belief in the primacy of the emotions over the intellect. Quite likely, he did so because his own early studies on Meister Eckhart had convinced him that some mystics were in fact philosophers rather than slaves to the sentiment. At any rate, in the case of James at least, the primacy of the affective was more stated than followed through, since in the case of mysticism, for example, James had placed a 'noetic quality' at the centre of all mystical states.⁷⁸⁵ Delacroix appeared to keep some of this 'noetic quality' by maintaining that the mystic did have a vague intuition of an inner God. But for him, the whole mystical quest was the attempt to bring this vague inner God to coincide with the discursive God of tradition. The mystic was thus no longer passive, as he had been for James, since he was actively and consciously involved in the process. In addition to attempting to understand the role that the mystic's intellect played in the process, Delacroix's historical method signalled that he was in fact much closer to Tiele and Marillier than he was to James and the American psychologists. Like the earlier scientists of religion, Delacroix sought to understand the psychological processes behind mysticism by an analysis of the documents in which it was embodied. At first glance, he appeared to differ from them because of the claim that he was offering a purely secular description, one that also paid heed to the pathological accidents that beset his mystical characters. However, he also maintained

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, 45, 55, 376.

⁷⁸⁴ Delacroix, *Études*, 54-55, 416-17.

⁷⁸⁵ In the *Varieties*, James established four criteria for defining mystical states: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity. See James, *Varieties*, 366-368.

that there was a limit to what could be described as pathological, and that 'a peculiar mental state' underscored the mystical effort. This state was thus irreducible, much like Tiele's Infinite or like Marillier's feeling. We can easily wonder if such an irreducible mental state was not only a different way of affirming that there was something beyond the pale of scientific investigation—the same theological residue that was present in Marillier and in Tiele's works.

3.5.2 Théodore Flournoy

Another author who studied mysticism as a process was Théodore Flournoy. Flournoy was born in Geneva in 1854. He studied natural sciences and humanities in his home town, and obtained a medical degree in Strasbourg in 1878. From there he moved to Leipzig for two years, where he studied with Wilhelm Wundt. In 1892, he was given a chair in psychology at the University of Geneva. In the early years of his psychological career Flournoy also started a psychological laboratory in Geneva, but like his friend James, quickly became disillusioned with it and turned his attention to psychical research and religious psychology.⁷⁸⁶ He published little in the latter field, no doubt also because of his lifelong writer's block, of which he frequently complained to James in his letters.⁷⁸⁷ Nonetheless, he exerted considerable influence on the discipline, both through the early enunciation of an epistemological manifesto (i.e. the two principles), which I have already evoked before, as well as through his 1915 article on the psychology of mysticism, which was widely read and commented upon by other psychologists. At the same time, through his founding of the *Archives de Psychologie* (1901) and through his presidency of the 1909 Psychology Congress in Geneva, Flournoy also created a forum for discussion about the new discipline.

For Flournoy, the psychology of religion was the essential science of religion, tasked with describing the inner experience of the believer, separated from dogma or institutions. He formulated two principles for the discipline: the exclusion of transcendence and the interpretation of inner experience in a biological fashion. In his own work, he did not in fact resort to biological explanations of the physiological sort, which had been offered by Leuba or Starbuck. He stuck to psychological explanations (dissociation, automatism, subconscious creations, incubations, etc.) But he unswervingly promoted the strict compartmentalisation of

⁷⁸⁶ The only book length study of Flournoy is Ronald Earl Goldsmith, 'The Life and Work of Théodore Flournoy, 1854-1920' (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1979). A wealth of material on Flournoy and his relationship to contemporary psychologists can be found in Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 127-29 *et passim*.

⁷⁸⁷ See *The Letters of William James and Théodore Flournoy*, ed. Robert C. Le Clair (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

the religious and scientific spheres, which was implicit in his first principle. As noted by Fernando Vidal, Flournoy's solution to the science and religion conflict offered respite to many restive souls in contemporary Switzerland.⁷⁸⁸ At the same time, this was a solution that had its origin in his own belief that religion was essentially an emotional, interior affair—a thing of the heart. What Flournoy did not see, or what he refused to see was that his compartmentalisation was itself rooted in a very specific Protestant tradition. By promoting this notion of religion and the science of experience that he had helped construct he was unwittingly promoting the Immanentist Liberal Protestant faith that he had grown up with. As opposed to Leuba and other religious psychologists, Flournoy maintained that he did not want psychology to become a religion or even to assume the role of arbiter among religious conceptions.⁷⁸⁹ He argued that religious conceptions were imperfect intellectual translations of the underlying experience, but everyone was free to choose whatever conception suited their sensibility.

In a lecture given in 1897 to the Society of Theological Sciences, Flournoy used an analogy with the medical sciences to explain the position that the psychology of religion should have within the theological sciences. According to him, in medicine, there was an essential science, which was physiology and pathological anatomy; there were propaedeutical sciences, such as chemistry and physics, and there was also an auxiliary science, which was history of medicine; finally there was also philosophical speculation, which surveyed the whole of physical life. Within the theological sciences by contrast, one could find propaedeutical sciences, like exegesis and philology as well as an auxiliary science, which was history of dogma. One could also find a great deal of speculation, though nowhere could one find an essential science, which described the contours of religious life. That essential science, according to him, was none other than religious psychology.⁷⁹⁰

3.5.2.1 The modern mystic

Flournoy's most sustained contribution to the psychology of religion was a long article (clocking in at over 200 pages) on mysticism that he published in 1915 in his *Archives de*

⁷⁸⁸ Fernando Vidal, *Piaget before Piaget* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 100-103. See also Matei Iagher, 'From America to the Planet Florissant: Théodore Flournoy and the Psychology of Religious Experience,' *Piper: International Psychology, Practice and Research* 5 (2014), 1-24.

⁷⁸⁹ Théodore Flournoy, 'Une Mystique moderne (Documents pour la psychologie religieuse),' *Archives de psychologie* 15 (Genève: Librairie Kündig, 1915), 222.

⁷⁹⁰ Théodore Flournoy, 'Recherches et problèmes de psychologie religieuse' [Hand-written notes for a lecture given at the Société des Sciences Théologiques, 1897] University of Geneva, Papiers de la famille Flournoy. Ms. fr. 7840/3.

Psychologie. Flournoy began his article by declaring that he had found what Delacroix could not find when he penned his study: a modern mystic, whose experiences and thoughts could be studied directly by the psychologist.⁷⁹¹ This mystic was an otherwise healthy 51 year old unmarried woman who worked as director of an evangelical institute for young women in the French part of Switzerland. She was educated, conversant in several languages, and also very religious. He dubbed her Cécile Vé. Vé had first come to consult Flournoy in 1910, though they had been corresponding since 1901 about some telepathic phenomena that she experienced. She suffered from periodic bouts of nocturnal autoeroticism (coupled with nightmares) that assaulted her every few months and gave her tremendous moral trouble. She interpreted these sensual assaults in both a psychological and religious manner. At the age of 18, she was raped by an older man. The experience cast a dark shadow on her life, leading to a split in her personality. Personality A. was her normal, moral self, while personality B. was a dark, diabolical, sexual self. For a while, personality B ruled her life, but after a religious conversion at the age of 30, A. took control again and B. remained in abeyance, save for periodic irruptions from the subconscious.⁷⁹² During the periods when she was under the spell of B., the people who knew her told her she seemed like a different person altogether. It was during these periods of possession by her secondary self that she manifested mediumistic capacities.⁷⁹³ Flournoy offered her moral council as well as (at her request) a number of sessions of hypnotism and informal conversation. The latter, in his estimate amounted to a 'non-systematic psychoanalysis.'⁷⁹⁴ At some point in 1912, Flournoy asked her to write an auto-biographical account. She obliged, and by 1914 he had a thick manuscript detailing and analysing her experiences.⁷⁹⁵ Following, no doubt, the example set by James in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, he included large segments of this confession into his account.

By 1912, Cécile's experiences started to take a new turn. Her erotic spells did not go away, and neither did personality B, even though she felt she was helped by her sessions with Flournoy. However, she asked him not to hypnotise her anymore, as she felt hypnosis created 'bondage' for her.⁷⁹⁶ Otherwise put, she felt she had become dependent on the experience, and that it had resulted in an emotional transfer or 'somnambolic passion,' which she was nevertheless able to analyse away. The expression 'somnambolic passion' (*passion*

⁷⁹¹ Flournoy, 'Une mystique moderne,' 2.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35-40. He in fact did hypnotise her later on. See *Ibid.*, 58.

somnambulique) had been coined by Pierre Janet to explain the excessive dependence of some patients on their hypnotiser or magnetiser, as well as the need to be repeatedly hypnotised.⁷⁹⁷ This was an addiction borne out of an excessive need for direction, a feature which, as we have seen, was also singled out by Murisier as one of the essential features of the mystic. The expression was employed as well by Cécile, as were a number of other psychological terms that she used to describe her experience.⁷⁹⁸ This raises the question: how much was the experience influenced by the psychology she took on board? Flournoy was aware of the problem, and admitted that he had lacked prudence, as he himself had furnished her with a lot of psychological literature. But he claimed that he did not think her reading influenced the development of the experience.⁷⁹⁹

For Flournoy, Cécile's decision not to give way to her feelings for her hypnotiser, as well as another personal incident (her resolve not to get involved in an amorous relationship with the married friend M.Y.) amounted to a repression or an assertion of the autonomy of her moral self. As a result of this repression, the subconscious cooked up another phenomenon: the spiritual Friend.⁸⁰⁰

The spiritual Friend was an 'ideal Companion' to whom she could speak candidly about her problems (though not about her sexual obsessions) and who offered her solace.⁸⁰¹ Flournoy remarked that, had Cécile been a spiritualist, she would have probably thought that the Friend was a control spirit and that had she been Catholic, she would have thought he was a guardian angel. But as a good Protestant, and moreover, as a Protestant with an inclination for psychology, she was well aware that the friend was only a manifestation of her creative fantasy. In her notes, Cécile wrote:

12 nov. 1912—For several weeks, the Friend has been coming to me from time to time. I see and hear nothing, but I know he is there, with the calm and the delicious rest that engulf me. I don't know if he has a body. I do not in any way perceive him through my senses, save for when I think I hear him talk, but through an inner voice, like that of my own thought. Still, he is not *me*. He comes from outside and brings me what is pure and bright. He speaks very little, very

⁷⁹⁷ See Pierre Janet, 'L'Influence somnambulique et le besoin de direction,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 43 (1897): 113-143.

⁷⁹⁸ See Flournoy, 'Une mystique,' 39.

⁷⁹⁹ See Flournoy, 'Une mystique,' 15-16.

⁸⁰⁰ Flournoy, 'Une mystique,' 40.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 41, 53.

slowly, and with few words. He is always listening to me. And when he is there, I speak all the time, I tell him everything that happens inside me.⁸⁰²

For Flournoy, the Friend represented the superposition of several impressions: the *imago* of her dead father, for whom she maintained a warm affection and respect; the echo of the hypnotic sessions, by which he had tried to instil into her a sense of courage, serenity and self-possession in the face of her assertive carnal self; examples from the religious literature she was familiar with; her own Christian upbringing, which was evident in the fact that she had considered the question whether the Friend was not Christ himself.⁸⁰³

After six months of interaction with the Friend, Cécile began experiencing ecstasies in the spring of 1913. The ecstasies gradually petered out during the summer of 1914.⁸⁰⁴ In total she experienced thirty one of them. Her ecstasies started as a state of lethargy, a quasi-paralysis and 'passive well-being.' Like the visits of the Friend, the ecstasies usually happened at night. Some followed upon a dream, and during this period Cécile also had a series of symbolic dreams. During the ecstasy, she became conscious 'of another reality, essential and immutable.' She wrote that 'I did not see anything, hear anything, I was neither asleep, nor passed out, but I was *somewhere else*, and I was *another*.' The experience was qualitatively different than her earlier encounter with the Friend. It gave her an 'absolute certitude of the reality of the divine.'⁸⁰⁵ For a while, she felt torn between the Friend and the new divine experience. She described this moral quandary as a choice between a human love, towards a being that was of the same nature as herself, and a divine love, towards a being that was radically different, and whom she could not control.⁸⁰⁶

Cécile hesitated to call the ecstatic experience a 'religious' one, because she felt it was deeper, less precise, and more 'overpowering' than any religious experience she had had in her life before.⁸⁰⁷ She explained that the God she had known and felt before during prayers was a different God altogether, a God who had entered history, who acted in a predictable way, whereas the God of ecstasy was a God beyond all history, and beyond all expression.⁸⁰⁸ In other words, the experience of the divine overturned her expectations of what God was. It

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 63. Cécile used the word 'overpowering' in English.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

brought her face to face with a God that was less personal, more like a vague force ('a vague something' as she once put it) and who seemed to be 'beyond good and evil.'⁸⁰⁹

Over the course of the next months, Cécile struggled with the meaning and value of her mystical experience. For a while, she doubted the reality of the experience, and wondered if she was not going crazy.⁸¹⁰ She asked herself why she was unable to simply take the experience as it was, without feeling obliged to draw moral consequences from it, or to expect some sort of visible fruits.⁸¹¹ As noted earlier, her descriptions and analyses often blended Christian and psychological languages. She wavered on the question of whether the ecstatic experience came from the subconscious or not. On the one hand she felt that for her, attaining the ecstasy came as a result of an inner battle, and at the cost of a momentary loss of self. She suggested that this was because of a rift that separated her subconscious from her consciousness, and speculated that such a rift did not exist in the case of Jesus, who was always perfectly harmonious with himself.⁸¹² On the other hand, she argued that the experience could not come purely from her subconscious (or that it was not a subconscious reflection of her conscious religious life), because she believed in a personal God, who was belied by the ecstatic experience. The impersonality of the God of ecstasy convinced her that she was dealing with an objective God.⁸¹³

At the beginning of 1914, Cécile reflected on how her relationship to herself had changed since she began her psychotherapy with Flournoy. She thought that her adoption of a medical-cum-psychological standpoint with respect to her erotic spells had set her free from her earlier accusatory and guilt-ridden Protestantism. Psychology, she felt, had set her free to accept her own personality. And she could also find a Biblical quotation to support such self acceptance in one of St. Paul's letters: 'But by the grace of God, I am what I am.'⁸¹⁴

Cécile's mystical experiences pushed even further her break with her earlier 'cramped' Protestant mentality. They made her a liberal Protestant. On the one hand, she felt that her

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 69-71. The phrase 'beyond good and evil' came to her all of a sudden, as she woke up one morning. It spelled out: 'Beyond good and evil our soul finds its true life in the luminous perfection.' Flournoy notes that Cécile had not read Nietzsche, whom she nevertheless disliked. *Ibid.*, 71.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, 83. See also the description on p. 103 about the contact with the divine happening the 'depths of the subconscious.'

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133. I have used the translation in the NRSV (The New Revised Standard Version). Cécile thought that the quote came from Romans 7, but it is actually 1 Corinthians 15:10. See <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A10&version=NRSV>.

ecstasy did not touch her intellectually.⁸¹⁵ But it did have intellectual effects, which went in the direction of a Schleiermachian affirmation of the primacy of the affective experience of the divine. As Cécile made clear, she thought that this newfound perspective made her more tolerant, as she now realised that religious convictions were only the 'imperfect, changing and insufficient' expressions of 'an eternal reality which is our thirst for God.'⁸¹⁶ Consequently, she felt she was no longer tied down to dogmas or metaphysical assertions. She had managed to separate the idea of God from any 'dogmatic shackles.'⁸¹⁷ The divine experience gave her a sense of the reality of the divine that made these intellectual constructs superfluous.⁸¹⁸

Soon after her penultimate ecstasy, Cécile reflected on her religious development. She thought that a new stage was underway and that something was brewing in her subconscious. She expected that this novel development would bring her back to Christ, and noted that 'the experience of the Divine did not satisfy me for long.'⁸¹⁹ Her sexual phases had not completely abated, but she felt that they had gotten easier to bear, and she thought that the divine Experience had a lot to do with their diminution.⁸²⁰ At the beginning of 1915, she wrote to Flournoy that 'the history of 'Mlle Vé' is the history of a conversion, of the slow detachment of a soul fastened unto impurity, and of its return to a moral and religious ideal.'⁸²¹ She thought that a new experience was underway, one of profound 'companionship,' which was different from that of the Friend, because she did not feel this companionship as coming from an outside presence. And still, something that was not herself had spoken to her and offered her comfort. She could only hope that this was the Christ that she was searching for.⁸²²

3.5.2.2 Flournoy's interpretation

Flournoy interpreted Cécile's story along several different axes, taking into account her modernity, the stages of the mystical process (incubation, prodromes, ecstasy), the nature of consciousness during ecstasy, the psychogenesis of ecstasy, the relation between sexuality and mysticism, and the transformation of personality that could be mapped out onto the mystical process. He thus placed himself at the nexus of the debates that we have been tracking in this chapter. Cécile's case provided him with an opportunity to preach once more

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 147, 153.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁸²² *Ibid.*, 167-69. The term 'companionship' was used by Cécile in English.

his own brand of moderate, interior Protestantism, dogmatically flexible and devoid of any ostentatious elements. Cécile was a mystic after Flournoy's heart: she was healthy, and lacked stigmata or other strange illnesses that beset the likes of St. Theresa; her revelations were almost completely devoid of the 'inexhaustible cinematography of the fantasy'—she had no majestic visions of the Trinity or hell and she displayed a cold and scientific reasoning when it came to the analysis of such subconscious creations, or of her own mediumistic abilities; she showed no propensity towards the baroque mortifications of past mystics. In her case, 'hygienic considerations have replaced the monastic practices of the past.'⁸²³

He further argued that the notion of an 'ecstatic consciousness' had to be accepted at least as a working hypothesis and as an accurate description of the lived experience of the mystics.⁸²⁴ Professing not to take sides on the ontology of this state (whether it was the fish-consciousness of Beck, or the superior evolutionary state of Bucke or Probst-Biraben), Flournoy claimed that ecstatic consciousness was better suited to explain the psychological state of the ecstatic than the hypothesis of absolute unconsciousness postulated by Leuba. Ecstatic consciousness meant that there was no hiatus, no absolute break between the mystic's consciousness before and after the ecstasy. Ecstatic consciousness could be a state of sub-consciousness or hyper-consciousness, but it was not a mere syncope. Cécile's descriptions on this point might have suggested the latter ('falling into the void,' 'ceasing to be'), but in Flournoy's estimations such expression referred merely to the abolition of normal consciousness and not to the abolition of all consciousness. Cécile agreed as much, as she was familiar with fainting fits and claimed ecstasy was nothing like them.⁸²⁵ For his part, Flournoy argued that ecstasy was a state wherein the subject attained a maximum of concentration and depth of the vital energy or libido. As this was an ineffable state, it was usually expressed instinctively with what, following Jung, Flournoy declared to be the essential symbol of life: light.⁸²⁶

Concerning the physiological correlative of the ecstatic state, Flournoy confessed that one could say nothing certain. He intimated that what happened during ecstasy was quite likely a reorganisation of cerebral centres that determined a new attitude and conduct in the subject. This elucidation was quite similar to the one offered by Leuba and Starbuck with regard to

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, 171-74.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, 179-80.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

conversion, and Flournoy recognised it and referred the reader to their works.⁸²⁷ But he did not pick up the theme of the connection between ecstasy (or mysticism) and conversion, even though Cécile herself had referred to her mystical journey as one of conversion.

Instead of dealing with conversion, Flournoy offered two different attempts at explaining the psychogenesis of Cécile's mystical states, using auto-suggestion and psychoanalysis. The auto-suggestive path was inspired by Leuba's 'seminal studies' on the fundamental tendencies of Christian mystics, and in particular by his catalogue of needs that the mystics responded to: for intellectual unification, affective support, organic satisfaction, and moral perfection.⁸²⁸ He thought that if one joined this catalogue of needs to Cécile's mediumistic and dissociative personality, one would thereby have all the elements needed to explain her mystical process.

As already mentioned above, Flournoy thought that Cécile's spiritual Friend was a concoction of her subconscious, whose purpose was to fill the void left by Cécile's breaking away from a the dangerous relationship with M.Y. The Friend stepped in to respond to her need for consolation and provided a centre for her wandering thoughts. The problem with the Friend, according to Flournoy, was that he was too ethereal, too emasculated to be able to fill the emotional void for long. Furthermore, he was too contrived, and Cécile could see from the very start that he was nothing more than 'puppet with strings.'⁸²⁹ For these reasons, her subconscious concocted the far more powerful divine presence, which could finally satisfy all of her needs, including that for organic satisfaction. The purpose of introducing this reading was unclear, as Flournoy had already explained the episode of the Friend in terms of repression and sublimation. At the same time, as it will shortly become clear, he also explained Cécile's entire mystical journey as a process of sublimation. He never explained how the two readings related to each other.

While the reading in terms of auto-suggestion was limited to Cécile's recent experiences, the psychoanalytic reading was applied to her whole life or to as much of it as Flournoy could reconstruct. Like Delacroix, Flournoy had himself subscribed Boutroux's thesis that mysticism was a lifelong process of development. Moreover, he claimed that this view corresponded to Cécile's personal feeling about her experiences.⁸³⁰ Flournoy claimed that, had he wanted to, he could have easily fitted Cécile's experiences into the schemas already

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, 181-82.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, 193-94.

proposed by Boutroux or Delacroix. But he preferred to take the more 'reckless' route of arguing that Cécile's mystical journey was long process of sublimation whose origins lay in her 'prehistoric or paleo-infantile period,' which could be reconstructed with the psychoanalytic method.⁸³¹

Flournoy's interpretation thus grew out of his earlier 'cryptomnesic' study of Héléne Smith, to which he now added a number of analytical categories, most of them borrowed from Jung: imago, introversion/extroversion and Electra's complex. Flournoy rejected Freud's 'pan-sexualism' and showed more sympathy for the broader way in which Jung interpreted the libido: as the life energy, Bergson's *élan vital* and Schopenhauer's Will.⁸³² He also adopted Jung's conception of the unconscious, 'whose unlimited depths enclose all the past of the race and of the individual.'⁸³³

Regarding Cécile, he argued that her life story was framed by the double influence of her father's imago.⁸³⁴ On the one hand, this imago or unconscious image of the father, had exercised a pernicious influence for most of her life, due to the incestuous affection that Cécile had for her father (Electra's complex).⁸³⁵ This attachment had prevented her from marrying when the time was right, and had kept her ensconced in a passion for M.Y., which was based on a superficial resemblance between this man and her father. On the other hand, Cécile had, late in life, begun to identify more fully with her father's imago. In her own words, she 'had become again, more completely than ever, my father's daughter.'⁸³⁶ As her father had been an exceptional and independent character, and as Cécile had maintained a moral admiration for him and his ideas, such an identification was salutary. It gave her the strength to break free of her infantile sexual attachment and to sublimate her erotic libido into altruism by the mystical process.

Flournoy maintained that Cécile's decision to identify with the latter aspect of her father's imago had set in motion her mystical journey. He also claimed that all mystical journeys

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, 195-96.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, 220.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁸³⁴ The term 'imago' was introduced by Jung in 1911 in *TSL*. As he explained in a note, 'imagos' were complexes that were autonomous in the psychical hierarchy. Jung only seemed to apply it to the mother and father complexes, as Flournoy also noted. See *TSL*, 492.

⁸³⁵ For Jung's definition of the Electra complex see C.G. Jung, 'Freud and Psychoanalysis,' *CW* 4, 154.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, 204. This splitting of the father complex into a good and a bad side was taken from one of Jung's articles. See C.G. Jung, 'Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen,' *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* I (Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1909): 171.

began with a voluntary decision.⁸³⁷ The subsequent period in her life (interaction with the Friend, divine ecstasy) was a period of introversion of the libido.⁸³⁸ It was a time in which she returned to herself and gathered the necessary energy for the extroversion that followed. The introversive period was in itself beset by dangers, namely the dangers of losing contact with reality, of finding too much pleasure in building imaginary castles. Flournoy explained that without a strong will, introversion could sometimes lead all the way to dementia praecox. For Cécile, introversion also presented a very real danger of personality fragmentation, given her mediumistic temperament.⁸³⁹ Cécile successfully navigated these dangers. The beginning of the extroversive period was marked by her decision to give up the incommunicable Experience. Symbolically, she was also told in one of her dreams of 1914 that it was in the service to others that she could truly find God.⁸⁴⁰ The success of her mystical journey could be measured by the effect it had on her, by its 'fruits.'⁸⁴¹ For Flournoy, these fruits were evident in Cécile's own acknowledgment that she felt liberated, that she was 'a new creature,' no longer bound to her erotic obsessions, or to her dogmatic intransigence. Flournoy assimilated this change to an enlargement of her personality, which had been accomplished by sublimation. At the same time, however, he conceded that the exact way in which sublimation was accomplished remained a mystery. Cécile could not explain it, and the only way to track it was by attending to her subconscious symbolism (from dreams, free associations, reveries). Flournoy dutifully obliged, and provided a concise analysis of four typical dreams, extracted, as he wrote, from over a hundred examples of such oneiric material at his disposal.⁸⁴²

Flournoy's account of Cécile's mystical journey quite likely had a significant effect on Jung. Though we lack any statements from Jung on the matter, we do know that, unusually for him, he possessed two copies of the piece, both of them annotated. At the same time, *Une mystique moderne* was a topic of discussion between him and his collaborators in 1915.⁸⁴³

From the point of view of the development of religious psychology which we have been tracking here, we can say that Flournoy's account was a reassertion of the primacy of the

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸³⁸ The term 'introversion' was introduced by Jung in 1909. See Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 62.

⁸³⁹ Flournoy, 'Une mystique moderne,' 207

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 208-09.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, 212-18.

⁸⁴³ See *infra*.

affective over against the strictures that had been imposed by Delacroix some years previously. Though Flournoy did not discuss these earlier criticisms, the Schleiermachiian thesis was asserted by Cécile herself, who also noted the liberating effect that the ecstatic experience had on her. As opposed to Delacroix's mystics, she did not try (or did not succeed) in making her experience conform to any dogmatic notions. Ultimately she had to affirm her experience in spite of her ideas, which had the advantage of giving her a freer perspective on life and of making her feel converted. Interestingly enough, Delacroix thought she had not gone far enough in trying to reconcile her dogmatic position with the ecstatic experience. In his review of Flournoy's article, Delacroix returned to what he claimed was the central question for any mystic: how to reconcile the self and the divine, or the intuitive vagueness of the God of experience with the determined form of the God of tradition? For him, there were four possible solutions to this quandary: 1) to fully embrace the ecstasy, and to try to repeat it as frequently as possible—which was a heterodox and not a Christian position; 2) to live in the alternation between ecstasy and life, between contemplation and action, as had been Cécile's procedure during her year of ecstasies; 3) to try to develop the theopathic state that he put forward in the *Studies*, wherein the mystic had both the continuous consciousness of God as well as the ability to act; 4) to renounce ecstasy and return to the world to live the life of an ordinary Christian. For Delacroix, Cécile had adopted the fourth way. With all the reserves that came from the fact that she was still alive and hence able to change her direction, he thus claimed that she was no mystic, but only someone who accomplished the process half-way and then stopped.⁸⁴⁴

3.5.3 Pierre Janet

With the examples of Delacroix and Flournoy in mind, we can now turn to the most famous representative of the psychopathological approach to mysticism: Pierre Janet. Janet was born in Paris in 1859. In his youth, he felt an equal passion for the natural sciences and for religion, and dreamt of working out a philosophy that would reconcile the two. In his autobiography, he claimed to 'have always retained mystical tendencies which I have succeeded in controlling.'⁸⁴⁵ Janet studied at the prestigious *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, and then taught philosophy for six years at a high school in Le Havre. In Le Havre he also began his psychological studies of hypnosis and suggestion, which he published between

⁸⁴⁴ Henri Delacroix, 'Remarques sur 'Une Mystique moderne,' *Archives de psychologie* 25 (1915): 343-45.

⁸⁴⁵ See Pierre Janet, 'Autobiography,' in Carl Murchison (ed.), *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, vol. I (Worcester MA: Clark University Press, 1930), 123. See also Pierre Janet, 'Auto-biographie psychologique,' *Les Études philosophiques*, I, No. 2 (1946), 81.

1886 and 1889. He returned to Paris in 1889 and begun working towards a medical degree as well as doing research on patients at the Salpêtrière under Charcot's supervision. When he graduated in 1893, Charcot entrusted the newly opened psychological laboratory at the Salpêtrière to Janet. In 1902, he was appointed to Ribot's chair of experimental psychology at the Collège de France.⁸⁴⁶

Several things need to be borne in mind before we attempt to summarise Janet's contribution to the psychology of mysticism. Firstly, his statements about the psychology of mysticism are a direct outcrop of his study and treatment of patients that populated the wards of the Salpêtrière. His 'raw material' as it were, was thus markedly different from that of purely academic psychologists of religion, whose work he have primarily dealt with so far. Secondly, his psychology of mysticism was connected with Janet's engagement with nosological reconstruction in the period after 1892, particularly with the concept of psychasthenia.⁸⁴⁷ Thirdly, Janet's psychology of mysticism was put forward as part of a larger psychological architectonic that he tried to develop later in life under the general name of 'the psychology of conduct.'⁸⁴⁸

The psychology of conduct was an attempt to construct a system of psychology that was rooted in the concept of action and in a complex developmental schema. As he explained, putting action first meant a complete reversal of the post-Cartesian psychological position, which had seen thought as being prior to action. Action was to serve as the keystone for all psychology, because all psychological objects could be ultimately described as actions.

His new psychology was thus a form of behaviourism, but Janet shunned the term and used 'conduct' as a way of signalling that his view was different from behaviourism.⁸⁴⁹ He thought the latter was ill suited to explain the higher psychological processes like consciousness,

⁸⁴⁶See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Fontana Press, 1994), 334-343.

⁸⁴⁷For psychasthenia see Sonu Shamdasani, 'Claire, Lise, Jean, Nadia, and Gisèle: Preliminary Notes towards a Characterization of Pierre Janet's Psychasthenia,' in Marike Giswilt- Hofstra and Roy Porter (eds.) *Cultures of Neurasthenia: From Beard to The First World War* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 363-385.

⁸⁴⁸For a brief summary of this psychology by Janet himself, see Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la conduite,' in H. Wallon (ed.), *L'Encyclopédie française*, VIII La vie mentale (Paris: Société de gestion de l'Encyclopédie Française), 8.08-11- 8.08-16. For a recent account of Janet's psychology of conduct see Jaan Valsiner and René van der Veer, *The Social Mind: Construction of the Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61-137.

⁸⁴⁹In *De L'Angoisse a l'extase*, he seemed more ready to accept the behaviouristic description. See Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase. Études sur les croyances et les sentiments I: un délire religieux. La croyance*. (Paris: Société Pierre Janet, [1926] 1975), 175. Horton interpreted his position as being a kind of behaviourism. See Walter M. Horton, 'The Origin and Psychological Function of Religion According to Pierre Janet,' *American Journal of Psychology*, 35, 1 (1924), 18.

belief, memory, thoughts, or the sentiments. For his part, these higher psychological objects were explained by an appeal to different 'tendencies' that were ranged across a succession of evolutionary stages. He defined tendency as 'a disposition of the living organism to perform a given action; action characterized by a certain number of movements of this or that organ, performed in a certain order in response to a certain stimulation of given quality and force produced on a certain point of the tegument.'⁸⁵⁰ These stages went from the most elementary reflex actions, to social acts, to acts which required language (assertive and reflective beliefs), and then finally to experimental, rational actions and ultimately to the development of individual conducts that reflected a person's uniqueness and originality. Janet attached supreme importance to language as the springboard for the specifically human tendencies, and he frequently referred to man as a 'chatty animal' (*animal bavard*).

By using concepts that he had devised earlier in his work, such as those of psychological force and tension, Janet could explain why some of his patients felt impotent to perform certain acts, why they required constant moral direction, and why they experienced feelings of void. These disturbances were thought to originate in the patients' lack of force or more frequently, in their lack of ability to concentrate that force, to obtain the tension necessary to attain a more complex act. As force was usually more readily available at an earlier developmental stage, that explained why they frequently went down a notch, like for example from the level of reflected belief to that of assertive belief, wherein actions were accomplished immediately, without thought. The level at which these patients functioned also served to explain why they spoke the way they did, without regard for logic or internal consistency, much like children or primitive peoples. Janet's evolutionary schema offered several things at once. Firstly, it gave him a diagnostic map with which to understand what was happening to his patients. Implicitly, by understanding what was wrong, one could also understand if and when to intervene with psychotherapy, or if the latter could be used to, for example, raise the patient's tension back up again. At the same time, the schema also offered a way into topics that had preoccupied sociologists, anthropologists and historians of religion: the formation of culture, religion, and society.

Before we move on to the issue of how Janet understood mysticism, it is important to briefly outline the way in which he understood religion more generally. Unfortunately, as Ellenberger noted long ago, we lack the great book on the psychology of religion that Janet

⁸⁵⁰ See Janet, 'La Psychologie de la conduite.' Ellenberger thought that these tendencies were similar to instincts. See Ellenberger, *op.cit.*, 386.

was planning to write at some point during the 1920s. However, we can still gather a lot from the summary of one of his courses on the subject, given at the *Collège de France* in 1921-22, and recorded by one American auditor, Walter M. Horton.⁸⁵¹

Janet began the course by outlining one of his favourite problems, that of the 'mental budget.' The starting point for the budget was the notion of psychological force that I mentioned above, and in particular the issue of how best to manage one's mental receipts and expenses, so that one did not become bankrupt. Janet thought that moral-religious conduct (he did not distinguish between morality and religion) functioned as a regulator of psychological force.⁸⁵²

In order to understand how this regulation happened, he investigated how religion had arisen in the first place. This brought him into close proximity with some of the major theories about the origin of religion and morality, those of Durkheim, Tylor, Leuba, and Frazer.

Janet professed to be in general agreement with Durkheim's theory, but in reality he advocated a completely different perspective, borrowed from Durkheim's rival Gabriel Tarde. Janet regarded the Durkheimian notion that religion was essentially a social phenomenon as true, but unproblematic, and even banal. Like any product of the superior level of tendencies (in this case the reflective level), religion originated in a lower one, such as the social. But one could just as easily say that it originated at the level of reflex action (several levels lower). Instead, Janet found an explanatory principle in the notion of imitation, which he borrowed from Tarde.⁸⁵³ If a group of people in the distant evolutionary past imitated the leader, it was because they found it easy to do so. Imitation was a way of conserving energy, and as he put it: 'sheep and idiots incapable of taking a step alone can walk in a row with ease.'⁸⁵⁴ Conversely, the leader spent more energy taking the first step, but was repaid in full by the joy he found in being imitated. Imitation happened at the social level, which humans and some animals shared. With the development of language at the next level (that of elementary intelligence), the leader's action of taking the first step became a command. He now simply ordered, and others obeyed.

The next level of conduct (the assertive) corresponded to the mental state of children, savages, and (in some cases) psychasthenics. This was the level at which myths and rituals

⁸⁵¹ Walter M. Horton, 'The Origin and Psychological Function of Religion According to Pierre Janet,' 16-52.

⁸⁵² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

made their appearance. For Janet, myths and rituals had no rationally intelligible meaning. To try to impose such meanings upon them was to commit a kind of categorical error, by applying the presuppositions of a higher level of conduct to a lower one. Instead, myths and rites were the product of spontaneous impulses to talk and to act, a kind of incongruous, cacophonous mental jazz.⁸⁵⁵ At the assertive level, one did not yet have religion (because for Janet as for Leuba, religion required a god or gods and these were seemingly absent at this level), but the soon-to-be religious rites revealed an essential function for this type of conduct: that of being a mental *stimulant*, a kind of drunkenness.

Janet's explanation for how this happened stretched the limits of psychological plausibility. On the one hand, he conceded to Durkheim that rituals had this kind of stimulating effect. He also concurred with Durkheim's analysis of a mourning ritual, whereby a certain tribe actually obtained an increase of mental power that made them joyous and helped them overcome the sadness of death. But Janet was silent when it came to Durkheim's collective effervescence, and provided no other explanation for why rituals could, in themselves, raise psychological tension. In fact, he seemed to agree with Durkheim that society could have this intoxicating effect by itself. He just disagreed that it was *only* society that did that. In his view, alcohol could have a similarly intoxicating effect as well. Alcohol, Janet claimed, also induced euphoria and raised the mental level. So did pulling one's hair:

It is purely arbitrary to make the sacred coextensive with the social; one could make just as good a case for the Great God Alcohol. Who knows? A monkey who got drunk may have been the founder of the human race.⁸⁵⁶

In other words, Janet's point was that what later became religion was only one among several conducts that had a stimulating effect. Religion proper appeared at the next (reflective) level, when such conducts were assimilated to the idea of God. For Janet, the idea of God was an extension of the idea of spirit, and he traced the latter to the development of interior thought. He explicitly disagreed with Tylor that the notion of spirit came out of dream experience. On the contrary, he saw spirits as gradually evolving out of the fact that on the reflective level, people no longer spoke out everything they thought (as they did on the assertive level). They

⁸⁵⁵ If such was the case, one wondered how he explained the fact that rites had fixed and rigid rules and that people compelled each other to obey them (something he agreed was the case). Was this another case of the herd following the leader? Janet usually described this stage with the phrase *language inconsistent* (inconsistent language). See for example Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43, 3 (1936): 329.

⁸⁵⁶ Horton, 28.

spoke in silence, to themselves, and begun seeing the others do the same thing. Thus, an invisible presence, a double, became the norm whenever one encountered another person whose thoughts were not accessible. Added to this was the fact that people continued to act in certain ways to those who were absent, or dead. With the gods firmly in place in the imagination, people began to turn to them for help, and especially for moral comfort. The gods, he thought, were eminently suitable for such exercises, because they were not real. They were idealized human beings, invisible to boot, but ready to always offer that constant assistance, friendship and direction that only an imaginary being can offer.⁸⁵⁷

Janet offered a compelling analysis of how morality was born out of religion.⁸⁵⁸ He argued that by forcing man to organise and subordinate his desires, religion had succeeded in turning him into an individual, a self. Other notable products of religion were science, work, and philosophy, all of which obtained on the next level (the ergetic and experimental one). Philosophy and science threatened to destroy religion in the contemporary age, because of their analytic propensity and also because of the scientific demand for experimental verification. The question hence arose: what kind of conduct would likely assume the regulative and stimulating function that had been fulfilled by religion?

Janet first surveyed some of the contemporary responses to the religious crisis: Spiritualism, which had attempted to adopt the scientific outlook in its quest for contact with the dead, the Religion of Sentiment, which he identified with authors like Renan, James, or Ritschl, as well as seemingly, with the psychology of religion in its entirety, and a host of contemporary 'mysticisms' (erotic, social, political, philosophical, artistic).

Concerning James and the psychology of religion, he put forward an argument that closely resembles one of the main points of this dissertation. According to Janet, James had made the value of religious experience dependent on its ability to create uplifting, 'sthenic' emotions. Furthermore, he had, quite rightly from the psychological point of view, included religious experience among a series of experiences that had a similarly uplifting effect, such as anaesthesia, drunkenness and ecstasy. However, by introducing such parallels between secular and religious experience, he had effectively erased the distinction between the two domains.⁸⁵⁹ Instead of bolstering religion, psychology had driven the last nail into its coffin.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32, 39.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44, 45.

This development did not really bother Janet, as he thought religion was only 'the sovereign but imperfect popular remedy' for depressive states. Religion had been singled out in the course of history as one of the superior stimulants because it did not result in harmful after-effects, the way alcohol did. But he also argued that people who were psychologically well did not need religion. At the same time, those who were unwell could turn to a more scientific remedy for their plight: psychotherapy. In his view, in the future it would be psychotherapy that would assume the stimulating and regulative function that had been fulfilled by religion.⁸⁶⁰

3.5.3.1 Madeleine, the ecstatic

If religion was destined to be dissolved by the combined action of philosophy and science, and ultimately replaced by psychotherapy, how well would mysticism fare? In what way was mysticism related to religion in the first place?

In 1896, students at the Salpêtrière noticed a patient who was scampering about on her tiptoes and brought her to Janet's attention. The patient, who called herself Madeleine Lebouc (real name Pauline Lair Lamotte), was a small, middle-aged woman (42 when Janet met her), who came from a bourgeois family in the North-West of France.⁸⁶¹ Her childhood was marked by ill health and an intense religious devotion, fuelled by her reading of Christian hagiographies, as well as by ecstatic states that seemed to prefigure her later mystical vocation. At the age of 19 she left home to become a teacher in London. She was profoundly impressed by the misery and squalor she saw in East London, where she walked daily on her way to mass. In 1874, after a year in London, she went to Paris, intent on leading an anonymous (or rather pseudonymous), ascetic existence among the proletarians of Montmartre. As shown by Jacques Maître in his biography of Madeleine, this decision was, to a large extent, influenced by her encounter with Franciscan spirituality, and in particular by her adoption of a particular, non-political reading of the Franciscan mission to the poor.⁸⁶²

From her return to France and until her health deteriorated significantly in 1893, Madeleine sought to make good on her promise of poverty, leading the life of a very modest seamstress, surviving for months on end on nothing but bread and water, and keeping only sporadic

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸⁶¹ Jacques Maître, *Une Inconnue célèbre: Madeleine Lebouc/ Pauline Lair Lamotte (1863- 1918)* (Paris: Anthropos, 1993), 3-14. Her pseudonym was a reference to Mary-Magdalene as well as to the her belief that she was called upon to suffer for the sins of others, hence the odd choice of a last name (from 'bouc émissaire'-scapegoat). See Maître, *op.cit.*, 28.

⁸⁶² *Ibid.*, 15-20.

contact with her family (mainly with her sister Sophie, who tried to help her out financially). She was also imprisoned several times, mainly on accusations of vagrancy, aggravated by her refusal to declare her true identity.⁸⁶³ Her medical troubles began on Christmas 1892, with the painful contraction of her lower limbs. The situation was complicated in 1893 by Madeleine's slippage into a state of delirium, wherein she began writing letters to the authorities (and to her sister) warning of the impending assassination of the president of the republic, or describing scenes of cannibalism, murder, and the selling of human flesh that she had supposedly witnessed on the streets of Paris. By 1894, Madeleine, already walking on tiptoes because of her muscle contraction, thought that she was starting to levitate, and would rise up like a balloon to heaven. After brief stints in two other hospitals (where she was diagnosed with fever and hysteria) in 1894 and 1895, she finally ended up under Janet's care at the Salpêtrière, where she spent 6 years in total, between 1896-1901, and 1903-1904. From her final discharge in 1904 and until her death in 1918, she lived mostly in Le Mans, close to her two sisters. She maintained a correspondence with Janet until her death.

Janet presented her case at the international psychology congress in Munich in 1896, as well as to a lay audience at the *Institut Psychologique International* in 1901, and Madeleine also made brief appearances under the name Vk. in Janet's *Névrose et idées fixes* (1898).⁸⁶⁴ He gave the most complete description and interpretation of her situation in his massive two-tome work *From Anguish to Ecstasy* (1926-28).

In Janet's view, Madeleine was a windfall for the psychology of mysticism. On the one hand, he claimed she exhibited the full range of mystical phenomena, comprising ecstasies, visions, stigmata, diabolical encounters. On the other, he relished the fact that through her, he was able to observe these phenomena live, as they developed, free from the interference of religious authority, and free from the sacred aura that had surrounded such phenomena in the past. Since Madeleine lived at the Salpêtrière, he was able to perform all manner of studies on her, which would have not been possible if she were in a monastery for example.⁸⁶⁵ In addition to conversations, he conducted a plethora of physiological investigations meant to test her reaction times, respiration, strength, fatigue and other variables. He also went as far as enclosing her feet in type of device fitted with a small glass, meant to verify whether her stigmata were actually produced without tampering (even unconscious) on her part. The

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, 24-30.

⁸⁶⁴ Maître, *op.cit.*, 49-51.

⁸⁶⁵ Pierre Janet, 'Une extatique: conférence faite a L'Institut Psychologique International le 25 mai 1901,' *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique* 5 (1901): 209-212.

results were inconclusive, but the case did garner the attention of contemporary theologians concerned with mystical experience, such as Jules Pacheu and Augustin Poulain.⁸⁶⁶

Despite the testing and the prolonged interaction with Madeleine, Janet vacillated a lot about her diagnosis. In the period between 1892 and 1894, Janet began dividing the realm of neuroses into two major categories: hysteria and psychasthenia.⁸⁶⁷ The two conditions were in some respects similar, and certain people could suffer from both. In both types of illnesses one met with a narrowing of the field of consciousness and with delirium, aboulia and fixed ideas. But in hysteria there was a preponderance of automatic phenomena, fixed ideas were subconscious and there was dissociation that could lead up to split personalities. Psychasthenics were, on the contrary, aware of their own obsessions, doubts, and fixed ideas. They were frequently the first to complain that they were pathological.⁸⁶⁸ The question for Janet was: to which group did Madeleine belong?

In 1896, he seemed to have gone along for a while with the hysterical diagnosis that was established by other physicians, and which he himself had endorsed in the past regarding mystics like Saint Theresa.⁸⁶⁹

By 1901, this was starting to change. On the one hand, Madeleine's ecstatic states appeared to be similar to the somnambulism of hysterics. On the other, Janet thought that her contractions were nevertheless different from hysterical ones, and he also sought to show that Madeleine's ecstasy did not cause amnesia, anaesthesia or immobility in the same way that hysteric somnambulism did. At the same time, she also frequently entered into states of 'dryness,' of incessant doubt and questioning that seemed similar to psychasthenia. The ecstatic, according to him, was thus somewhere between these two conditions, part hysteric and part psychasthenic.⁸⁷⁰

By 1926, Madeleine was more firmly in the psychasthenic camp, though Janet still thought that there was something special about her condition, but the nature of that specialness

⁸⁶⁶ Janet seemed more convinced that the stigmata were of psychosomatic origin in 1901 than in 1926. See Pierre Janet, 'Une extatique,' 219-227; Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase I*, 395-400. See also Maître, *op.cit.*, 51-52.

⁸⁶⁷ See Shamdasani, 'Claire, Lise, Jean, Nadia, and Gisèle,' 370. See also Pierre Janet, *The Mental State of Hystericals: A Study of Mental Stigmata and Mental Accidents*, trans. Caroline Rollin Corson (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 519-521, 278-280.

⁸⁶⁸ Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase I*, 278.

⁸⁶⁹ Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase I*, 27.

⁸⁷⁰ Janet, 'Une extatique,' 214-18, 237-38.

seemed elusive.⁸⁷¹ At least, such was the case in volume one of *From Anguish to Ecstasy*. In volume two of the work, she also took on attributes of anxious melancholy, schizophrenia and manic agitation. Towards the end his book Janet claimed that it was 'singular to see the same individual present successively almost all the forms of mental illness.'⁸⁷² This admission thus made Madeleine not the paradigm of the psychasthenic, but of the mentally ill in general.⁸⁷³

He also claimed that a closer investigation of her clinical history had convinced him that her mental troubles were superimposed on a neurological condition of slow development, most likely syringomyelia.⁸⁷⁴ Despite this organic trouble, he affirmed that the origin of Madeleine's illness lay in her ideas.⁸⁷⁵ What he meant by this, however, was not that religion was pathogenic, but rather that it was the particular form of her religious ideas which was pathogenic.

On a very basic level, Janet argued, Madeleine was not particularly interested in religious ideas: she read no religious books, and she had no particular interest in theology or metaphysics, no interest in eschatology. This appears to be a paradoxical point in a book that was, at least in part, about the psychology of a mystic. However, as Janet already pointed out in 1903, 'mysticism is the lack of the apprehension of the real, coupled with a certain agitation of the mind, and a need to feed on chimeras.'⁸⁷⁶ There was nothing necessarily religious about it. The story of Madeleine's delirium was the 'perpetual story of her affective relationship with a character she called God.'⁸⁷⁷ It was essentially a love-delirium, no different than that of another patient who had dreamt constantly of her relationship with a German prince whom she named Byron. The view that Madeleine had of her God was

⁸⁷¹ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 348, 350, 381

⁸⁷² Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase. Études sur le croyances et les sentiments II: les sentiments fondamentaux* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1928), 655.

⁸⁷³ It is quite possible that Janet did not regard the different diagnoses that he gave throughout his book as anything more than tentative approximations. At one point, he wrote that 'mental illnesses today are not at all means of classifying the ill, but procedures for distinguishing rival psychiatric schools.' See Pierre Janet, *De l'angoisse*, vol. 2, 303. This admission would go some way toward explaining his liberal use of terms borrowed from his rivals: schizophrenia, autism, introversion, abreaction, at times with no concern for their original use. In the end, he seemed to argue that a more adequate nosology would involve a deeper understanding of the notion of psychological force and its modifications. See Janet, *De L'Angoisse II*, 660.

⁸⁷⁴ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 27, 154-157.

⁸⁷⁵ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 6, 388-89.

⁸⁷⁶ Pierre Janet, *Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie*, vol. 1 (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1903), 550.

⁸⁷⁷ Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 403.

simplistic, even crude, and her ontology was hardly what he expected from someone with her education.⁸⁷⁸

Like all psychasthenic patients, Madeleine suffered from a periodic loss of psychological tension that bumped her down from the stage of reflective belief to that of assertive belief.⁸⁷⁹ As mentioned earlier, the stage of assertive belief corresponded to the mental situation of children and 'pre-logical' savages. When in this stage, the psychasthenics uttered whatever came into their minds, with no concern for logic or plausibility. The patient Sophie maintained loudly, for example, that she was a rat, even when it was pointed out to her that rats do not speak. The psychasthenics also lacked a notion of time, and past, present and future blended together, even as they themselves blended in with a certain vision they had. Madeleine, for example, in one of her ecstasies, experienced the birth of Christ not as a historical event, but as a present occurrence, one in which she was at the same time both the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus (while Janet was given the more modest role of Joseph).⁸⁸⁰ At the stage of assertive belief, the psychasthenic patients frequently found themselves unable to act, or unable to complete an act whatsoever. They also showed a remarkable disinterest in social life, and desired constant direction, either from God, or from an earthly representative. As he wrote,

I note with particular interest the way in which God plays the part of the director for these psychasthenics. One of the well known manias of these sick people is to make the director decide for them the acts that they desire to accomplish, but which they cannot will.⁸⁸¹

The thinking of psychasthenics was above all subject to the vagaries of a dominant feeling, whereas on the reflective stage a number of opposing feelings and tendencies balanced themselves out.⁸⁸² Janet borrowed Madeleine's own terms to describe the phenomenology of her psychological states, superimposing his own psychological interpretation: 1) equilibrium; 2) consolation (which included ecstasy); 3) torture; 4) dryness; 5) temptation.⁸⁸³ Briefly put, equilibrium was a state of moderate joy and suffering; consolation was a state of extreme joy and limited activity; torture was the opposite of consolation, being a state of profound moral

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 322-328.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, 312.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*, 31-31.

suffering; dryness was a state of complete or almost complete lack of feeling; temptation was a state of obsession and doubt, dominated by a feeling of anxiety.⁸⁸⁴ The three negative states were above all ruled by what Janet called '*sentiments du vide*' (feelings of void), which were a hallmark of psychasthenia (though one could also encounter them in dementia praecox, melancholy, and asthenia). The feelings of void were an extreme form of feelings of devaluation. In simpler cases, the sufferer felt the loss of certain feelings (love, hate) that one used to experience. In more extreme cases, it wasn't just the feelings that were suppressed, but sufferers complained of a loss of action, of a loss of their own personality (which had been replaced by another), spontaneity, liberty, or even of one of their senses, claiming they were blind or deaf without really being so. Reality could also start feeling unreal, or take on an artificial aspect.⁸⁸⁵

For Janet, the most interesting of Madeleine's psychological states was that of consolation, which included three different levels: contemplation, ecstasy and rapture.⁸⁸⁶ All three boiled down to different degrees of immobility.⁸⁸⁷ In addition to this noticeable absence of movement, he defined ecstasy by a feeling of ineffable joy, coupled with visions or reveries, as he sometimes called Madeleine inner journeys. Janet came to question the received wisdom that ecstasy was a state of absolute immobility. It was not a paralysis, but rather a state of complete disinterest towards movement. As he quickly discovered, by uttering a phrase through which he asked Madeleine to ask God to do something, he could get her to perform a great deal of actions: to drink, stand up, get dressed, walk around, go to the laboratory for different tests.⁸⁸⁸ This lack of interest towards action was a feature that spoke clearly in favour of psychasthenia, because Janet observed it as well among his other patients.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁸⁸⁵ See Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase. Études sur le croyances et les sentiments II: Les Sentiments Fondamentaux* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1928), 44-61. Feelings of void were at the origin of mystical deliriums. (*Ibid.*, 71).

⁸⁸⁶ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 40. An ascending, threefold division of ecstatic states was typical for Catholic mystical theology, being a scholastic division that was endorsed by Richard of Saint Victor and St. Thomas Aquinas, though the 3 states did not bear the same names that were assigned by Janet. See M. J. Ribet, *La Mystique divine distinguée des contrefaçons diabolique et des analogies humaines. Tome Second: Les phénomènes mystiques* (Paris: Librairie Poussielgue Frères, 1879), 356-67.

⁸⁸⁷ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 43.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 49. It is perhaps not by accident that Janet discovered his ability to get Madeleine to 'snap out' of ecstasy, since he was probably familiar with some mystical manuals. The possibility of calling an ecstatic to order was a prerogative of the spiritual director (whose role he agreed he fulfilled in Madeleine's eyes) and was discussed in mystical manuals. As Ribet notes, the ability to bring an ecstatic back like this was one of the tell-tale signs that one was dealing with a supernatural ecstasy, and not simply with a fainting spell. See Ribet, *op.cit.*, 372, 406-13.

Another interesting thing about ecstasy came from the fact that Janet had difficulty finding something exactly similar among his other, more secular, psychasthenic patients. The secular kind of ecstasies that he identified among people like Rousseau, Nietzsche, or the patient 'Martial' (the pseudonym of the poet Raymond Roussel), did not seem to go as deep as Madeleine's, and were equivalent only to the most elementary stage of her contemplation.⁸⁸⁹ Janet argued that he had been wrong in the past, when he had tried to study ecstasy in the way that one studied other psychological states, that is, with no concern to their intellectual content. In the case of ecstasy that intellectual content was crucial, and true ecstasies were religious ecstasies. Such an affirmation was clearly contradicting his point that Madeleine was not really interested in religious ideas, but Janet tried to solve the conundrum by claiming that it was not the religious ideas that led to ecstasy, but rather that the form of thought in ecstasy determined the intellectual content. He did not explain precisely how this determination worked, but only hinted that the immobility, the joy, the seemingly endless vistas that opened out to the ecstatic were eminently compatible with how people had imagined the divine life from times immemorial.⁸⁹⁰

In spite of this affirmation of the psychological uniqueness of religious ecstasy, Janet did his best to try to debunk it, by arguing that it was essentially 'an optimistic and immobile religious delirium.'⁸⁹¹

For him, it was important to see the ecstatic state (or the consolation) as part of a cycle, that is, as inextricably linked with the other states of temptation, dryness and torture, which were all merely varieties of the psychasthenic experience of doubt, obsession, and scruples.⁸⁹²

Figure 3: Evolution of Madeleine's crises in the course of her life, Pierre Janet, *De l'angoisse a l'extase. Études sur les croyances et les sentiments*, vol. 1, 169.

Janet mapped out the periodicity of this cycle throughout Madeleine's life. In her youth, her 'crises' had been episodic; they got progressively worse after the age of 19, and reached their maximum around the age of 40; they declined again and at 50, around the time that she was finally discharged, Madeline had returned to a period of equilibrium.⁸⁹³ On one hand, Janet used this map of Madeleine's life so as to show that there was no exact parallel that could be

⁸⁸⁹ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 118.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 163-167.

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*, 169.

drawn between her psychological condition and her organic troubles: close to her death she had finally gotten better psychologically, despite the worsening of her physiological condition.⁸⁹⁴ On the other hand, establishing the periodicity was important inasmuch as it allowed Janet to argue that those psychologists who focused only on ecstasy and on the equilibrium that followed it could make significant errors because they did not look at the whole process, or at the whole life of their subjects. A case in point was William James' pragmatic criterion, but the argument was meant to be applicable as well to all religiously minded psychologists, who argued that ecstasy could not be pathological because it resulted in a state of well being, mental balance, etc.⁸⁹⁵

Figure 4: The succession of Madeleine's states, Pierre Janet, *De l'angoisse a l'extase. Études sur les croyances et les sentiments*, vol. 1, 166.

As can be seen from Figure 4, for Janet, Madeleine's states always followed first a downward curve before they went up again, culminating in ecstasy and then returning to equilibrium. Janet thought that there was such an intimate connection between ecstasy and the torture that preceded it that one could predict the length and intensity of the ecstatic state by the length and intensity of the torture that preceded it.⁸⁹⁶ James and others like him assumed that because the ecstatic felt refreshed after the ecstasy, this was in fact also *due* to the ecstasy. In other words, if what followed onto the ecstasy was good, then ecstasy was good as well. This, Janet argued, was a classic *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy.

Madeleine felt refreshed after the ecstasy because she returned to a state of mediocre, healthy equilibrium, identical to the one that preceded the whole cycle. From her own perspective, the equilibrium appeared to be spectacular because she compared it with the terrible torture that came before it. But in reality there was nothing spectacular about it.⁸⁹⁷ Not that Janet had anything against the state of equilibrium, though he did declare that he was a bit annoyed by the fact that in this state, he no longer got the usual long delirious missives from Madeleine, but only discussions of domestic affairs, which bored him. Nevertheless, this was a sign that her condition had improved, that she took an interest in others, and that finally, she could do

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁹⁵ It was actually one of the classical arguments used by theologians to distinguish between the true and the false mystics. See for example the argument in Maxime de Montmorand, *Psychologie des mystiques catholiques orthodoxes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1920), 174-75.

⁸⁹⁶ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 352.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

something with her life. He argued that in his view, Madeleine herself preferred the mundane feelings of the equilibrium to the emotional turmoil of ecstasy.⁸⁹⁸

A closely related point had to do with the supposed intellectual illumination (the noetic quality) that James as well as the mystics themselves had singled out as a feature of the ecstatic experience. For Janet, the feelings of intellection that the mystics experienced were only the satisfaction that they felt regarding any verbal formula that happened to come into their heads.⁸⁹⁹ They showed no indication of having actually solved a problem, or of 'understanding' in the way people usually used such words. Frequently, at any rate, what Madeleine thought or uttered in her ecstasies was no different from what she would have thought or uttered otherwise.⁹⁰⁰ No great thoughts came to her during the experience. The same went for the so-called 'inspirations' that she received from God. Frequently among the psychasthenics, such divine inspirations were merely ways of not acknowledging responsibility for something they desired, because it did not square with their asceticism. Madeleine thus, was 'inspired' to ask Janet for a laxative or for sugar flavoured water, while another psychasthenic was inspired by the Holy Spirit to masturbate.⁹⁰¹

Janet argued that it was the joy that the psychasthenic ecstatic felt that had confused many interpreters of mystical phenomena. This was because, in general, people were not prepared to associate joy with a pathological condition.⁹⁰² For his part, he offered two different interpretations of it. Starting with his 1901 presentation, Janet argued that the state of ecstasy offered a powerful counter-argument to the James-Lange theory of emotions. According to the latter, emotions were only the consciousness of a certain physiological changes (muscular, respiratory, circulatory, etc.) taking place in the organism in response to a certain situation. According to this theory, joy would have to be the emotion corresponding to a great muscular force, ample movements, increased circulation, etc. Or what one observed in ecstasy was quite the opposite.⁹⁰³ So what did this mean? On one hand, it meant that the James-Lange theory was wrong, and in volume two of *From Anguish to Ecstasy*, Janet argued at length against it, and also put forward his own understanding of sentiments as 'regulators of action.' On the other hand, one had to devise another explanation for the ecstatic joy. In

⁸⁹⁸ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 151-53.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁹⁰⁰ See also Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43, 4 (1936), 520.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, 386.

⁹⁰³ Janet, 'Une extatique,' 230-32.

1901, Janet seemed to have gone along with the Ribot-Murisier thesis that ecstasy was a kind of monoideism, and that the joy that came with it was due simply to the seeming perfection of the idea that the ecstatic contemplated, and to the fact that one was not usually accustomed to such perfection.⁹⁰⁴ As I have noted above, the main point of this interpretation was that the mystic did indeed accomplish a kind of synthesis, an escape from the disjunction of his life into the unity of the one idea.

By 1928, Janet was less convinced with this interpretation. He argued that the disappearance of doubt and suffering did not necessarily entail a synthesis or an escape from multiplicity.⁹⁰⁵ Instead, he found that there was enough multiplicity and variation in Madeleine's relations with God. On the other hand, he also questioned the idea that intellectual unity should result in a feeling of joy. There was unity as well in systematic deliriums, but that did not bring joy in and of itself. At the same time, Janet did not buy into the thesis that the joy of ecstasy was due to the presence of unacknowledged (or barely acknowledged) orgasms in the ecstatic state. Madeleine did tend to 'have sex' with God during the ecstasy, but she also had other kinds of social relations. At the same time, the devil often sexually assaulted her during the state of torture, and that brought no joy.⁹⁰⁶

In order to understand the joy of ecstasy, Janet brought in the notion of introversion, though without explaining its origin. He used the term as quasi-synonymous with autism and schizophrenia.⁹⁰⁷ For him, Madeleine and patients like her concentrated all their action on the inside, focusing on their inner dialogue, and foregoing social relations. They spent their time building imaginary sand-castles, combining thoughts and images like children and being annoyed when someone pointed out some contradiction in their stories.⁹⁰⁸ The reason for this inner withdrawal was a lack of energy to act on the outside. They were people who felt exhausted without a reason for being exhausted. In the case of Madeleine, she was exhausted by her own obsessions and doubts during the preceding states. Sometimes, however, a simple fatigue, or an indigestion, or bad news in a letter from home, was enough to trigger in her a state of fatigue.⁹⁰⁹ What followed upon this state of extreme fatigue was not sleep, but

⁹⁰⁴ Janet, 'Une extatique,' 239.

⁹⁰⁵ Janet, *De L'Angoisse II*, 519.

⁹⁰⁶ Janet, *De L'Angoisse II*, 522-27.

⁹⁰⁷ Janet, *De L'Angoisse II*, 532.

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 559.

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 566-67.

ecstasy. So was ecstasy a kind of abnormal sleep? That seemed to be the conclusion, but Janet seemed weary of expressing it in that fashion.⁹¹⁰

He argued instead that by suddenly suppressing all exterior action and replacing it with an introverted one, ecstasy conserved Madeleine's force and gave her the impression that powerful reserves of energy were at her disposal.⁹¹¹ For Janet, joy in general was due to the sense of triumph that followed upon a successfully completed action.⁹¹² What happened in joy was that a part of the force that had been mobilised for the already completed action was henceforth available for wasting (*gaspillage*). In Madeleine's case, the wastage was evident in all the acts that she did interiorly during the ecstasy: conversations with God, marvellous imaginary voyages, delivering the baby Jesus, etc. A similar kind of opulent imaginative wastage was evident in the fantasies of opium eaters.⁹¹³

Madeleine got her feeling of joy not from any accomplished action, but from bracketing off the outside world. Her feeling was thus an abnormal and premature regulation of action, but one which seemed to work. It worked in the sense that it brought her out of the painful suffering of the state of torture, and in the sense that ecstasy was followed by a *restitutio ad integrum*, by a return to the state of equilibrium.⁹¹⁴ Janet was, however, not entirely satisfied with this explanation, particularly since he could see that the same introversion, the same retreat from outside reality, could be found among schizophrenics who did not have the same kinds of ecstasies as Madeleine. Ultimately, ecstasy depended on a particular distribution of psychological force that remained outside of analysis. There was a 'rencontre délicate' (a delicate encounter) that happened in it.⁹¹⁵

One way of understanding of how one got to ecstasy was through the concept of asceticism. Ecstasy seemed to be little else than a by-product of the ascetic exercise. Better put, asceticism was the ideology that explained the retreat from exterior life that led to ecstasy. Janet re-wrote the notion of asceticism so that it became co-extensive with a particular feature of psychasthenic conduct. He argued that asceticism was not necessarily connected with

⁹¹⁰ In volume 1, he did admit that in the 3rd state of consolation, she probably did fall asleep. See Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase I*, 379. Conclusive perhaps in this regard is also the admission that Madeleine had frequent insomnias, and only slept normally when in her state of equilibrium. See Pierre Janet, *De L'Angoisse a l'extase II*, 661.

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 581

⁹¹² *Ibid.*, 573-75.

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*, 576.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 586-87.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 586. However, he thought the same could be said about, for example, the trances of opium addicts, as not all of them managed to enter the same deep states of reverie, regardless of the dose.

religion, as one found the same kind of behaviour among non-religious psychasthenics. It was instead connected with the loss of psychological tension and the consequent inability to perform pleasurable acts. The asceticism of psychasthenics was thus no great renunciation. It was in fact a withdrawal from actions that they could not accomplish anyway.⁹¹⁶ One had to be particularly careful about taking the words of such psychasthenics at face value. Madeleine and the other psychasthenics all thought themselves to be great hedonists, who had to restrain themselves completely before they succumbed to unacceptable behaviour, whereas in reality they were more like the fox in La Fontaine's fable, which could not reach the grapes and figured they were not ripe anyway.⁹¹⁷

By 1936, Janet had an about-face regarding his pathological conception of mysticism. In a long lecture on the psychology of belief and mysticism he put forward that mystics:

are thinkers who are unhappy with the forms of belief offered by the science and logic of their time, and who dream not only to criticise the reigning belief, but also to conceive a form of superior belief.⁹¹⁸

Belief in this context had nothing to do with the way in which the word is usually used in reference to religion, but rather it is one of the fundamental elements in Janet's psychology of conduct. Belief was thus a way of talking (*une manière de parler*), of making promises either to oneself or to others, and as Janet pointed out, one had beliefs not just about God, but also about the *Arc de Triomphe*, or about the Seine flowing through Paris.⁹¹⁹ One could also have assertive and inconsistent beliefs, or rational beliefs, or scientific beliefs. And one could surely doubt or criticise such beliefs, which is where mysticism came in.

In his re-interpretation of mysticism in the late 30s Janet disengaged the concept from ecstasy and its host of pathological 'accidents.'⁹²⁰ He argued that mysticism could be a progressive doctrine that led to political and religious reforms, and that one should not readily assimilate it to the 'incoherent and completely sterile reveries' of psychasthenics like Madeleine.⁹²¹ Janet

⁹¹⁶ Janet, *De L'Angoisse I*, 340-45.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁹¹⁸ Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43, 3 (1936): 348. See also the subsequent articles: Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43, 4 (1936), 507-532. Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme (Suite et fin),' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 44, 2 (1937): 369-410.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 329.

⁹²⁰ See also Pierre Janet, 'La Psychologie de la croyance et le mysticisme,' *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 43, 4 (1936): 518.

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, 352-53.

thus repudiated his earlier identification of mysticism with a form of psychasthenia, but still maintained that it was not an essentially religious concept. Mysticism was now a kind of philosophical scepticism, and he agreed that one could be a mystic with regard to astronomy or biology as well as religion.⁹²²

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the development of the concept of mysticism from the school of Théodule Ribot, through what we called 'the cosmic approach' of psychologists like Myers and Bucke and onto the more complex accounts that treated mysticism as a process. We started with a section that mapped out the various ways in which 'mysticism' was configured during the nineteenth century in England, France, and Germany, and then moved on to an analysis of the first attempts at a psychology of mysticism in the work of Ribot and his followers. As we have suggested, the latter picked up the tradition of seeing mysticism as an affective form of religiosity and built a psychological theory around it by effectively reducing mysticism to a single state of heightened affectivity and conceptual simplification called ecstasy. In a further section, we examined the musings of several ethno-psychologists, who interpreted ecstasy either as suggestion, or as a heightening of consciousness or as a reversal to an earlier evolutionary form of consciousness. From these, we moved on to the cosmic approach, wherein ecstasy was regarded as the adumbration of a higher evolutionary form of consciousness, or as a hyper-consciousness that escaped altogether the laws of normal psychology.

As we have also noted, a noticeable change occurred after 1902, when the notion of mysticism was expanded to encompass not just ecstasy, but a whole sequence of states that could cover an entire life. As representatives of this change of perspective, we then studied the works of Henri Delacroix, Théodore Flournoy, and Pierre Janet. As we have noted, all three had constructed their views on mysticism as part of dialogue with, or reaction against, the American psychology of religion. As we have seen, Delacroix began his psychological career with an assault on the affective mantra of the Americans. In opposition to these, he tried to put forward a description that also accounted for the mystic's own intelligence and creativity, as well as for the society in which the mystic lived. The latter point might have been a concession to the sociological school and to his friend Mauss. But, as he noted, this was a very minor concession indeed, for his view was still individualistic and the historical

⁹²² *Ibid.*, 358.

milieu only supplied the intellectual forms in which the mystic could pour out his creativity. And sometimes, even this borrowing of forms could be quite thin, as he himself demonstrated was the case with St. Theresa. As we have shown, Delacroix was in fact refashioning the science of religion project that he had taken over from Tiele and Marillier. And while he appeared to be removing their theological residue, he in fact had to keep it in the form of the 'peculiar mental state' which underscored the mystical journey. The reason why he had to keep it, even in this attenuated form, is that without it there would have been no way of distinguishing between mysticism and any other kind of psychological transformation. Delacroix's procedure disclosed in fact the central conundrum of the psychology of religion. Since he had described mysticism as a process whereby the subject's self was enveloped by the subconscious, he had to admit that this was only a general psychological process. Who was to say that it didn't repeat as well for artists? In order to keep the theoretical integrity of mysticism, he thus had to suppose that there was something particular about it, something about the mental state that made it mysticism and not anything else. But this something had to remain beyond the pale of analysis: ineffable and irreducible.

In the case of Flournoy, his relationship with the Americans was much more straightforward, as he did not doubt the affective primacy of religious experience and also gladly adopted James' pragmatic principle. As such, he did not need to suppose that there was anything else that gave value to Cécile's ecstasies other than the fact that they offered her a certain kind of liberation and a respite from her nocturnal erotic attacks. Flournoy needed no particular mental state to justify her mysticism, because there was enough justification and 'cash-value' in the aforementioned liberation. At the same time, Flournoy's account of Cécile's journey was in fact only a description of a general psychological transformation, a reorganization of psychic centres, analogous to a conversion, as Cécile (and Flournoy) both noted. Much like his American colleagues, Flournoy's psychology of mysticism succeeded in dissolving mysticism in the process of analysing it, turning it ultimately into nothing more than a process of transformation.

As noted earlier, Janet was perhaps one of the very few psychologists to notice the dissolving effect that psychology had on religion. But he was unconcerned about this consequence of religious psychology, since he thought that psychotherapy could perform the same function as religion, with a scientific vigour that the latter did not have. Janet's study of Madeleine was, as we have mentioned, rooted in his own medical practice and in this sense it constituted a departure from earlier studies in the psychology of mysticism. As opposed to figures like

Flournoy, Delacroix or James, he was perhaps less interested in establishing a science of religion, though he applied a similar kind of conscientiousness to the analysis of his subject's experience. At the same time, Janet also created an original developmental account of the human psyche, which he used as a matrix for the concurrent development of culture, society and religion—and as a model for understanding psychopathology. From his observations of Madeleine and other psychasthenics, Janet gathered the notion that mysticism was in fact a loss of psychological tension that he equated with a return to the mental level of pre-logical 'savages.' Among other things, this return to the pre-logical or assertive stage meant that mysticism was not a religious process, because the assertive was a stage that preceded the formation of religion.

In the next chapter, we will see how C.G. Jung attempted his own return to a 'pre-logical stage,' and how he used the information he gathered in order to construct a psychology of the religious making process.

Chapter 4: Jung

4.1 Introduction

In the introduction to an essay published originally in 1930, C.G. Jung wrote the following:

Psychology, which once eked out a modest existence in a small and highly academic backroom, has, in fulfilment of Nietzsche's prophesy, developed in the last few decades into an object of public interest which has burst the framework assigned to it by the universities. In the form of psychotechnics it makes its voice heard in industry, in the form of psychotherapy it has invaded wide areas of medicine, in the form of philosophy it has carried forward the legacy of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, it has quite literally rediscovered Bachofen and Carus, through its mythology and the psychology of primitives have acquired a new focus of interest, it will revolutionize the science of comparative religion, and not a few theologians want to apply it to the cure of souls.⁹²³

As this quote shows, like many of the psychologists of religion whose work we have examined so far, Jung fully expected that his discipline would make a decisive contribution to the science of religion, as well as to the pastoral cure of souls. As Sonu Shamdasani has noted, Jung's religious psychology was based on the same kinds of assumptions as the religious psychology of James and Flournoy.⁹²⁴ Like them, he too subscribed to the primacy of experience over against what he took to be secondary elaborations in dogmas and rituals, and he also adopted Flournoy's principles of the exclusion of transcendence and the biological interpretation of religious phenomena. Differently from them however, Jung also

⁹²³ C.G. Jung, 'Psychology and Literature,' CW 15, 84.

⁹²⁴ Sonu Shamdasani, 'Is Analytical Psychology a Religion? *In Statu Nascendi*,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 44 (1999): 540-41.

embodied his theory into a psychotherapy whose role was the elicitation of religious experiences and the healing of the divided selves described by James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

More than James or any other psychologist of religion, Jung's project also drew substantially on the comparative science of religion established by Müller, Tiele and the other authors surveyed in chapter 1. His personal library contained almost a full set of Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, and Jung frequently referred to these volumes in his studies and lectures, particularly when trying to find evidence for the trans-cultural nature of the process of individuation. At the same time, his method of analysis—which involved finding cultural parallels to the clients' dreams and fantasies in the world's myths and symbols—made the sciences of religion an integral part of psychotherapy.⁹²⁵ Furthermore, as we shall see in one of the sections, Jung's conception of the embodiment of the libido into myths and symbols (as laid out in *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*) had a remarkable similarity to the psychological science of religion set forth by Tiele, Sabatier and Marillier in their works. In this respect, Jung's comparative psychology of religion was in fact only a psychologically updated version of the Liberal Protestant project of these nineteenth century scholars. At the same time, Jung's psychology of religion was, as already suggested, based on a hermeneutics of religious experience, and in particular his own experience, which he recorded and commented on in *The Red Book*. We can thus regard his project more accurately as an attempt to combine the nineteenth century science of religion with the psychology of religion of the likes of James and Flournoy.

Jung's subscription to the principles of an experience-based religious psychology exposed him to the same central conundrum that we have been examining in the other chapters as well. We can formulate this conundrum here once again as the question whether the psychology of religion was doing anything else than finding out how general psychological categories played out in the development of religious experience. Since such categories had nothing 'religious' about them, we have argued that this resulted in the peculiar situation whereby 'religion' was being dissolved in the process of analysing it. Left without an object, the consequence was that religious psychology would have to be dissolved as well. On the other hand, we have also seen that the other route open for religious psychologists was to claim that through their analyses of religious experience, they were in fact setting up a new

⁹²⁵ See C.G. Jung, 'Introduction to Kranefeldt's "Secret Ways of the Mind,"' CW 4, 330.

theology or a new religion—the only scientific one possible. Jung's solution to this conundrum was to claim that the psyche itself was religious, or that it contained a religious function. In turn, this made psychology the theological discipline *par excellence*, since it studied the ways in which religions formed in the mind. But did Jung mean to turn his psychology into a religion? In order to answer this question, we will turn to his own writings.

4.2 The Zofingia Lectures

In 1895, Jung entered Basel University and joined the student fraternity Zofingia. In his conversations with Aniela Jaffé in the late 50s, he remembered his student days fondly, as 'a time of friendships,' when 'everything was spiritually animated.'*(geistig belebt)*⁹²⁶ During his four years of study, he delivered several lectures there, on topics that reflected his developing interests in philosophy, psychology and theology.⁹²⁷ Jung's enthusiasm for the things of the spirit during these years is captured in the protocols of the Zofingia society. One evening in 1899, seemingly intoxicated ('moved by the "spirit"' as the notes state), he suggested that the brothers debate all the philosophical questions as yet left unsettled. He was probably not joined in the discussion, as the protocols record that he proceeded to 'yap on endlessly, and that was stupid.'⁹²⁸

Written in a florid language, Jung's lectures lambasted the materialistic reductionism of physiologists like Emil du Bois-Reymond and Ludwig Büchner and inveighed, more generally, against the contemporary philistinism of those 'for whom there are no questions, no riddles, nothing exalted and nothing profound, no bright and no dark.'⁹²⁹

In contrast to such 'intellectual teetotallers,'⁹³⁰ Jung argued in favour of independent thought, and used the lectures as an opportunity to put forward his ideas about the meaning of religion, the limits of scientific inquiry, vitalism, and psychical research, illustrating them with quotations from his philosophical heroes: Kant, Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and Nietzsche.

Jung broached the topic of religion in his second lecture, titled *Some Thoughts on Psychology* and given in 1897. The aim of the talk was to offer an argument in favour of the soul, as an

⁹²⁶ See MP, 4 May 1957, C.G. Jung Papers, Library of Congress, 67.

⁹²⁷ See Barbara Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (London: Michael Joseph, 1977), 65-66. For a summary of the lectures, primarily from the perspective of Jung's reception of Nietzsche, see also Paul Bishop, *The Dionysian Self: C.G. Jung's reception of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 27-42.

⁹²⁸ ZP, "Unordentliche" Sitzung, Samstag vor Fastnacht, 18. II. 1899], Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, 69. During the following meeting, at Jung's request, the word 'yap' (*schwadronierte*) was stroke out and replaced with the neutral 'spoke.' (*redete*)

⁹²⁹ C.G. Jung, *The Zofingia Lectures*. trans. Jan van Heurck (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 8.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

independent animating principle of the body, which was extra-conscious, intelligent and immortal. Drawing on Kant's dichotomy in the *Vorlesungen über Psychologie*, Jung divided his lecture into two parts, dealing with rational and empirical psychology respectively.⁹³¹

He argued that the existence of the soul could be rationally postulated through the proper application of the category of causality. By doing so, one was forced to acknowledge the necessity of an animating principle of the body, i.e. a soul. Nevertheless, evidence of the soul's existence and of its properties could also be gathered from materialization phenomena, hypnotism and telepathy. In Jung's understanding, empirical psychology was almost coterminous with psychical research.⁹³² He thus enjoined his listeners to seek out the works of Friedrich Zöllner, William Crookes, Carl Du Prel and other psychical researchers who offered evidence of the reality of such phenomena. By attending to these modern miracles, one could succeed in overcoming the contemporary intellectual malaise represented by materialist science:

Deeds are needed to wake up religion, miracles are needed, and men endowed with miraculous powers. Prophets, men sent by God! Never has a religion sprung from a dry theoretician or a gushy idealist. Religions are created by men who have demonstrated with deeds the reality of mystery and of the "extrasensory realm." The dry postulates of reason and mere religious feeling cannot redress the ravages of our age; the only thing that can do that are facts that directly establish the validity of something beyond the senses.⁹³³

For Jung thus, at this stage, the questions of science and those of religion were thoroughly imbricated. Much like Frederic Myers, he expected psychology to open up into a truly cosmic perspective, offering a vindication of the immortality of the soul and of the 'extrasensory realm.' In the same article, he wrote:

We see our lives coming in contact with a higher order of being. The laws governing our mental universe grow pale before that light, emanating from the metaphysical order, which is granted us to dimly divine. Man lives at the boundary between two worlds. He steps forth from the darkness of metaphysical

⁹³¹ See Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesungen über Psychologie*, ed. Carl du Prel (Leipzig: Ernst Günther Verlag, 1889), 5.

⁹³² The minutes of the Zofingia meetings include the following phrase in the summary of Jung's talk: 'The facts of somnambulism possess a great value for the establishment of psychology as a science.' See ZP, 15 May 1897, Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, 46.

being, shoots like a blazing meteor through the phenomenal world, and then leaves it again to pursue his course into infinity.⁹³⁴

In a lecture given the following year, Jung returned to the connection between science and religion. He argued that happiness followed upon the satisfaction of two 'a priori requirements': the categorical imperative and the need for causality.⁹³⁵ Jung claimed that the search for causality was an instinct (*Trieb nach Kausalität*).⁹³⁶ He defined instinct in almost the same way as von Hartmann in the *Philosophy of the Unconscious*: 'an agent, which, without being subject to our will, influences our actions, or rather modifies them in a direction of which we are not consciously aware.'⁹³⁷ For Jung, the search for causes, or for truth, amounted to an instinct because it was purposeful. It was an instinct that led to 'metaphysical longing' and to religion.⁹³⁸

Science, philosophy and religion were products of this instinctual search for causes. Jung did not specify why it was that the causal instinct led sometimes to science, sometimes to philosophy, and sometimes to religion. He did imply that it was the strength of the instinct that had this effect. As such we can speculate that a weaker causal instinct led to science, while a stronger one to philosophy and religion. Jung also appeared to equate metaphysics and religion.⁹³⁹

But the purpose of the causal instinct was not merely to create religions or metaphysics or science. Rather, the causal instinct pointed to transcendence and to the *Ding and sich*. In other words, this purpose was transcendental and it could not be known. However, Jung claimed that its unknowability was no argument against the existence of the instinct. Humans, he said, were like migratory birds grown in captivity, who are overcome with wanderlust in

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹³⁶ See C.G.Jung, *Die Zofingia-Vorträge 1896-1899* (Zürich: Walter Verlag, 1997), 97.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69. See also Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, 79: 'Instinct is purposive action without consciousness of the purpose.'

⁹³⁸ A theory similar to Jung's was proposed by the 19th century geographer and ethnologist Oscar Peschel (1826-1897), in his book *Völkerkunde* [Ethnology] (1874). He restated his theory in an identical chapter printed in *The Races of Man*, published in English in 1888: 'In all stages of civilization, and amongst all races of mankind, religious emotions are always roused by the same inward impulse, the necessity of discerning a cause or an author for every phenomenon and event.' See Oscar Peschel, *The Races of Man and their Geographical Distribution* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 245. See also Oscar Peschel, *Völkerkunde* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humboldt, 1874), 255. The crucial difference between Jung and Peschel is that the latter did not refer to causality as an instinct, but only as a need (*Bedürfnis*). At the same time, Peschel's account does not have Jung's philosophical sophistication. His claim that religion springs from the need for causality is only an entryway into a typical catalogue of ethnographic curiosities. There is, as well, no evidence that Jung was familiar with Peschel's work.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

autumn but do not know that this is because winter is soon coming, and with it, hunger and death.⁹⁴⁰ Jung also appended a brief metaphysical discussion to his causal instinct, arguing on the basis of physics and biology that the world was composed of two opposite principles, towards rest or passivity and towards motion or activity.⁹⁴¹ According to him, the causal instinct put one in touch with unconditional activity, making one approach 'the roots of our being.'⁹⁴² Such a turn towards one's own being was also a turn away from contemporary secularization, from 'the will to material existence,' and from herd mentality. It was an affirmation of individuality, both of one's own personality and of that of others.⁹⁴³ But it was a painful affirmation, as Jung claimed that 'the suffering resulting from dualism is absolutely essential to the development of a differentiated personality.'⁹⁴⁴ He did not explain why dualism necessarily implied suffering, but maintained that the dualistic world view resulted in a deep pessimism, and that any true philosophy or religion was pessimistic. His reasons for pessimism were multiple: the realisation that most people lived in ignorance of the metaphysical purpose of life, Schopenhauer's catalogue of worldly horrors (disease, war, etc.), as well as the belief that Christianity itself was pessimistic, because it taught that the world was under the control of evil forces.⁹⁴⁵ Jung referred to 1 John 5:19, which states 'We know that we are God's children, *and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one.*'⁹⁴⁶ He quoted (in Greek) only the italicised section. The post-lecture discussion appears to have revolved around the question of whether Christianity was optimistic or pessimistic, becoming so heated at one point between Jung and one Bernoulli that the presidium had to step in.

4.2.1 Defending mysticism

In 1899, Jung gave his last lecture to the Zofingia, offering a critical interpretation of Albrecht Ritschl's negative evaluation of mysticism. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) was born in Berlin in a family of Lutheran clergymen with strong ties to the Prussian establishment. His father was the bishop of Pomerania, and he was cousins with the philologist Friedrich Ritschl (1806-1876), who was Nietzsche's professor in Bonn and Leipzig.⁹⁴⁷ As a boy,

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8-85.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹⁴⁶ See NRSV. ZP, 31-32.

⁹⁴⁷ For Ritschl's biography and context see Robert Mackintosh, *Albrecht Ritschl and his School* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1915), 23-48. Philip Hefner, *Albrecht Ritschl: An Introduction*, in Albrecht Ritschl, *Three Essays: Theology and Metaphysics, "Prolegomena" to The History of Pietism, Instruction in the Christian*

Ritschl once met Schleiermacher, who was taken by his family for a coach drive in the countryside. The young Albert had to sit on the box seat and later enjoyed to give a semi-humorous interpretation of the incident, claiming that he had then, as later in his theology, a wider view than his predecessor.⁹⁴⁸ Ritschl studied theology, philosophy, and Biblical studies in Bonn, Halle and Tübingen, obtaining his habilitation at the age of 24 and subsequently teaching in Bonn and Göttingen (starting in 1864). Between 1870-74 he published the three volume *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, which cemented his reputation as one of the foremost Protestant theologians in Germany, bringing him scores of supporters, as well as critics. His position in German nineteenth century theology was such that Adolf von Harnack later referred to him as 'the latest Lutheran Church Father.'⁹⁴⁹

As Mark Chapman has noted, the young theologians that later became the 'History of Religion school' were attracted to work with Ritschl at Göttingen in the 1880s because he seemed to offer a modern interpretation of Christianity, one that did not completely ignore the rising tide of natural science, nor the existence of other religions. Troeltsch and his fellow Göttingen theologians would later reject Ritschl for not being modern enough, whereas Jung, as we will see, rejected him for being too modern.⁹⁵⁰

In fact, Ritschl's knowledge of, and interest in other religions was perfunctory. As a Christian theologian, he did not hide the fact that he was already committed to the notion that Christianity was the most perfect religion. Other religions could only be seen through the lens of their most developed member: hence, as a catalogue of errors. However, he did wonder whether a science of religion—which worked out an evolutionary schema of religion in a thorough fashion (with Christianity at the top)—might not be useful in promoting mutual understanding between Christians of various denominations, or as an aid to apologetics.⁹⁵¹ For Ritschl, religions were social phenomena, and as such, 'a psychological explanation of religion is inadequate, for it deals only with those phenomena of spirit in which all men are alike, and one is the type for all.'⁹⁵² He identified such a psychological explanation of religion

Religion, trans. Philip Hefner (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1972), 1-17. Otto Ritschl, *Albrecht Ritschls Leben*, 2 vols. (Freiburg in Breisgau: J.C.B. Mohr, 1892-1896).

⁹⁴⁸ See Otto Ritschl, *op.cit.*, vol.1, 11.

⁹⁴⁹ See Adolf von Harnack, 'Zur gegenwärtige Lage des Protestantismus' [1896,] in *Adolf von Harnack als Zeitgenosse, Teil I: Der Theologe und Historiker*. ed. Kurt Novak (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 233.

⁹⁵⁰ See Mark D. Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18-25.

⁹⁵¹ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*. ed. H.R. Mackintosh and A.B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1900), 197.

⁹⁵² *Ibid.*, 198.

with an exclusive focus on feelings, whereas for him, all religions partook as well of intellect and of will. He argued that religions were attempts to solve the essential quandary of human beings, who were on the one hand part of nature, and subject to its laws, while on the other possessed of a 'spiritual personality' that sought to maintain its independence and to dominate nature. Religions thus boiled down to a faith in superhuman powers that could help one secure such independence, by supplementing man's natural faculties and bringing them into unity.⁹⁵³

Ritschl attempted to cordon off the sphere of religion from both philosophy and natural science, by claiming that religions were composed of a specific type of knowledge, arrived at by independent value judgments. He started from the premise that the mind always performed two types of intellectual operations whenever a sensation was presented to it: it both tested the value of sensation with respect to the pleasure or pain that it produced on the self, and it also tried to work out the causes of the sensation.⁹⁵⁴ These operations always took place simultaneously, the former being judgments of value and the latter judgements of cause. These two types of judgment were the building blocks of philosophy and science. However, in religion, as opposed to science or philosophy, one dealt with *independent* judgments of value, that is, judgments which dealt with the appreciation of the world in its totality, or which sprang from a unified law of the cosmos. In Christianity, *independent* judgments of value were above all perceptions of moral ends or hindrances.⁹⁵⁵

Whenever philosophy or science tried to present such a unified law of the world, they in fact stepped into the territory of religion. They showed themselves to be rival religions in disguise. Ritschl argued that the opposition between materialistic science and Christianity sprang from the fact that the former took the law of one particular realm of being and tried to set it up as the law of the cosmos. For him, such an extension was based on the wrong assumption that organic life could be deduced from the laws of inorganic matter, and that more complex beings could be explained on the basis of simpler ones. But the materialists were not able to provide the supreme law of things, and only resorted to mere chance as an explanatory criterion. What he ultimately found in such materialistic theories was 'an expenditure of the power of imagination which finds its closest parallel in the cosmogonies of heathenism—which is of itself a proof that what rules in this school is not scientific method,

⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

⁹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 204-205. Ritschl's presentation of *independent* value judgments is at times contradictory. On this point, see also Robert Mackintosh, *Ritschl and his School*, 176-82.

but an aberrant and confused religious impulse.⁹⁵⁶ In other words, Ritschl sought to solve the 'science vs. religion' conflict by claiming that the metaphysics of science was a heathen construct that needed to be discarded. He passed similar judgment on philosophical metaphysics, which he claimed was the theoretical motor behind mysticism.

As Hugh Mackintosh has noted long ago, Ritschl's theological novelty consisted in the fact that, different from the majority of his predecessors, 'he starts not from the "Christian consciousness," but from the "Gospel" given in Jesus Christ.'⁹⁵⁷ The importance of this historical and Biblical perspective is evident in the structure of Ritschl's opus magnum (*JR*), in which the systematic part is tackled in the third volume, only after the historical and the Biblical conception of justification and reconciliation have been laid out in the previous volumes. For Ritschl, faith in God was mediated firstly through Christ and secondly through the community that received and propagated his message. As he put it in a shorter essay on *Theology and Metaphysics*: 'without mediation, nothing is real.'⁹⁵⁸ *Theology and Metaphysics* (1881) was a polemical piece, directed against theologians like Christoph Ernst Luthardt (1823-1902) or Franz Hermann von Frank (1827-1894), who were critical of Ritschl's attempt to expunge metaphysics from theology and of his rejection of the *unio mystica*. Ritschl's account of the mediated nature of the Christian faith was part of this larger polemic around mysticism and metaphysics.⁹⁵⁹ He argued that to maintain the notion of an unmediated contact with God was epistemologically and theologically unsound. From the epistemological side, he claimed that not even the simplest perceptions were unmediated. Perceptions were instead sensations mediated through the faculty of judgment and habit. To strive for an unmediated perception of God was to enter a field where one could not tell between hallucination and reality.⁹⁶⁰

From the theological point of view, mysticism implied the adoption of a non-Christian metaphysics. Ritschl argued that in order to grasp the meaning of mysticism one had to place it in its context, 'as the practice of the neoplatonic metaphysics.'⁹⁶¹ He claimed that 'there is

⁹⁵⁶ Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine*, 209.

⁹⁵⁷ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet, 1937), 147-48.

⁹⁵⁸ Ritschl, *Theology and metaphysics*, 196.

⁹⁵⁹ See also Christine Helmer, 'Mysticism and Metaphysics,' 517-38. As Helmer points out (p. 520), the root of the debate around mysticism lay in the fact that the Lutheran Fathers had left unresolved the question of the *unio mystica*, stating only that it was neither personal nor substantial, but adding no distinctive positive determination.

⁹⁶⁰ Ritschl, 194-196.

⁹⁶¹ Ritschl, 'Theology and Metaphysics,' 174.

such a close relationship between mysticism and *this kind* of metaphysics that it is immaterial whether one counts certain affirmations as mysticism or as false metaphysics.⁹⁶² It was only in the context of a metaphysics that posited an abstract, universal and supreme Being, corresponding to all that was true and authentic, that it made sense to forego the determinations of concrete being in order to unite to this abstract entity. This supreme Being of Neo-Platonism could be called God, but it was a God that had nothing to do with the God of Christianity. The God of Christianity was a personal Being, who revealed Himself in history, and not an abstract entity established in an *a priori* manner. Ritschl claimed that his theological rivals proceeded themselves in this *a priori* fashion, starting with the attributes of an abstract necessary being and then combining their results with what was given in the Christian revelation. For Ritschl, it was impossible to know what God was in Himself, apart from what was given in revelation. Yet the theologians who described God as absolute, or as the bearer of qualities that could not be derived from revelation, claimed to do just that.⁹⁶³ Their method was thus prone to errors, and also at odds with his resolve to stick to the Biblical revelation and to Luther's statements.⁹⁶⁴

In *Theology and Metaphysics*, Ritschl offered the following epistemological-cum-psychological explanation of the genesis of the Platonic worldview, which he saw as dominating contemporary theology.⁹⁶⁵ He argued that the perception of an object created a memory image that was always an abstracted, essentialised representation of the actual thing. Even as the thing continued to change on the outside, in memory it remained changeless, especially if one did not compare the memory image with the real thing. This 'placid,' unmoving memory image was also invested with value by the observer. The value that one attached to the recollected image was quite likely an echo of the value that was attached to the thing itself when first observed. For Ritschl, the blending of the feeling of value with the memory image was responsible for the sort of doubling that one observed in Platonic metaphysics: the notion that there was something behind the actual thing perceived, a more essential being, an idea that underscored it. Through a curious inversion, these ghostly images of the mind, these stripped down generalizations from the realm of fleeing multiplicity were lifted up as the purveyors of real being. They were overvalued. A real apple was thus taken to

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*, 173.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁹⁶⁴ As Alfred Garvie pointed out, Ritschl did in fact accept the *unio mystica*, but only in the sense that had been given to the phrase by Luther, namely as a union between Christ and the community of believers. See Alfred E. Garvie, *The Ritschlian Theology: Critical and Constructive. An Exposition and an Estimate* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 137.

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 181-87.

be real only to the extent that it participated in the idea of the apple, even though the latter was only a faint trace of reality. It was by way of generalization and overvaluation that the Platonists obtained the concept of the Absolute Substance, which theologians then identified with the Christian God. And it was because of their doubling of reality with ghostly images that they imagined that there must be a noumenal Christ or a Holy Spirit guiding them always from behind the realm of phenomena. He wrote about his theological adversaries that:

They themselves posit pale and wavering images from their memory as the reality of things, and from them they have abstracted their universal concepts without any sort of proof, even when these universal concepts are themselves borrowed from some tradition.⁹⁶⁶

Instead of 'the pale and wavering images from their memory,' Ritschl proposed the reality of the 'detailed recollection' of Christ. For him, this was the only way that God worked among Christians, namely through recollection, and through education. By following the example of Christ, and his actual words, one was indeed authenticating His presence in the community, though not as immediately present, behind the phenomena.⁹⁶⁷

In his lecture on Ritschl, Jung claimed he had been trying for the past two years to understand how theologians understood the concept of personality, and specifically 'to discover where human personality gets its motivational force.'⁹⁶⁸ He offered a concise and clear summary of Ritschl's epistemological statement in *Theology and Metaphysics*.⁹⁶⁹ He treated Ritschl's account of the genesis of Platonic metaphysics as if it were also an account of how Christ continued to have an effect on believers through the ages, in a way that was mediated by the remembrance of Christ in the gospels.⁹⁷⁰ In Jung's interpretation, the performance of a

⁹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁹⁶⁸ Jung, *The Zofingia Lectures*, 96.

⁹⁶⁹ See also Marilyn Nagy, 'Self and freedom in Jung's lecture on Ritschl,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 35 (1990): 443-57. Nagy claims that 'In preparation for his lecture Jung went through an entire volume, probably Volume 3, of Ritschl's *opus magnum*, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*.' (p. 445). She offers no evidence for this assertion. I would argue instead that, though Jung was familiar with JR, his lecture on Ritschl was based entirely on his reading of 'Metaphysics and Theology.' A parallel reading of the two texts reveals numerous allusions to this shorter work, which is also the only work by Ritschl that appears in Jung's notes (Jung, *The Zofingia Lectures*, 118). In the Protocols however, Jung remembered reading Ritschl's 'thick book' and how 'imbecilic' (*blödsinnig*) he thought the book and Ritschl's theology were. He couldn't remember the title of the book anymore, but offered the following analogy of how the impact of Christ was seen in it: it was like a long freight train, with the locomotive at the very back (Christ), sending a jolt through the whole train so as to set in motion the carriage at the very front. See MP, 4 May 1957, 67.

⁹⁷⁰ See also Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine*, 20. Ritschl often liked to point out that he followed a different epistemology than other theologians. For a lucid and detailed analysis of Ritschl's epistemology and its

Christian act activated in the believer the feeling of value that was transmitted through the memory image recorded in the gospels. The activation of this feeling of value—which was at the time of Christ associated with Christ's actual presence—made the believer search for an objective source for it: a living Christ standing beside them.⁹⁷¹ This was the doubling effect that I have mentioned above. Jung had a number of objections against this theory. Foremost among them was that Ritschl's theory assumed that the only motivating power on a person came exclusively through the medium of conscious perception. Jung disagreed with this, pointing out that the existence of post-conscious hypnosis was evidence to the contrary. He also remarked that Ritschl's reliance on an exclusively conscious model of personality was born out of a general tendency in post-Renaissance philosophy—that of creating a standard of the 'normal man.' For Jung, the 'normal man' was the spectre that haunted the Ritschlian theological system, and it made for a pathetic Christ, who could only influence humanity to the degree that his memory image served as an ethical model for his latter day followers.⁹⁷²

At the same time, Jung used Ritschl's example as an entryway into a general characterisation of what he saw as the pitiful state of contemporary Christianity. He asked himself:

Why are people more interested in attending scientific lectures than in going to church? Why is their interest focused on Darwin, Haeckel, and Büchner? And why today do they not even bother to discuss religious questions, which, in the past, people were willing to kill for?⁹⁷³

For Jung, the answer lay in the critical spirit which had permeated contemporary society. He argued that Ritschl's case was paradigmatic for the way in which theologians and pastors had given in to the pressure of contemporary culture. Such men of the cloth continued to hope naively that it was enough the preach about Christ's life in order to get the attention of the crowds. Some of them had even given in to the notion of a purely human Christ, who was in the end reduced to being a "naive idealist," poor as a churchmouse.⁹⁷⁴

We have already seen what was Jung's solution for re-boosting religion in the contemporary age: miracles and the scientific demonstration of the extrasensory realm. In the final lecture, he added another dimension to this proposal. He claimed that to be a Christian was to accept

inconsistency see Leonard Stählin, *Kant, Lotze, and Ritschl: A Critical Examination*. trans. D.W.Simon (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889), 166-182.

⁹⁷¹ Jung, *The Zofingia Lectures*, 99.

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*, 104.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

Christ completely, and in the terms that He had used to describe himself: as a man sent by God, and also as God-man. To be a Christian was to be ready to accept the impossible. The claims of critical reason and of the 'normal man' had to be fought at all costs, 'even at the risk of a new flowering of scholasticism.'⁹⁷⁵ Jung's solution to the religious crisis was thus a kind of new Middle Ages. In an earlier lecture, he had already extolled the medieval world view as the properly Christian one.⁹⁷⁶ Jung understood the medieval world view as one in which the individual was given over to the development of the inner life, with a complete disregard for material conditions and social welfare. He argued that this was a dangerous position, but one which embodied the radical character of Christianity: 'the inner spiritualization of the individual and the concomitant disintegration of the existing order of nature.'⁹⁷⁷

4.3 At the Burghölzli

In 1900, the Zofingia protocols record a significant turn in Jung's attitude towards religion: his conversion to a natural-scientific viewpoint. In one discussion with his colleagues, he argued that in theology, one started with certain hypotheses, like the possibility of experiencing God, which one then built upon. But the possibility of experiencing God was not provable. Jung claimed that he had never had such an experience. At the same time, those who did have such experiences (i.e. the mystics), often also had them together with erotic urges, which for Jung demonstrated that there was an inner link between religion and the sexual instinct. And if someone tried to argue that the experience of God was not the exclusive appanage of sexual deviants like the mystics, nonetheless, one could not prove that such 'normal' experience did not come quite simply from one's unconscious. He asked himself: 'Is God a symptom or a cause? More likely the former.' He did not specify what God was a symptom of, but went on to question the goodness of God in a world where everything was decided by power, and where a God-thirsty melancholic became insane as a result of his search for God. He also argued that from the natural-scientific viewpoint, God must have constant effects, whereas millions of people had not God whatsoever. One of his colleagues noted that Jung used to have more positive views about God in the past, which he had presently given up.⁹⁷⁸

For almost a decade afterwards, Jung stayed clear of religious topics. In 1900, he was offered a position as assistant doctor at the Burghölzli clinic, on the outskirts of Zürich. The

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁷⁸ ZP, 33-35.

Burghölzli, then under the leadership of Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939), was one of the main centres of research into the psychogenesis and diagnosis of mental illness. Bleuler placed an emphasis on work therapy and moral training, but he also used hypnosis and suggestion, particularly for psychoneuroses.⁹⁷⁹ He saw the patients as cured the moment they were able to return to earning their bread outside of the hospital.⁹⁸⁰

Inside the Burghölzli, he imposed a strict discipline upon his staff, who lived and worked in the hospital together with the patients, and had to ask for permission to leave. The staff were also forbidden to consume alcohol.⁹⁸¹ Jung found the Burghölzli somewhat off-putting at first. There was a marked difference, he said, between the intellectual atmosphere that he was used to in Basel, where even medical students could debate the Latin styles of Cicero, and took an interest in Schopenhauer and theological debates, and the Burghölzli scene, which gave him the impression of a 'conglomerate of peasant populations.' Of Bleuler himself, Jung said he was a 'cross between a peasant and a school teacher' and that they were not very close.⁹⁸² Despite this, he cherished Zürich, because, as he put it 'the air was free.'⁹⁸³ Jung quickly jumped on the Burghölzli band wagon. He began to immerse himself in psychiatric and psychological literature and started researching the psychogenesis and diagnostics of mental illness. In his early years at the Burghölzli, he took an interest in brain dissection and histology, becoming friends with Alexander von Muralt, Burghölzli's anatomic-pathologist. He later replaced von Muralt as the first *Oberarzt* (becoming second in command after Bleuler) after von Muralt left his job when he contracted tuberculosis in 1905.⁹⁸⁴

In 1904, Jung started a series of word association experiments together with his colleague Franz Riklin. The experimenters asked subjects to respond to a list of stimulus words with the first word that came into their minds, and noted down the associated word and reaction time. They argued that in certain cases, a disturbance of association revealed the presence of an 'affect toned complex' that was constellated by the stimulus.⁹⁸⁵ Jung thought the experiments

⁹⁷⁹ Eugen Bleuler, *Textbook of Psychiatry*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Macmillan, [1924] 1934), 214-220.

⁹⁸⁰ See Brigitta Bernet, *Schizophrenie: Entstehung und Entwicklung eines psychiatrischen Krankheitsbilds um 1900* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2013), 123-47.

⁹⁸¹ Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, 667.

⁹⁸² MP, 75- 76.

⁹⁸³ Karl Abraham made almost the exact statement in a letter to Freud in 1907. See Ernst Falzeder, 'The Story of an ambivalent relationship: Sigmund Freud and Eugen Bleuler,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 52 (2007): 348-49.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* See also Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 45-46.

⁹⁸⁵ See C.G. Jung and F. Riklin, 'The associations of normal subjects,' in *Studies in Word-Associations: Experiments in the Diagnosis of Psychopathological Conditions Carried Out at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Zurich*, ed. C.G. Jung, trans. M.D. Eder (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1919), 66: 'By "affect-

offered an objective and scientific way of probing the unconscious, with applications in psychotherapy and psychopathology.⁹⁸⁶

Sometime between 1902 and 1904, Bleuler introduced psychoanalysis at the Burghölzli. In 1904, he started a correspondence with Freud. Zürich soon eclipsed Vienna as the primary centre for training and research into psychoanalysis, with the young doctors analysing each other, their patients, wives, and their children.⁹⁸⁷ A *Freud Society for Doctors* was started in 1907, and in 1908 it changed its name to the *Freud Society for Psychoanalytic Researches*, so as to allow for lay membership.⁹⁸⁸ Jung was initially attracted to Freud because he thought his theory offered a model to understand his association experiments. By his own admission, it was the realization that Freud's theory was in line with this research that made him openly 'take up the cudgels' for psychoanalysis at psychiatric congresses.⁹⁸⁹

Another important moment in Jung's intellectual development in this period was his reading of Théodore Flournoy's *From India to the planet Mars*, which he offered to translate into German. To his regret, Flournoy had already appointed another translator.⁹⁹⁰ Flournoy's work served as the model for Jung's medical dissertation, *On the Psychology and Psychopathology of so-called Occult Phenomena* (1902). He would also later borrow the case of Miss Miller, which was the focal point of *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* (henceforth *TSL*), from Flournoy's *Archives des psychologie*. In the protocols of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung recollected his visits to Flournoy in Geneva, during his Burghölzli period. He claimed that for him, Flournoy fulfilled the role of a mentor, at a time when he felt he was too young to strike out on his own. He clearly did not think that either Freud or Bleuler were suitable for that position. Jung also mentioned that he could have turned toward Janet (whose lectures he had attended in Paris in 1902-1903), but he did not feel that there was not much more that he could learn from him.⁹⁹¹ Jung thought that Flournoy shared his interests (e.g. in psychical research and religion) and general way of looking at things, at a time when no one

toned complex" we understand the total number of presentations relating to a definite experience that is charged with emotion.'

⁹⁸⁶ See C.G. Jung, 'Psychoanalysis and Association,' *Studies in Word-Association*, 297-321.

⁹⁸⁷ See Falzeder, *op.cit.*, 343-350.

⁹⁸⁸ See Marianne Jehle-Wildberger, 'Die Wegstrecke von den Anfängen bis 1943,' in *C.G. Jung und Adolf Keller. Über Theologie und Psychologie: Briefe und Gespräche* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2014), 24. Bleuler's wife, Emma Jung and the pastor Oskar Pfister were among the lay members.

⁹⁸⁹ See C.G. Jung, *Introduction to Jungian Psychology*, 15.

⁹⁹⁰ Sonu Shamdasani, 'From Geneva to Zürich: Jung and French Switzerland,' *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 43, (1998), 117. MP, 101.

⁹⁹¹ In other interviews Jung had better things to say about Janet and his influence on his thought. See Shamdasani, 'From Geneva to Zürich,' 115-126.

else did. He stated that he had borrowed from Flournoy the notion of 'creative imagination,' that Flournoy taught him 'the affectionate immersion in a case,' and that his Genevan mentor had a wider, more objective outlook that helped him overcome the one-sidedness of Freud.⁹⁹²

Another person from whom Jung got a similar impression was William James, whom he met at Clark University in 1909.⁹⁹³ Jung stated that James and him had understood each other excellently (*ausgezeichnet*) on the 'estimation of the religious factors in the psyche.' Jung had also talked to him about James' psychical research and he thought that James understood the importance of this means of accessing the unconscious. He found James to be 'a really impressive man, a very nice man,' but also a bit dry, a bit too much of a philosopher. He felt that Flournoy was closer to him on a personal and emotional level.⁹⁹⁴

In 1909, the same year that he met James, Jung published an article that dealt, briefly, with religion. The article was called 'The Significance of the Father for the Destiny of the Individual.' In it, he outlined several cases of neurosis, all of which, in his estimation, sprang from the patients' inability to free themselves from 'the magic-circle of the family constellation.'⁹⁹⁵ What Jung meant by this expression was that these patients' lives (their destinies) continued to be ruled and determined by the infantile sexual relations established in their childhood, vis-à-vis their parents. Their neurosis was the result of unsuccessful attempts to free themselves from their parental bondage. It was the observation of the powerful force of the 'infantile constellation' in the individual life that made Jung think of religion. He argued that it was this effect of infantile sexuality upon personal destiny that, in the course of centuries, led to the idea of independent entities (i.e. God and the devil) that ruled the fate of humans.⁹⁹⁶ According to Jung, the general development from childhood into adulthood resulted in a conflict between the budding individuality and the infantile constellation. The latter was pushed into the unconscious and then sublimated. In the process, the imperfect

⁹⁹² MP, 101-102. Jung and several members of the Association for Analytical Psychology were later organizing Flournoy sessions around 1915, so as to discuss Flournoy's work (most likely *Une mystique moderne* which appeared in 1915). See Jehle-Wildberger, *op.cit.*, 43. Jung's two personal copies of *Une mystique moderne* have numerous underlinings.

⁹⁹³ Jung also stated that he met James again in 1912, and that they had a long walk. That, of course, cannot be true, since James died in 1910. Jung did travel to America again briefly in 1910, and may have met James then for a second time. See *FJL*, 301.

⁹⁹⁴ MP, 102-103. For more about Jung's relationship with James, see Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 57-61.

⁹⁹⁵ C.G. Jung, 'Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen,' *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* I (Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1909), 163. See also CW 4, 301-323. See also the summary of Jung's argument in James W. Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion* (London: Associated University Press, 1979), 19-20.

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

human father was split into a good God, 'the symbol of the highest sexual repression' and a devil, who symbolised sexual lust. In a single paragraph, Jung glossed the entire history of Judaism and Christianity from this psychoanalytic perspective. He argued that religions were 'fantasy systems' of entire peoples and eras. In Judaism, Yahweh was the sublimated Jewish *pater familias*, with which the prophets—the only ones who achieved complete sublimation—identified themselves. Drawing on a recent article of Freud's in the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie*, he argued that the rest of the population was kept in a state of neurotic fear and imperfect sublimation by the obsessive compulsion of Mosaic law.⁹⁹⁷ In the Christian tradition, a similar situation obtained: Christ, the saints, and later the reformers were able to sublimate fully, while the ceremonials of the Catholic Church were taken to be a neurotic ritual, analogous to the Jewish law. Ultimately, Jung's religious history turned into a psychoanalytic apology of Protestantism, as he suggested that the turn toward inner experience in modern theology was precisely an attempt to use 'the fervour of love' in order to transform the fear and compulsion of neuroticism into a higher form of feeling.⁹⁹⁸

Jung's account posed an implicit question that would preoccupy him (*mutatis mutandis*) as well in the coming years: was religion still necessary in a world that had psychoanalysis (or psychotherapy)? Could the liberating function of the latter compensate for the loss of the former? Or was there some other way of bringing psychology and religion together, in a way that would preserve both? In the following years, these questions would preoccupy not only Jung, but several of his colleagues in Zürich as well. In addition to Pfister, whose work I examine in the next section, other such colleagues included Frank Riklin and the Protestant pastor Adolf Keller (1872-1963), who later became an advocate for Jung's ideas, and whose wife Tina also became a Jungian analyst.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübung,' *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* Band I, Heft 1 (Halle a. S.: Verlag von Carl Marhold, 1907), 4-12. Freud found a similar kind of instinctual repression in both religion and obsessional neurosis. He wrote: 'In view of these similarities and analogies one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis.' As opposed to Jung however, he argued that the chief difference between neurosis and religion was that in the former one was dealing with exclusively sexual instincts, while the latter had an egoistic origin. See Sigmund Freud, 'Obsessive actions and religious practices,' *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 9 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1959), 126-27.

⁹⁹⁸ Jung, 'Die Bedeutung des Vaters,' 170-71. Freud approved of this paper. See *FJL*, 166.

⁹⁹⁹ On Keller and Jung see For Keller's relationship with Jung see Jehle-Wildberger, *op.cit.*, 33-102. Also Marianne Jehle-Wildberger, *Adolf Keller (1872-1963): Ecumenist, World Citizen, Philanthropist*. trans. Mary Kyburz and John Peck (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013). Franz Riklin was also interested in religious topics. See for example Franz Riklin, 'Betrachtungen zur christlichen Passionsgeschichte,' *Wissen und Leben* XII (1913): 26-46.

4.4 Oskar Pfister

We turn now to perhaps the most important of these colleagues: the Protestant pastor Oskar Pfister. Pfister came to psychoanalysis via Jung, whom he had met in 1903 and who also analysed him later.¹⁰⁰⁰ Pfister saw analysis as having a revolutionary potential for pastoral practice and he was instrumental in setting up pastoral psychology as a new modality for the psychology of religion—one in which psychology was used not as a tool for the disinterested description of religious experience, but as an instrument with which to bring about moral and religious change in the believer.¹⁰⁰¹

Pfister was born in 1873 and studied theology, psychology and philosophy in Zürich, Basel, and Berlin. He obtained a Philosophy doctorate from Zürich in 1897. For most of his career (from 1902 to 1939) he served as pastor of Prediger Church in central Zürich. He came to psychoanalysis via Jung, and started using it in his pastoral practice in 1908.¹⁰⁰² In a series of papers published in 1909, Pfister began outlining a psychoanalytic method of pastoral care (*Seelsorge*) that used a combination of Jung's association test and free-association to get at underlying complexes. He argued that psychoanalysis was necessary in all cases where one was dealing with a 'severe religious-ethical defect, which is based not on a simple moral and intellectual weakness, but on repression.'¹⁰⁰³

The notion of 'religious-ethical defects' was vague enough to allow him to take on whatever cases he thought were fit for his ability: hysterics, difficult children, as well as all manner of 'neurotically' disturbed people. In a 1912 paper, he gave a more comprehensive list of

¹⁰⁰⁰ Pfister gave an unflattering description of his analysis with Jung in a letter to Freud, which the latter quoted anonymously in his paper 'On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement.' See Sigmund Freud, *CW* 14, 62-63 (Sonu Shamdasani, personal communication).

¹⁰⁰¹ See Isabelle Noth, *Freuds bleibende Aktualität: Psychoanalytische Rezeption in der Pastoral- und Religionspsychologie im deutschen Sprachraum und in den USA* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2010). As Noth shows, it was primarily Freud's work that was taken up as the basis of pastoral psychology. Pfister served as an important bridge to Freud's dissemination, even though he was later criticized for having too short analyses and for only relying on the early Freud. See Noth, *op.cit.*, 293. Jung's analytical psychology was far less influential among such psychologically minded theologians, even though he expressed his own hope for a rapprochement, particularly in two papers published in the 1920s and 30s. See C.G. Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the clergy,' *CW* 11, 327-47; 'Psychoanalysis and the cure of souls,' *CW* 11, 348-54.

¹⁰⁰² See Oskar Pfister, 'Psychanalytische Seelsorge und experimentelle Moralpädagogik,' *Protestantische Monatshefte* 13, 1 (1909): 8. For Pfister's life and work see E. Nase, 'The psychology of religion at the crossroads: Oskar Pfister's challenge to the psychology of religion in the twenties,' in *Aspects in Contexts: Studies in the History of Psychology of Religion*, ed. Jacob A. Belzen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 45-89. See also Eckart Nase, *Oskar Pfisters Analytische Seelsorge: Theorie und Praxis des ersten Pastoralpsychologen, dargestellt an zwei Fallstudien* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993). Isabelle Noth, *op.cit.*, 59-141. A summary of some of Pfister's work can also be found in John Shanner Cornell, 'When Science Entered the Soul: German Psychology and Religion, 1890-1914' (PhD diss., Yale University, 1990), 151-56 *et passim*.

¹⁰⁰³ Pfister, 'Psychoanalytische Seelsorge,' 32. See also Oskar Pfister, 'Die Psychoanalyse als wissenschaftliches Prinzip und seelsorgerliche Methode,' *Evangelische Freiheit* 10 (1910): 66-73, 102-113, 137-46, 190-200.

conditions that he felt he could intervene in: mendacity, kleptomania, animal cruelty, vandalism, aversion to work, dislike of certain foods, symptomatic gestures, effects of corporal punishment, effects of withholding sexual enlightenment, eccentric behaviours, hatred towards others, psychosomatic conditions, goblin pranks of the repressed complex (*Koboldstreiche des Verdrängten*) when choosing a wife or husband, unhappy marriages, and religious abnormalities.¹⁰⁰⁴

It was not clear from his description why these cases should not have been referred to doctors or professional psychotherapists. Pfister was clearly aware of this critique, but defended himself by writing that it was difficult to draw a clear line between the medical and the non-medical fields. At any rate, he claimed to always consult a physician, especially if organic disturbances were involved.¹⁰⁰⁵ A related question is raised by Pfister's claim that 'the process of moral cure is accomplished in exactly the same way as the psychoanalytic reintegration of different complex-induced physical and psychic defects, such as paralyses, automatisms, anxiety symptoms, fixed ideas, etc.'¹⁰⁰⁶ If, as Pfister put it, this healing process was accomplished 'in exactly the same way' as in general psychoanalysis, it is difficult to see what role religion played in it, or if *Seelsorge* was in fact anything different from psychoanalysis.

In fact, as he made clear on several occasions, *Seelsorge* was not essentially different from psychoanalysis, as much as it was its historical fulfilment. For Pfister, Jesus was the original psychoanalyst, since through his commandment for love he had done away with the 'neurotic nomism' of the Jewish law, which he had then replaced with an idea of the father that was free from all 'oedipal dross.' In opposition to Freud, Pfister argued that original Christianity was not neurosis, but a cure, and it was only through the subsequent accumulation of neurotic elements in Catholicism that the original message was obscured.¹⁰⁰⁷ But then, the Reformation came, and with it, the return to the message of Christ—and hence the return to 'psychoanalysis.' It was in this context that Pfister could write to Freud in 1909 that 'the Reformation was fundamentally nothing but an analysis of Catholic sexual repression.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Freud was also part of this historical trajectory, because, whether he wanted it or not, he had

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Oskar Pfister, 'Anwendungen der Psychoanalyse in der Pädagogik und Seelsorge,' *Imago* 1, 1 (1912): 56-77.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Oskar Pfister, 'The Illusion of a Future: A Friendly Disagreement with Prof. Sigmund Freud' (1928), *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 74 (1993): 561-63.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Oskar Pfister to Sigmund Freud, 18.02.1909, in *Psychoanalysis & Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud & Oskar Pfister*, ed. Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 18.

been the author of a similar reformation, of a similar return to what had been originally preached by Jesus. For Pfister, Freud was in fact a Protestant, the unwitting and unwilling instrument of God's plan—an idea which Freud probably found quite amusing.¹⁰⁰⁹

It was because of Pfister's integration of psychoanalysis into the larger plan of God that he felt entitled to use it to promote his own brand of moderate liberal Protestantism, as well as to police religious 'eccentricities.'¹⁰¹⁰ In 1912, he wrote: 'a healthy religiosity that fosters optimism and moral energy is only strengthened through an analysis undertaken by a religiously active pastoral councillor, while pious eccentricity is made to disappear under its influence.'¹⁰¹¹ An example of what he meant can be found in his account of several cases where 'good Protestant youngsters' had wanted to convert to Catholicism. Pfister found that historical and dogmatic reasons were useless to dissuade them from their choice. He argued that only with the help of psychoanalysis was he able to reveal their drive towards conversion as being nothing other than a neurotic obsession and then to remove their 'obsessive impulse' with 'relative ease.'¹⁰¹²

Reviewing Pfister's early articles in 1909, Jung argued that these showed that through psychoanalysis one could attain 'the most beautiful educational purposes' with speed and gentleness. As opposed to traditional church methods (asceticism and training) which were ineffectual and created only distress and despair, analysis offered a clear way of 'morally strengthening, purifying and healing the mind' of believers.¹⁰¹³

In 1910, Pfister began expanding his purview into history, publishing a psychobiographical study of a notorious 18th century Pietistic leader, Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf.¹⁰¹⁴ The study sprang from Pfister's conviction that excessive piety was only a compensation for deep sexual repression, whose corollary was neuroticism and moral bankruptcy.¹⁰¹⁵ The count's story offered a graphic illustration of this thesis. Von Zinzendorf, according to Pfister,

¹⁰⁰⁹ See Sigmund Freud to Oskar Pfister, 20.02.1909, *Psychoanalysis & Faith*, 19.

¹⁰¹⁰ Psychoanalysis was, as he put it in 1928, 'nothing but the development of Jesus' basic ideas.' See Pfister, quoted in Noth, *op.cit.*, 99.

¹⁰¹¹ Pfister, 'Anwendungen,' 78.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁰¹³ C.G.Jung, review of 'Wahnvorstellung und Schülerelbstmord. Auf Grund einer Traumanalyse beleuchtet,' 'Psychoanalytische Seelsorge und experimentelle Moralpädagogik,' 'Ein Fall von psychoanalytischer Seelsorge und Seelenheilung,' by Oskar Pfister, *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, II, 1 (1910): 380.

¹⁰¹⁴ Oskar Pfister, *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorf: Ein psychoanalytischer Beitrag zur Kenntniss der religiösen Sublimierungsprozesse und zur Erklärung der Pietismus* (Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1910).

¹⁰¹⁵ See also the case quoted in Pfister, 'Psychanalytische Seelsorge und experimentelle Moralpädagogik,' 31.

projected his repressed bisexual and sado-masochistic tendencies upon Jesus, arriving at a kind of sexualised 'blood theology.' Pfister offered a gripping exposé of the analysand's (as Pfister frequently referred to the count) sensual obsession with Jesus' blood and wounds. Using quotations from his works, he argued that von Zinzendorf regarded Jesus' wounds as female genitalia, as the birth-organ, and as a male anus.¹⁰¹⁶ As he wrote: "'The little side-wounds" are invested by the religious libido with an animal passion that reaches the highest orgasm, the highest ecstasy.'¹⁰¹⁷ In another passage, he offered a long list of the baroque, yet transparently sexual things that the count wanted to do with Jesus' side-wounds: lie down inside, crawl inside, lodge into, whistle into, burrow, play, lick, suck, bathe, move around in them like a little pigeon or fish, be happy, sit, rest, sleep, remain there forever, apply the wounds to the whole of life, bite into them, live inside them after death, use them as an incubator for righteous souls.¹⁰¹⁸ Ultimately, for Pfister, the count stood accused of his inability to ethically sublimate his sexual instincts. His neurotic condition made him deficient in actual human love, which was evident in the cruel way in which he treated his subjects and his family. Like with all neurotics, his poor ethical performance was nature's revenge for its ascetic violation.¹⁰¹⁹ Jung praised Pfister's book both in private to Freud, as well as publicly, in the introduction to *Transformations and Symbols the Libido*.¹⁰²⁰

By 1911, Pfister was claiming that there was no question anymore that the history of religious psychology was divided into a period before Freud and a period after Freud.¹⁰²¹ Despite the pronouncement, Pfister had yet to formulate what a psychoanalysis of religion would look like. Nor was it clear if his psychoanalysis of religion was a self-standing discipline or merely a branch of psychoanalysis. In 1912, Pfister began to move away from Jung, siding with Freud for the rest of his life.¹⁰²² A decade later (1922), in an essay titled 'Religious Psychology at Crossroads,' Pfister noted that 'what we urgently need is a psychological knowledge that would help us understand the emergence of religious phenomena and how to gain an influence upon them.'¹⁰²³ This sentence seems to suggest that, much like Jung in the

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-64.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-112.

¹⁰²⁰ See *FJL*, 193. *TSL*, 6.

¹⁰²¹ Oskar Pfister, 'Die psychologische Enträtselung der religiösen Glossolie und der automatischen Kryptographie (Schluß),' *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, III, 2 (1912): 794.

¹⁰²² See [Sigmund Freud to Oskar Pfister, 9.12.1912], *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*, 58.

¹⁰²³ See Oskar Pfister, 'Die Religionspsychologie am Scheidewege,' *Imago*, VIII 3 (1922): 395. According to the protocols of the Zürich chapter of the International Psychoanalytic Association, in 1913, Pfister and Jung had an

same period, Pfister was thinking about developing a psychology of the religious making process. However, I can see no evidence that he tried to develop such a psychology himself.¹⁰²⁴

In 1927, Pfister wrote an essay titled 'The Science of Religion and Psychoanalysis' (*Religionswissenschaft und Psychoanalyse*). In it, he defined religion as being, essentially, inner experience in relation to any kind of divinity. He claimed that, 'in a wider sense,' religion included as well all those 'processes, representations, actions and institutions which such an experience effects.' However, he cautioned his readers not to rest content with such sedimentations, and thus fall into the error of contemporary theology.¹⁰²⁵

For Pfister, *Religionswissenschaft* was primarily concerned with inner experience and he defined it as 'all those researches which are related to the essence, causal relations, truth and validity of religious processes.'¹⁰²⁶ He claimed that psychoanalysis had a prime contribution to make to the science of religion, as it concerned itself with the conscious and unconscious causation of religious facts. However, following Flournoy's second principle, he argued that psychoanalysis had no right to make a claim about the reality or value of such facts.¹⁰²⁷ This was a rather disingenuous claim, given that in the same paper he showed how easily he could take, for example, someone's angelic or demonic visions, and analyse them to nothing more mundane than a death-wish against a neighbour, or a desire that an evildoer be exposed.¹⁰²⁸ These were clearly exercises in evaluation, which had an effect on how their subjects viewed their religious experiences. Furthermore, such exercises were consistent with his longstanding use of psychoanalysis as pruning tool, by which to separate the wheat of the genuinely religious from the chaff of neurosis.¹⁰²⁹ What Pfister seemed to miss however, was that, outside of his prior commitment to a kind of Christian belief, there was, in theory, no limit to the kind of religious objects (experiences, dogmas, etc.) that could be psychoanalysed in this fashion. It was thus up to psychoanalysis to decide what was and what was not genuine

argument about the neuroticism of Christ and Paul. Pfister maintained they were both neurotics, which Jung denied. See Jehle-Wildberger, *C.G.Jung und Adolf Keller*, 39.

¹⁰²⁴ In that same paper he wrote: 'we have nothing to do with religion in general, but with this or that religious phenomenon in this or that person.' See Pfister, 'Die Religionspsychologie am Scheidewege,' 398.

¹⁰²⁵ Oskar Pfister, *Religionswissenschaft und Psychoanalyse* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töppelmann, 1927), 18. Despite the Schleiermachian tone of this definition, Pfister did not think that religion was only feeling. He took it to be a commonplace that religion was composed as well of willing and thinking. See Pfister, 'Die Religionspsychologie am Scheidewege,' 368.

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

¹⁰²⁹ Oskar Pfister, *The Psychoanalytic Method*. trans. Charles Rockwell Payne (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1917), 408.

religiosity. Ultimately, despite Pfister's protestations, it could even decide that all religion was nothing but neurosis, and hence something to overcome.¹⁰³⁰

4.5 Towards a new understanding

In his 1925 seminar, Jung recounted the famous dream that he had on his way back from America in 1909. He said that in it he found himself in a medieval house from which he descended first into a Gothic cellar, then into a Roman one beneath it. Finally, from a hole in the second cellar's floor he looked down into a dusty tomb, filled with fragments of pottery and ancient bones.¹⁰³¹ Jung said that this dream was the first intimation of the collective unconscious as well as the origin of *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido (TSL)*, which he began publishing in 1911 in the *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen*, and then as a book in 1912.¹⁰³² After his return from America, Jung began reading extensively on mythology, with the aim of finding a 'phylogenetic basis for the theory of neurosis.'¹⁰³³ That same year (1909), he quit his job at the Burghölzli, and moved into a new house that he had built for himself in Küsnacht.

In *TSL*, Jung picked up the line of inquiry about religion that he had already begun articulating in 'The Significance of the Father.' The book's pretext was an article by a woman named Frank Miller, which appeared in the *Archives de Psychologie* in 1906 together with a short introduction by Flournoy.¹⁰³⁴ Miss Miller was an American born in Alabama in 1878. She had travelled widely in Europe, and studied at several universities (including in Geneva) and had success as a popular lecturer in the US, where she spoke about and presented the garbs of countries like Russia, Greece, and Scandinavia.¹⁰³⁵ Flournoy presented her as possessed of a hypersensitive, almost mediumistic temperament, coupled, however, with a critical acumen and a lively intelligence. He did not doubt that, had she lacked in introspection and self-criticism, she would have become a successful purveyor of subliminal

¹⁰³⁰ In a letter sent to René Laforgue in 1952, Pfister recounted his last meeting with Freud in 1936: 'On our last visit together in 1936, his parting words were: "you have done much for the propaganda of psychoanalysis, but the fact that you still are religious- that I cannot forget." He said it laughingly, but he meant it in earnest.' See Pfister, quoted in Noth, *op.cit.*, 95.

¹⁰³¹ C. G. Jung, *Introduction to Jungian Psychology: Notes of the Seminar on Analytical Psychology given in 1925*. ed. Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 23.

¹⁰³² It came out as a volume in 1912. See C.G. Jung, *Introduction*, 23. See also C. G. Jung, 'Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido. Beiträge zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Denkens,' *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* III, 1 (1911): 120-227; IV, 1 (1912): 162-464. The English translation appeared in 1916. See *TSL*.

¹⁰³³ *FJL*, 258, 269. Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 214.

¹⁰³⁴ See Frank Miller, 'Quelques faits d'imagination créatrice,' *Archives de psychologie*, V (1906): 36-51.

¹⁰³⁵ See Sonu Shamdasani, 'A woman called Frank,' *Spring*, 50 (1990), 31-39.

romances, much like H el ene Smith.¹⁰³⁶ Miss Miller was, as she herself noted, completely opposed to spiritualist interpretations. The point of her article was precisely to offer a naturalistic explanation of some personal episodes of unconscious or semi-conscious reverie and lyrical genesis, with the aim of 'dispersing the superstition of so-called 'spirits.'¹⁰³⁷ She used the explanatory paradigm of cryptomnesia, set out by Flournoy in *From India to the planet Mars*, and traced back her 'fantasies' to forgotten or half-remembered incidents in her life.

Jung did not take Miller's explanations at face value, quite likely because he thought them to be insufficient, and instead proceeded to treat them somewhat like free associations. His argument in *TSL* started with a distinction between fantasy and directed thinking. He claimed that directed thinking was adapted to reality and objective, whereas fantasy thinking was subjective, nebulous and dreamy. Fantasy thinking was a survival from ages past, when mythology and not science held humans in its sway.¹⁰³⁸ In what was a common anthropological move, he regarded fantasy thinking as the primary mode of thinking for children and primitive peoples, and also equated it with the kind of thinking that was common in dreams. In children's fantasies one had the proof that psychologically, ontogeny repeated phylogeny. Such fantasy thinking was furthermore the basis for all mythology and religion:

One can say, that should it happen that all traditions in the world were cut off with a single blow, then with the succeeding generation, the whole mythology and history of religion would start over again. Only a few individual succeed in throwing off mythology in a time of a certain intellectual supremacy—the mass never frees itself.¹⁰³⁹

As this quote suggests, religion and mythology were genetically related (if not identical), they were *psychically* ingrained, and they were to be overcome (at least by those who were gifted enough to rise above the mass). This negative evaluation of religion was implicit in the fact that religion was the result of a lower form of thinking. One became religious (or mythological) as a result of fatigue, of an *abaissement du niveau mental*, whose correlative

¹⁰³⁶ Flournoy, 'Introduction,' in Frank Miller, *op.cit.*, 36-38.

¹⁰³⁷ Frank Miller, *op.cit.*, 48. In his review of Jung's *TSL*, Flournoy referred to her procedure as being a "'psychoanalysis" avant la lettre.' See Th odore Flournoy, review of C.G. Jung, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido: Beitr age f ur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Denkens*, *Archives de psychologie* 50, 13 (1913): 195.

¹⁰³⁸ *TSL*, 24.

¹⁰³⁹ *TSL*, 30.

was a loss of what Janet called 'the function of the real.'¹⁰⁴⁰ It was the extent of this loss of the function of reality in schizophrenia that convinced Jung that the libido was not purely sexual, but more like a vital energy or Schopenhauerian Will. As he put it, with regard to dementia praecox:

The function of reality is lacking to such a degree that even the motive power must be encroached upon in the loss. The sexual character of this must be disputed absolutely, for reality is not understood to be a sexual function.¹⁰⁴¹

The self-deepening of psychotics into a world of fantasy led to a 'loosening up of the historical layers of the unconscious.'¹⁰⁴² As such:

it may be concluded that the soul possesses in some degree historical strata, the oldest stratum of which would correspond to the unconscious. The result of that must be that an introversion occurring later in life, according to the Freudian teaching, seizes upon regressive infantile reminiscences taken from the individual past. That first points out the way; then, with stronger introversion and regression (strong repression, introversion psychoses), there come to light pronounced traits of an archaic mental kind, which, under certain circumstances, might go as far as the re-echo of a once manifest, archaic mental product.¹⁰⁴³

The fantasies that were triggered by such introversions revealed thus not only personal or infantile memories, but memories of the race. A case in point was the Solar Phallus Man, who hallucinated the ancient myth of a sun-phallus that could also be found almost identically in the Mithraic liturgy.¹⁰⁴⁴ Jung expanded Flournoy's cryptomnesia paradigm so as to include such ancient memories. As Shamdasani has argued, one could call this method a 'phylo-cryptomnesia.'¹⁰⁴⁵ In later editions of *TSL*, Jung would retrospectively supply a diagnosis for Miss Miller that would more closely fit this model, turning her into a nascent schizophrenic.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰⁴⁰ *TSL*, 142-53, 488.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁰⁴² *FJL*, 427.

¹⁰⁴³ *TSL*, 37.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *TSL*, 108-109.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 218

¹⁰⁴⁶ See Shamdasani, 'A woman called Frank,' 27. The subtitle of the revised 1952 edition was thus changed by Jung 'An analysis of the prelude to a case of schizophrenia.' See CW 5. In the original edition of *TSL*, Jung agreed that he did not know the cause for Miss Miller's introversion, but claimed that it must have been an 'inner conflict.' See *TSL*, 196.

Jung's project in *TSL*, seems to have been, in part at least, a synthesis between the comparative religion project of people like Müller and Tiele and the religious psychology of James, Flournoy and Janet. There is in fact a striking similarity between Jung's conception in *TSL* and that of Tiele, which we have outlined in chapter 1. To recap, Tiele claimed that the study of myths and symbols provided a window into the embryology of religion: a way of seeing how early man had used the faculty of the imagination to give concrete form to a diffuse Infinite, lurking in his unconscious depths. *Mutatis mutandis*, Jung argued the exact same thing: one only has to replace 'imagination' with 'fantasy thinking' and 'the Infinite' with the equally protean and ultimately non-analysable libido.¹⁰⁴⁷ Differently from Tiele however, Jung also claimed that this imaginative process also took place among his contemporaries—indeed that every person carried within them both the libido and its typical forms. A loss of psychological tension (as in a psychosis, an introversion or a dream) could show that this mythologizing capability had not been lost. This argument served as the justification for why Jung studied Ms. Miller's religious fantasies side by side with the ancient myths and symbols of Greece, India, or Egypt.

Starting from Miller's religiously themed subliminal poems, Jung argued that religions were systems built out of the '*regressive reanimation of the father-and mother imago*.'¹⁰⁴⁸ Whenever, for some reason (as for example encountering an obstacle in life), one became introverted, the libido began flowing back onto its former, disused waterways. This meant that it went back to the person's earliest attachments, namely the mother and the father. In Miller's case, this happened because of her state of introversion (whose aetiology Jung could not precise) as well as because of a repressed erotic desire.¹⁰⁴⁹

Jung was not entirely clear on what such reanimations of the paternal imagos meant. He seemed to vacillate between a Freudian and a non-Freudian description. On the one hand, to return to the mother and father was taken to mean simply a symbolic return to the protection and peace of childhood. He argued that mystical feelings in general were nothing but an unconscious memory of that age.¹⁰⁵⁰ On the other hand, one's relationship with one's parents was marred by a strong incestual barrier. It was supposedly this barrier that made for the

¹⁰⁴⁷ I have, however, found no evidence that Jung had read Tiele, though he may have encountered him in his preparatory reading for *TSL*.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *TSL*, 99.

sublimation of sexual feelings towards the parents into the symbolism of religion.¹⁰⁵¹ At the same time, God was only a representation of the subjective feeling of one's own vital energy:

Psychologically, however, God is the name of a representation-complex which is grouped around a strong feeling (the sum of libido). Properly, the feeling is what gives character and reality to the complex. *The attributes and symbols of the divinity must belong in a consistent manner to the feeling (longing, love, libido, and so on).* If one honors God, the sun or the fire, then one honors one's own vital force, the libido.¹⁰⁵²

Historically, religions offered the possibility of projecting one's complexes, which had a salutary effect on cultural development. In Christianity, for example, projection allowed for a solution to the believer's complexes, as these could be objectively represented, transferred upon the self-sacrificing Christ who took some of the burden, and because one could confess one's sins through a kind of psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*. Also, because of Christianity's strong emphasis on brotherly love, the individual could also transfer his conflicts upon the whole community.¹⁰⁵³ In the case of historical religions, such sublimation also served to put a restraint on man's animal impulses.

In the contemporary situation, people lost track of the powerful animal instincts that Christianity had to repress. Such instincts had been so thoroughly pushed into the unconscious that the moderns no longer realized how powerful they could be.¹⁰⁵⁴ People were no longer aware of their 'sins,' so religion also became devalued. For Jung, consciously opposing religion to the instincts was sound religion. However, when contemporary people took the route of unconsciously turning their erotic conflicts into religion (as Miss Miller had done), they assumed '*a sentimental and ethically worthless pose.*'¹⁰⁵⁵ They adopted an infantile attitude, preferring to live out their incest wish in a symbolised, religious form. This created a double whammy. On the one hand, religious people were usually threatened by

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 100. In 1918, Jung wrote: 'Thus, when the Freudian school explains that religious feelings or any other sentiments that pertain to the spiritual sphere are "nothing but" inadmissible sexual wishes which have been repressed and subsequently "sublimated," this procedure would be the equivalent to a physicist's explanation that electricity is "nothing but" a waterfall which someone had bought up and piped into a turbine. In other words, electricity is nothing but a "culturally deformed" waterfall- an argument which [...] is hardly a piece of scientific ratiocination.' See C.G. Jung, 'The Role of the Unconscious,' CW 10, 8.

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 74-78.

¹⁰⁵⁴ In 1918, he argued that the suppression of animal instincts by Christianity was what ultimately led to their explosion in the recent war. See CW 10, 22. See also RB, 335, 341-42.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *TSL*, 82.

anxiety, because their vision of a fatherly God and a good world was constantly under threat of being subverted by the reality that the world was not good, but full of horrors. On the one hand, to believe in religious symbols was to invest one's libido in imaginary things. The ethically worthy position for Jung had to come through understanding, or as he implied, through a psychoanalytic practice that laid bare the imaginary nature of the symbol. Knowledge and understanding would render the individual morally autonomous.¹⁰⁵⁶ In other words, psychoanalysis could not only replace religion, but offered a better alternative to it.

4.6 Liber Novus

In 1910, Jung wrote to Freud concerning an invitation to be a member in Auguste Forel's *International Fraternity of Ethics and Culture*:

If a coalition is to have any ethical significance it should never be an artificial one but must be nourished by the deep instincts of the race. Somewhat like Christian Science, Islam, Buddhism. Religion can be replaced only by religion. Is there perchance a new saviour in the I.F.? What sort of new myth does he hand out for us to live by? Only the wise are ethical from sheer intellectual presumption, the rest of us need the eternal truth of myth.¹⁰⁵⁷

In the letter, Jung went on to say that instead of an alliance with an ethical fraternity, what he would have liked to see was an infiltration of psychoanalysis into Christianity. In his view, the latter would thereby be rejuvenated, Christ would be transformed 'into the soothsaying god of the vine,' and the cult would be turned into what it once was: 'a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal.'¹⁰⁵⁸ This vision of a psychoanalysis fuelled cult of Christ-Dionysus did not come to pass. What such a flight of fancy shows however, is Jung's reluctance to give up on Christ, even at a time when he thought that psychoanalysis could replace Christianity.

At some point after the writing of *TSL*, Jung underwent a change with respect to his earlier, negative portrayal of religion, and this change also had repercussions on his analytical practice. In 1913, he delivered a paper in London in which he said that he had become

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 260-63. Jung returned to the relationship between belief in knowledge in the *Red Book*, where he argued that too much belief could turn one into a lunatic, especially if one took literally the 'beyond full of strange and mighty things' that one encountered in oneself. Instead, he argued that one should strive for a balance between belief and knowledge. See RB, 471.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *FJL*, 293-94.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 294.

convinced of the need to take into account religious and philosophical forces in the analytical work: he referred to these by pointing to what Schopenhauer had called 'the metaphysical need of man.'¹⁰⁵⁹ He argued that such forces should not be reduced to their sexual roots like Freud proposed, but made to serve the biological function that they had fulfilled from time immemorial. This function was one of healing and of freeing people up to do creative work for the good of the species. He claimed that just as the primitives had been released from their condition by religious and philosophical symbols, the neurotic too could be freed up from his condition. This meant not the inculcation of dogmas, but rather:

I mean simply that there must be built up in him that same psychological attitude which was characterized by the living belief in a religious or philosophical dogma on earlier levels of culture.¹⁰⁶⁰

Jung did not then specify what this development spelled out for psychology, nor did he enter into details about the psychological attitude that he helping to develop in his clients. But such statements show that he was on a completely different drift than he had been only a year earlier. This was confirmed later in 1913, when Jung broke with Freud and resigned from his position as editor of the *Jahrbuch*.

In November 1913, Jung embarked on an extended self-experiment, which lasted until around 1928, when he began to study *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.¹⁰⁶¹ The experiment consisted in Jung's attempt to partially suspend his critical faculties, so as to allow his fantasy thinking to come to the fore. In the terms of the *TSL*, he was deliberately trying to place himself in the mental shoes of a primitive or a Miss Miller, so as to see if mythologies and religions did indeed come gushing out of the unconscious. Jung usually engaged in this exercise at night in his library. During the day he went about his usual business: seeing patients, participating in seminars, fulfilling his military service, etc.¹⁰⁶² His procedure consisted in consciously evoking fantasies and then participating in them as a character in a theatre play. This procedure already suggests the extent to which this was a more or less controlled experiment, since Jung's conscious 'I' was always present in the fantasies, asking questions, offering interpretations, as well as complaining when not understanding.

¹⁰⁵⁹ C.G. Jung, 'General Aspects of Psychoanalysis,' CW 4, 241.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁰⁶¹ Sonu Shamdasani, 'Introduction,' RB, 84.

¹⁰⁶² *Ibid.*, 26.

The main interlocutor was Jung's soul, which was joined by a host of usually mythological or religious characters: Salome, Elijah, the anchorite Ammonius, Philemon, the giant Izdubar, The Red One, a scholar, a woman in a forest castle, a dying locksmith, Death, a librarian, a cook, Ezekiel and his band of dead Anabaptists, a professor of psychiatry, a madman who thought himself Nietzsche and Christ, a serpent, Satan, the Cabiri, the soul of a murderer in hell, a shade, the God of the frogs (Abraxas).

Jung's fantasies, were, as Sonu Shamdasani has defined them, 'a type of dramatized thinking in pictorial form.'¹⁰⁶³ Jung first wrote these down in a series of personal notebooks (*Black Books*) and then copied them in a calligraphic volume, adding commentaries, lyrical elaborations, illustrations and decorative elements (*Liber Novus*). The fantasies took place from 1913-1916, with a yearlong interruption, between 1914-15. While the fantasies were copied by Jung faithfully from the *Black Books*, the elaborations and commentaries constitute a second layer in which he tried to interpret the fantasies not only subjectively, but also collectively (in terms of the general functioning of psychological principles, or in terms of real or symbolical events that were going to happen). In the years after 1916, it was the interpretative layer that Jung kept reworking. The second layer was thus an exercise in hermeneutics.¹⁰⁶⁴ As opposed to the *Black Books*, which were destined for his own use, *Liber Novus* (or *The Red Book*) was meant for a larger audience.¹⁰⁶⁵

Though its origin lies in Jung's experiment in the *Black Books*, the *Red Book* is not primarily a text of psychology, but a work of theology and soteriology that embodies its author's personal religious transformation. At the same time, the book does contain themes and motifs that Jung later picked up in his psychology of religion. Stated in general terms, *The Red Book* depicts Jung's journey of personal development that starts with re-finding his own soul and culminates in the birth of a new God-image in the soul and in the subsequent articulation of a Gnostic-inspired cosmology.¹⁰⁶⁶ The place of religion in the soul, the relation between the development of personality (or what Jung later term individuation) and religion, the future of religion, the past, present and future of Christianity are all central themes in the book. In what

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁶⁴ In what follows, I will indicate when I am referring to the second layer.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

follows, I will focus on those elements that have a bearing on Jung's later psychological understanding of religion, leaving to one side his personal cosmology and his ethics.¹⁰⁶⁷

Liber Novus is composed of three books: *Liber Primus* (The Way of What Is to Come), *Liber Secundus* (The Images of the Erring) and a *Liber Tertius* (Scrutinies).¹⁰⁶⁸ The whole work begins with four quotes from the Bible (three from Isaiah and one from the Gospel of John) that set out the prophetic tone of what follows, as well as its fundamental connection with Christianity and 'the Word made flesh.'¹⁰⁶⁹ Jung commenced by saying that he has been gripped by the spirit of the depths, who had taken away his belief in science and his joy of explaining (both attitudes pertaining to the spirit of this time), and who was forcing him to speak in a paradoxical way, 'melting together sense and nonsense.'¹⁰⁷⁰ For Jung, the mixing together of sense and nonsense constituted 'supreme meaning' and was an image of the God that was to come.¹⁰⁷¹ After the spirit of the depths announced him that it was preparing him for solitude, Jung noted that he expected a sign that would show him that the spirit of the depths was also the ruler of world affairs. This sign came in the form of the visions of the map of Europe covered in blood that happened in 1913 and in the form of several prospective dreams that happened before war broke out in 1914. Jung then announced the following:

Believe me: *It is no teaching and no instruction that I give you. On what basis should I presume to teach you? I give you news of the way of this man, but not of your own way. My path is not your path, therefore I / cannot teach you. The way is within us, but not in Gods, nor in teachings, nor in laws. Within us is the way, the truth, and the life.*¹⁰⁷²

In the following chapter (12 November 1913), Jung started to call out for his soul. He wondered what he should tell the soul of his life so far, and the one thing he claimed to have learned was that 'this life is the way, the long sought-after way to the unfathomable, which

¹⁰⁶⁷ I also leave to one side the broader question of the intellectual sources that had an impact on Jung's text. Perhaps the most important of these is Friedrich Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, which is implicitly referenced in much of Jung's text. For a study of the impact of *Zarathustra* on Jung's *Liber Novus* see Gaia Domenici, 'Books 'For All and None': Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, Jung's *The Red Book*, and 'Visionary' Works' (PhD diss., University of Pisa, 2014).

¹⁰⁶⁸ Sonu Shamdasani, 'Introduction,' RB, 45.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Throughout the history of Christianity, the book of Isaiah has often been considered to be the quintessentially Christian book of the Old Testament, a feature captured by the fact that it has often been referred to as 'the fifth gospel.' On this, see John F.A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Incidentally, Nietzsche also referred to his *Zarathustra* as a 'fifth gospel.' See Domenici, *op.cit.*, 36.

¹⁰⁷⁰ RB, 120.

¹⁰⁷¹ RB, 120.

¹⁰⁷² RB, 125.

we call divine.¹⁰⁷³ Two nights later, he said that his soul appeared to him in his dreams as a child and a woman. He wondered if these figures might not have been God. The spirit of the depths told him that he was not a leader, but the servant of this divine child.¹⁰⁷⁴ Being the servant of a child exposed him to mockery, much in the way that Christ was exposed to mockery during His time. Jung's conclusion then was that one should 'drink the blood and eat the flesh of him who was mocked and tormented for the sake of our sins, so that you totally become his nature, deny his being-apart-from-you; you should be he himself, not Christians but Christ.'¹⁰⁷⁵ A night later however, Jung argued that Christ had managed to overcome his temptation only partially, that is, he overcame the devil's temptation to evil, but not God's temptation to good. To overcome all temptation was to move beyond Christianity.¹⁰⁷⁶ But what did it mean to move beyond Christianity? Firstly, it meant taking on the cloak of madness, which Christianity no longer had. Jung commented that the overtaking of the spirit of this time by the spirit of the depths meant divine madness.¹⁰⁷⁷ In order to overcome this madness, one had to wait for its fruits.¹⁰⁷⁸ His path then took him to hell, much as it took Christ after His death. Jung claimed that 'no one knows what happened during the three days Christ was in Hell. I have experienced it.'¹⁰⁷⁹

On 26 December 1913, Jung's 'I' met the devil, with whom he has a conversation about religion, for, as he put it in the second layer, 'a religious conversation is inevitable with the devil.'¹⁰⁸⁰ The 'I' told the devil that 'he whose heart has not been broken over the Lord Jesus Christ drags a pagan around in himself, who holds him back from the best.'¹⁰⁸¹ The devil thought Jung's 'I' was too serious, whereas he (i.e. the devil) was joy.

On 30 December 1913, the 'I' encountered the hermit Ammonius, who had a hut in the Libyan desert. The 'I' was surprised that Ammonius could spend so much time poring over the text of Scriptures, which he reckoned he must have already known by heart. What ensued was a conversation about the manifold meanings of the Bible, and particularly about the

¹⁰⁷³ RB, 128.

¹⁰⁷⁴ RB, 134-135.

¹⁰⁷⁵ RB, 137, 202.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁰⁷⁷ See also RB, 230: 'The soul demands your folly, not your wisdom.' The theme of divine madness has a long history in European thought. See Sonu Shamdasani, 'Descensus ad Inferos: la saison en enfer de C.G.Jung' [unpublished paper], 12-32. Later in the RB, the 'I' overcomes madness by slashing his brain with a sword forged by the Cabiri. See RB, 427.

¹⁰⁷⁸ 12 December 1913, RB, 150.

¹⁰⁷⁹ 20 December 1913, RB 167.

¹⁰⁸⁰ RB, 218.

¹⁰⁸¹ RB, 215.

meaning of the Logos.¹⁰⁸² The 'I' was told to be on his guard so that he does not turn words into gods. The 'I' then spent the night in the desert, after being told not to forget to pray in the morning. The next day, instead of praying to God, the 'I' prayed to the sun, a scarab, and the earth. This seemed to prove that Ammonius was right when he accused the 'I' of being still a pagan.¹⁰⁸³ On the next day, Ammonius recounted his conversion to Christianity and the discussion turned toward the history of religions. The 'I' asked whether Christianity may not be simply a refashioning of Egyptian religion. In Ammonius' view, in their essence, all religions were one.¹⁰⁸⁴ Each religion pointed to the one that came after it, and what Ammonius was trying to do was find the future meaning of Christianity. The discussion confused Ammonius, who thought the 'I' was Satan. He lunged towards Jung's 'I,' but he was 'far away in the twentieth century.'¹⁰⁸⁵

The next time the 'I' met Ammonius (5 January 1914), the monk was in the company of the Red One.¹⁰⁸⁶ The two had reached a kind of quarrelsome agreement. They travelled together, but without being friends. According to Jung's comments in the second layer of the text, they represented 'the remains of earlier temples,' his overcome ideals.¹⁰⁸⁷ Consequent upon their coming together, the narrator noticed in layer two that he had become a kind of Pan, 'a laughing being of the forest, a leaf green daimon, a forest goblin and prankster.'¹⁰⁸⁸ However, despite the overcoming,

I had still not become a man again who carried within himself the conflict between a longing for the world and a longing for the spirit. I did not live either of these longings, but I lived myself, and was a merrily greening tree in a remote spring forest. And thus I learned to live without the world and spirit; and I was amazed how well I could live like this.¹⁰⁸⁹

In a further adventure (14 January 1914), the 'I' found himself in a library, where he checked out Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*.¹⁰⁹⁰ A conversation ensued with the librarian, who was surprised that the 'I' would want such a book. The 'I' said that he wanted the book for

¹⁰⁸² See RB, 262: 'But you find manifold meaning only in yourself, not in things'.

¹⁰⁸³ RB, 243.

¹⁰⁸⁴ RB, 258.

¹⁰⁸⁵ RB, 258.

¹⁰⁸⁶ RB, 269.

¹⁰⁸⁷ RB, 273.

¹⁰⁸⁸ RB, 272.

¹⁰⁸⁹ RB, 274.

¹⁰⁹⁰ RB, 328.

prayer. He thought there was perhaps something of value still in Christianity and was not convinced by those who reject it because belief supposedly clashes with natural science.¹⁰⁹¹ The librarian thought that there were suitable contemporary alternatives for a prayer-book, now that Christianity had collapsed, and he gave as examples Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Goethe's *Faust*. The 'I' thought that Nietzsche writes for those who need more freedom, whereas he (i.e. the 'I') was among those who needed more resignation.

In the second layer, Jung launched into a meditation on the meaning of *imitatio Christi*. He wrote:

Our natural model is Christ. We have stood under his law since antiquity, first outwardly, and then inwardly. At first we knew this, and then knew it no longer. We fought against Christ, we deposed him, and we seemed to be conquerors. But he remained in us and mastered us.¹⁰⁹²

Thus, Christ was inescapable. He was the way, but he was also inimitable. To imitate Christ was to imitate no one, but to proceed along one's own path, because Christ himself did not emulate anyone.¹⁰⁹³ The theme of the *imitatio Christi* is also present in Ritschl.¹⁰⁹⁴ Ritschl thought that the imitation of Christ was impossible because it was: a) epistemologically impossible: one does not have a direct access to a person's character, but only to what one can gather of that character through the senses. Imitation is thus bound to be partial, picking up only on the externals of that person's character; b) historically impossible: Christ lived in different times than contemporary people: his actions were, in part at least, conditioned by his environment. We live in a different time altogether; c) Christ's vocation was unique; d) to focus on the imitation of Christ is to lose track of the relation to the world, and to one's fellows. For Ritschl, religion is also a communal affair, not only a relationship between man and God. Incidentally, he regarded Schleiermacher's theory of dependence as responsible for leading people into seeing religion as an exclusive affair between man and God. Jung took up some of these themes in his meditation, namely b) and c). One could say also that there are some elements of d) as well, inasmuch as Jung thought the trip to the depths was justifiable only to the extent that one produced something of value to the community.¹⁰⁹⁵

¹⁰⁹¹ RB, 330.

¹⁰⁹² RB, 331.

¹⁰⁹³ RB, 332.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine*, 586-90.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See also Shamdasani, 'Introduction,' in RB, 52.

On the following night (17 January 1914), the 'I' ended up in a kitchen, where he sat down, browsing through Thomas and conversing with the cook. A group of dead Anabaptists showed up, who were on their way to Jerusalem to pray. Jung's 'I' asked them to take him along. They replied that they could not because he still had a body. Speaking for the group, Ezekiel, one of the Anabaptists, told the 'I' that they could not find peace, though they had died as true believers. They felt there was something important that they had not lived. The conversation was then brought to an abrupt end as Ezekiel reached towards the 'I' and told him, with glowing eyes, that he had not lived his animal.¹⁰⁹⁶ The scene upset the cook, who thought the 'I' was crazy. The police showed up and took the 'I' into a madhouse, where he was given a quick interview and told the prognosis was pretty bad. He was then taken into the ward and told to get into bed. In the second layer, the narrator kept meditating on the imitation of Christ. He entrusted himself to the 'mercy of God.' He felt that he was overtaken by chaos and by the figures of the dead, whose 'hordes people the land of the soul.'¹⁰⁹⁷ He argued that one needed to accept the animal in oneself, as well as the lament of the dead, who did not live their animal: 'Not one title of the Christian law is abrogated, but instead we are adding a new one: accepting the lament of the dead.'¹⁰⁹⁸ To accept the lament of the dead was to accept to perform a work in secret on their behalf.¹⁰⁹⁹ If one did not do this, then one succumbed to temptation, for 'what we call temptation is the demand of the dead who passed away prematurely and incomplete through the guilt of the good and of the law.'¹¹⁰⁰

In a further chapter (27 January 1914), the 'I' encountered Philemon, who taught him magic. In the second layer, Jung offered the following definition of magic:

The practice of magic consists in making what is not understood understandable in an incomprehensible manner. The magical way is not arbitrary, since that would be understandable, but it arises from incomprehensible grounds.¹¹⁰¹

It was magic, or otherwise put, the symbolic, which allowed him to 'hold together what Christ has kept apart in himself.'¹¹⁰² The attempt to bring the opposites together was then

¹⁰⁹⁶ RB, 335.

¹⁰⁹⁷ RB, 341.

¹⁰⁹⁸ RB, 345. The quote is from the *Draft*. It is repeated, with a slight alteration on p. 406 (also from the *Draft*): 'Hence nothing has been removed from the Gospel, but only added to it.'

¹⁰⁹⁹ RB, 433.

¹¹⁰⁰ RB, 346. Later in the *Red Book*, the soul says: 'I believe the dead will soon become extinct.' (p. 432). In the second layer, Jung noted: 'Through drawing the darkness from my beyond over into the day, I emptied the beyond. Therefore the demands of the dead disappeared, as they were satisfied.'

¹¹⁰¹ RB, 404.

humorously represented in a scene where the 'I' asked his serpent soul to bring help from the beyond. The serpent obliged, carrying up the Trinity and all of heaven, as well as Satan, who had to be pulled up somewhat forcefully, unhappy at the extraction.¹¹⁰³ What followed was a conversation between Satan and the 'I,' while the Trinity waited silently in the background. Satan expressed his disagreement with the 'I's' innovation, thinking that it would bring life to a standstill. The 'I' replied that the trinity appeared to not be bothered by this. Satan then quipped that the Trinity was so irrational that one could never trust its reactions. He counselled the 'I' to reverse the process, and to allow him to keep things moving, by doing what he knew best: creating disunity and divisiveness.¹¹⁰⁴

In a further fantasy (11 February 1914), the 'I' was forced to hang for three night and three days on a tree, suspended between heaven and earth.¹¹⁰⁵ Satan returned to jeer at him. In one of the second layer commentaries, Jung noted that he had not realized that no man could unite the Above and Below, but only a god could, the god that was born from him, Abraxas.¹¹⁰⁶ In the final fantasy of the *Liber Secundus*, the god thus presented himself, asking the 'I' to let him return to the eternal realm, and then departed. In the second layer, Jung noted: 'An opus is needed, that one can squander decades on, and do it out of necessity. I must catch up with a piece of the Middle Ages—within myself. We have only finished with the Middle Ages of others.'¹¹⁰⁷

4.7 Translating the symbols

On 22 January 1914 the soul offered the 'I' three things: the misery of war, the darkness of magic, and the gift of religion, saying that the three go together.¹¹⁰⁸ As Shamdasani has noted, in this context, religion was taken not in a merely personal sense, but in the sense of 'a

¹¹⁰² RB, 405. See also RB, 392: 'Salvation is a long road that leads through many gates. These gates are symbols.'

¹¹⁰³ RB, 420.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 443.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 454. For Jung, Abraxas represented the union of the Christian God and Satan. He saw his advent as the sign of a transformation of the image of God in the West. See Sonu Shamdasani, *C.G. Jung: A Biography in Books* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 121.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 457. See also C.G. Jung, 'The Symbolic Life,' CW 18, 280: 'From my observations I learned that the modern unconscious has a tendency to produce a psychological condition which we find, for instance, in medieval mysticism.' As Shamdasani has noted, the return to the Middle Ages was reenacted by Jung through the calligraphic convention of the *Red Book*, which was made to look like a medieval manuscript precisely because of Jung's desire to recover something that had been lost since Medieval times- in other words to return to a period before the split of science of religion, and before the triumph of the 'spirit of the times.' See Shamdasani, *A Biography in Books*, 130.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 376.

religious transformation in the world.¹¹⁰⁹ The transformation pertained to the proclamation of Jung's religion, as was announced to him by the soul later in 1922. As the soul put it: 'to no longer be a Christian is easy. But what next? For more is yet to come. Everything is waiting for you. And you? You remain silent and have nothing to say. But you should speak. Why have you received the revelation? You should not hide it.' In a later conversation, Jung's 'I' said that he accepted this, but did not know how to transform the knowledge into life. The soul replied: 'There is not much to say about this. It is not as rational as you are inclined to think. The way is symbolic.'¹¹¹⁰ One should ask at this point: what was the religion that Jung was supposed to proclaim?

The simple answer to this question is that the religion was contained in the *Red Book*. The latter had begun as a psychological experiment, and had grown to be the record of a new psychological and theological metaphysics, centred around Jung's mystical experience of God. As he wrote in one passage in *Scrutinies*, the third book of *Liber Novus*:

Through uniting with the self we reach the God. I must say this, not with reference to the opinions of the ancients or this or that authority, but because I have experienced it. It has thus happened in me. And it certainly happened in a way that I neither expected nor wished for. I wish I could say it was a deception and only too willingly would I disown this experience. But I cannot deny that it has seized me beyond all measure and steadily goes on working in me [...] I recognize the God by the unshakeableness of the experience.¹¹¹¹

Crucially, however, the experience of God through the self did not lead Jung to the promotion of an esoteric gnosis. Rather, he began using his own fantasies as the springboard for a general psychological theory of higher human development. The key to the theory was that his experiences represented a process that had a goal, and that this process could also be discovered in the religions and spiritual practices of Asia, in European Mysticism, in Alchemy, as well as buried in works of literature.

In 1915, he provided a schematic account of this process in a letter to Adolf Keller, laying particular emphasis that this was a development that had to be lived:

¹¹⁰⁹ Sonu Shamdasani, *C.G. Jung: A Biography in Books* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 209.

¹¹¹⁰ Jung, quoted in Shamdasani, 'Introduction,' 61. See also RB, 416, where the souls says to the 'I': 'Religion is still tormenting you, it seems? How many shields do you still need?' And also RB, 492, where a shade asks the 'I' to establish a church encompassing both living and dead.

¹¹¹¹ RB, 480.

1st Stage: introversion: separation of the individual from society. This happens not without misunderstanding, because of a too strong sticking together (*zu starken Zusammenhaltung*). Hostility and hatred = war.

2nd Stage: libido in the mother: resurrection of the archaic = psychosis. Unleashing of the highest and the deepest. An almost anarchic condition, at any rate dissolution of society in the highest degree. (dismemberment motif.)

3rd Stage: hatching out. A mystical development and unification, of which I can say myself only too little, for I can only intuit it rather than think it. For we have barely experienced it so far. The dismemberment of the old is not yet accomplished. The isolation will become terrible. The beginning is given in the national isolation.¹¹¹²

In 1916, he gave a talk to the Association for Analytical Psychology, in which he attempted to further translate this development into the language of psychology. The talk was entitled 'The Structure of the Unconscious' and it was Jung's first attempt to give an account of the whole process of higher development, which he termed individuation.¹¹¹³ In it, Jung distinguished between two layers of the unconscious: a personal one, which contained elements of the individual's personal life, which were either repressed or had not yet reached the threshold of consciousness, and a collective psyche that contained 'primordial images.'¹¹¹⁴ As an example of such a primordial image, he offered an idea taken from one of Alphonse Maeder's schizophrenic patients, namely that the world was his picture book. He noted that this was the same idea as that expressed by Schopenhauer in his conception of the world as composed of will and representation. The crucial difference between the two, however, was that Schopenhauer had raised this primordial image to the level of an abstract notion, thereby giving it universal validity.¹¹¹⁵ This example shows, above all, Jung's intense preoccupation with drawing universally valid conclusions from his experience of the depths. It was such an intellectual process of abstraction that separated a poor psychotic's fantasy from the work of a

¹¹¹² C.G. Jung to Adolf Keller, 5. November 1915, in Jehle-Wildberger, *C.G. Jung und Adolf Keller*, 45.

¹¹¹³ The paper was first published in Flournoy's *Archives de psychologie*. It appeared in English with the title 'The Conception of the Unconscious.' See C.G. Jung, *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*, ed. and trans. Constance E. Long, 2nd edition (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1920), 444-474. It was later re-worked by Jung in 1928, and re-issued with the title 'The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious.' See CW 7, 123.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 448.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 447-48.

towering philosopher, even though both essentially drank from the same well. The distinction, of course, also had connotations for Jung's own experiment.

As it was, there was also more that distinguished Jung's personal journey from that of the mad person. As Jung noted, when someone underwent analysis, they began assimilating into consciousness the elements of the personal unconscious as well as parts of the collective psyche. This resulted in an enlargement of personality, but the addition of collective elements also resulted in a peculiar state of superiority or inferiority, which he termed 'God-Almightiness.' If one went further with the analysis, one reached a state wherein fantasy became unshackled.¹¹¹⁶

To reach this state, one had to first dissolve the *persona*, which was that part of the collective psyche that was erroneously thought to be individual: '*a mask which simulates individuality.*'¹¹¹⁷ The dissolution of the *persona* meant also the concomitant dissolving of the personal into the collective. One was left in a state of unfettered fantasy, which was difficult to bear and similar to madness, though the difference was that this state was consciously induced.¹¹¹⁸ From this point onwards, three possibilities presented themselves: one could attempt to restore the *persona*, but this was not likely to be successful, as there was no way to withdraw libido from the unconscious, once it was activated. Secondly, one could allow oneself to be absorbed into the collective psyche. This option, if taken, could have disastrous consequences, because it led to a complete loss of individuality and freedom. The third option was to strive for a balance between the two and to try to create a synthesis between the personal and the collective. This was termed individuation. Individuation was neither fully rational, nor fully conscious. As he put it, 'it is, therefore, to some extent impossible to achieve individuation by means of conscious intention; for conscious intention leads to a conscious attitude, which excludes everything that "does not suit."¹¹¹⁹ The synthesis that was needed could only be accomplished by a hermeneutics of the symbol that was presented in the fantasy. Such a hermeneutics involved adding analogies, both subjective ones, given by the patient himself, as well as objective ones, supplied by the analyst 'out of his general knowledge.'¹¹²⁰ What then resulted was a 'many-sided picture' that eventually revealed the individual life-line. As Jung noted, this hermeneutical procedure could not be scientifically

¹¹¹⁶ Jung regarded fantasy as 'nothing else but the functioning of the collective psyche.' *Ibid.*, 458.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 457.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 466.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.

validated, but only pragmatically, as it revealed its validity by supplying a result that had value for life.

In 1921, Jung returned to the issue of the possible uses of primordial images in his *Psychological Types*. In it he wrote that there were four possible uses of such images that were brought up by the soul:

The *artistic* is the foremost possibility for their application, in so far as such a means of expression lies in one's power; a second possibility is *philosophical speculation*; a third is the *quasi-religious*, which leads to heresies and the founding of sects; there remains the fourth possibility of employing the forces contained in the images in every form of licentiousness.¹¹²¹

These four possibilities were not meant to be exhaustive, as there was also at least one more possibility that he had hinted at earlier in the text.¹¹²² This was the *genuinely religious*. As Jung expressed it, 'wherever we can observe a religion at its birth, we see how even the figures of his doctrine flow into the founder as revelations, *i.e.* as concretizations of his unconscious phantasy.'¹¹²³ If such concretizations were generally accepted (as was the case with Christ and other religious founders), they turned into 'stereotyped symbolical ideas'—which was Jung's way of referring to dogmas. In his view, religions offered such 'stereotyped symbolical ideas' that expressed 'the stages of unconscious processes in a typical and universally binding form.'¹¹²⁴ Whenever such symbolical maps got established, as was the case with 'every completed religious form,' the individual's unconscious fantasy was thereby paralysed and even violently suppressed. Jung's example of such suppression was the treatment of Gnosticism in early Christianity, as well the way in which early anchorites like St. Anthony dealt with the devil ('the voice of the anchorite's own unconscious'): by refusing to engage with him, even when he appeared to be speaking the truth.¹¹²⁵

The problem with the symbolic stereotypes of religion is that they got old: 'mankind is constantly inclined to forget that what was once good does not remain good eternally.'¹¹²⁶ For

¹¹²¹ C.G. Jung, *Psychological Types or The Psychology of Individuation*. trans. H.G. Baynes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1946), 311-12.

¹¹²² Given the topic of the book, it's not unlikely that Jung patterned this fourfold division on the four psychological functions: intuition, thinking, feeling, and sensation. The 'fifth way' (religious or psychological) would then correspond to the harmonious functioning of all four.

¹¹²³ *Ibid.*, 70

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 70-74.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

Jung, this dictum applied both the individual and to society. To the latter corresponded a 'general attitude,' which Jung also termed a religion. The 'general attitude' was not the same as the dogmas mentioned earlier, but rather an unconscious orientation developed as a result of their wider acceptance. This general attitude was an adaptation to inner and outer experience, and one which could not be simply eliminated by conscious rejection, even though such rejection was itself a symptom that a new attitude was necessary or perhaps already emerging. For Jung, the depreciation of Christianity since the time of the French Revolution disclosed precisely such a situation. But the acquisition of a new general attitude was also one 'of the most painful moments in the world's history.'¹¹²⁷

In *Types* (and especially in chapter 5), Jung tried to detail the process whereby a new psychological attitude was developed by the individual. The assumption seemed to be that the individual process also had repercussions on the collective or that it disclosed as well a general collective development. As was typical for Jung, the picture was complicated by the fact that he appeared to be running multiple projects at once: a description of psychological types, an account of individuation, an attempt to understand the psychological nature of religion, as well as, the transformation of religion in the West, the relationship between Eastern and Western spirituality, the nature of symbolism, the cultural status of psychology, the relationship between visionary experience and various cultural forms. As noted by James Heisig, there were at least four major projects in the *Types*, with respect to 'religion':

(1) to redefine *religion* in psychological terms; (2) to evaluate psychologically what is called "religion" in ordinary language (i.e. the major religious traditions: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc.); (3) to discourage all forms of "religion" that are psychologically damaging; and thereby (4) to understand the nature and contents of the unconscious mind from which all "religious" phenomena spring.¹¹²⁸

To these we can add a fifth, namely to translate the religious experience of the *Red Book* into the language of psychology. At any rate, the text of *Types* was peppered with allusions and nods to the *Red Book*, which was the shadow referent throughout the discussion.

¹¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹¹²⁸ Heisig, *Imago Dei*, 159.

From the standpoint of religious psychology, perhaps the most important remark made in all of *Types*, was that the psyche itself had a religious function.¹¹²⁹ This, as James Heisig has pointed out, was that of creating symbols that linked consciousness and the collective unconscious into a smooth functioning relationship.¹¹³⁰ Seen from the intellectual angle, symbols were only 'shaped energies, or forces.'¹¹³¹ They were means of effecting an energy-transfer between the unconscious and consciousness. But symbols were also irrational, and in order to be effective or 'living,' they had to be both aesthetically convincing, as well as impervious to intellectual analysis. The symbol, as Jung put it, 'must be the best possible expression of the existing world-philosophy, a container of meaning which cannot be surpassed.'¹¹³² Real symbols could not, of course, be consciously created, but could only come up through a dynamic process that implied a certain amount of introversion and withdrawal of libido from the 'real' world.¹¹³³

This process was evident in the fact that 'the objective of the great religions is contained in the injunction 'not of this world', which suggests the inward subjective movement of the libido into the unconscious.' It was in the unconscious that one found 'the kingdom of God,' the 'costly pearl'—these expressions were symbols for the concentration of the libido in the unconscious.¹¹³⁴ The question for Jung was what to do with the treasure, once it came out in the form of primordial images. From the psychological point of view, he argued that through a hermeneutic treatment of the images, one could succeed in developing a differentiation of personality and a renewed attitude to the world. This attitude was religious, inasmuch as it also expressed the collective unconscious, and because it helped release the latent energies of the latter.¹¹³⁵ The question that one could ask, however, is whether this procedure was in principle any different from the *genuinely religious* one stated above. Was psychological hermeneutics any different from a series of 'stereotyped symbolical ideas,' which, as it turned out, were also based (in part at least) on the founder's original revelations? Jung's answer was that the difference was only of a practical sort. Psychology, for him, did nothing more than create a new symbol that expressed an age-old mysterious process:

¹¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 392. See also C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12, 12.

¹¹³⁰ Heisig, *Imago Dei*, 36.

¹¹³¹ Jung, *Psychological Types*, 311.

¹¹³² *Ibid.*, 291. See also the distinction between sign and symbol in the chapter on 'definitions,' *ibid.*, 601.

¹¹³³ *Ibid.*, 142-46.

¹¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 271. Heisig, *op.cit.*, 35-36.

Our science is also a language of metaphor, but from the practical standpoint it succeeds better than the old mythological hypothesis, which expresses itself by concrete presentations, instead of, as we do, by conceptions.¹¹³⁶

4.8 Psychology of Religion

In 1923, Jung held a seminar in Polzeath, on the Cornish coast. The seminar was Jung's first major statement in public about the historical significance of Christianity. In Polzeath, he defined religion as 'the formulation of a universal attitude.'¹¹³⁷ The universal attitude corresponded to the 'general attitude' of the *Types*. It was conditioned by certain dogmas, and in order to be universal, it had to be assumed unconditionally as well. Christianity, Jung claimed, was no longer a valid formulation of this universal or impersonal attitude. Christianity had only truly been the universal attitude during the Middle Ages. As he put it in a striking sentence: 'The real Christianity was Medieval.'¹¹³⁸ The Christian impersonal attitude had gone to pieces because of the Renaissance and the Reformation. As opposed to the Middle Ages, when there was a general sense of connectedness amongst the people of the known world (the same religion, the same science, the same language), contemporary people lived in utter separation from each other. They lacked 'collective representations,' and had only tribal or at best national representations, as had been shown by the recent war.¹¹³⁹

People had become unconscious of a general symbol. This lack had resulted in a constellation of the collective unconscious. But a new symbol could be created: 'creative fantasy could produce a religion in ourselves, because it can produce the symbol by which we live.'¹¹⁴⁰ As he put it, 'the thing that still works in us may be a religious attitude, but it is not nowadays naturally Christian and need not be Christian everywhere.'¹¹⁴¹

In the same seminar, Jung returned to the issue of the relationship between religious experience and its institutional formalization. In one passage, he compared analytical psychology and Christianity. Both of these had a spiritual fire in them, and both sought a form.¹¹⁴² He said: 'I myself am always seeking form. Well, if we find a form that satisfies our

¹¹³⁶ Jung, *Psychological Types*, 314.

¹¹³⁷ C.G. Jung, 'Notes on the Seminar in Analytical Psychology. Conducted by Dr. C.G. Jung. Polzeath, England, July 14 - July 27, 1923. Arranged by Members of the Class,' 71.

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 79.

expectations, we are done for.¹¹⁴³ According to him, the form, or the church had taken the life out of Christianity and Jung wondered if the same fate awaited his movement. He implied that the loss of the fire by Christianity happened because the Church had produced four psychological exclusions (or repressions): 1) of nature; 2) of the animal; 3) of the inferior man; 4) of creative fantasy and freedom.¹¹⁴⁴ By contrast, analytical psychology could rekindle the fire by taking these psychological issues into account.¹¹⁴⁵

The practical implications of analytical psychology were taken up by Jung in a paper presented in 1932 to a pastoral conference in Strasbourg on the relationship between psychotherapy and the cure of souls. In it, Jung put forward an argument for why the Protestant *Seelsorger* needed to take up the study of analytical psychology.¹¹⁴⁶ He argued that neuroses were at bottom problems of a loss of meaning. They were problems that required a philosophical, spiritual or religious solution, not a medical and certainly not a reductionist one. Ultimately, they required an experiential solution, which Jung compared with Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. In a clearly Jamesian way, Jung described neurosis as 'an inner cleavage, a splitting into two (*Entzweiung*) within oneself' which could only be healed by religion or in a religious fashion.¹¹⁴⁷ As opposed to James however, he did not simply record this, but claimed that he could bring it about. Psychotherapy was the answer to the divided self.

This account made Jung declare himself surprised that whenever contemporary pastors did turn to psychology, they turned to Freud and Adler, who reduced everything to instincts, and had no concerns for the religious needs of the soul. At the same time, this problem of the loss of meaning that modern man experienced was compounded by the fact that modern people did not turn to the clergy for help, but to the psychotherapist. The latter was forced to fulfil a role that was traditionally that of the priest (and which indeed was still fulfilled by the priest in the Catholic Church). As Jung in noted in an earlier paper on the topic, as opposed to their Catholic brethren, the Protestants lacked the symbolic armamentarium of the Catholic Church.¹¹⁴⁸ Symbolic actions (such as confessions) served to channel the contents of the

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁴⁶ C.G. Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the Clergy,' CW 11, 327-347. See also C.G. Jung, *Die Beziehungen der Psychotherapie zur Seelsorge* (Zürich: Rascher & Cie. A.- G., 1932).

¹¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 340-41. Jung probably did not read James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* until after 1919. He had two copies of the book in his library: an English edition from 1919 and a French translation from 1931. See also C.G. Jung, 'Introduction to Kranefeldt,' CW 4, 327.

¹¹⁴⁸ C.G. Jung, 'Psychoanalysis and the Cure of Souls,' CW 11, 348-354.

collective unconscious. The Protestants did not have confessions—hence they had to tackle their parishioners' problems head on. They had to get involved with them in a kind of psychotherapeutic relationship for which they were ill equipped by their lack of psychological knowledge. The solution was for the pastors to take up analysis in earnest. But to do so, pastors would have to accept to take the unconscious into account. They would also have to accept that modern man had 'an ineradicable aversion for traditional opinions and inherited truths.'¹¹⁴⁹ This was in fact the reason why the moderns turned to the psychotherapist in the first place. They did not want to be simply judged and then dispatched with some bland moral advice. Instead they wanted to be understood and accepted. To do so, the psychotherapist needed to develop an attitude that allowed him 'to *feel* with that person's psyche.' Jung called this attitude 'unprejudiced objectivity,' and regarded it as the mark of the truly religious person, who understood that God sometimes took strange roads to get into a person's heart. As he made clear, only those who had accepted themselves completely could have 'unprejudiced objectivity.'¹¹⁵⁰

Jung was hinting here at his own process of individuation and also effectively telling his audience of pastors that unless they had gone through a similar process, they could not consider themselves unprejudiced, objective observers, nor truly religious. But he attenuated this suggestion by claiming that no one could actually maintain that they had fully accepted themselves, except maybe Christ, 'who sacrificed his historical bias to the god within him.'¹¹⁵¹ This description of Christ's life led Jung to a meditation on the notion of imitation, which drew on the similar one in the *Red Book*. For Jung, the true imitation of Christ was not to copy Christ's life (which had become the current 'historical bias'), but rather to live one's life as truly as Christ lived his—presumably, also according to one's own inner god. At any rate, modern people did not want to imitate anyone (even Christ), but wanted to find their own way, their own meaning—and this was what psychotherapy could help them do.¹¹⁵² These meditations of Jung show quite clearly why pastoral psychologists preferred to turn to Freud rather than Jung for psychological insight. For though Freud advocated a 'soulless psychology' (as Jung called it), he did in no way challenge the authority of the pastors or the objects they chose for sublimation and transference.¹¹⁵³ In fact, as Freud repeatedly wrote to Pfister, he envied him for having at his disposal the easier route of sublimation to religion,

¹¹⁴⁹ Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the Clergy,' 336.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 338-340.

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 341.

¹¹⁵³ Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the Clergy,' 330. (trans. mod.)

which he as an atheist did not have.¹¹⁵⁴ Jung's psychology, on the contrary, presented a radical challenge. For he not only took it upon himself to foster religious experiences, but he also suggested that the latter no longer took place in the church, but in the analytical encounter. Gravest of all, he also appeared to take God out of the hands of pastors and theologians. The men of the cloth could no longer impose a God of tradition upon their believers, since modern man wanted to find his own relationship to God (perhaps also his own God) and his individual meaning. The church no longer seemed to play any role in religious experience. Such notions fully justified Jung's confession that he was 'on the extreme left wing in the parliament of Protestant opinion.'¹¹⁵⁵

Jung took up again the relationship between the church and religious experience in his most sustained argument on the psychology of religion: his three Terry Lectures at Yale, given in 1937. At Yale, Jung elaborated on his distinction between 'the fire' and 'the form,' which he had established in *Polzeath*. As it should be clear, these distinctions were ultimately rooted in Schleiermacher's distinction between the experiential, affective core of 'religion' and its secondary translation of it into rites, creeds and institutions. Jung never referred to Schleiermacher in the Terry Lectures (or elsewhere in his writings), but in 1937, he rechristened 'the fire' as *the numinosum*, borrowing the term from Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. For Otto, the numinous referred to a specific and *sui-generis* mental state, that was irreducible, undefinable, and which resulted from the encounter with the 'wholly other.' Otto's work made frequent references to Schleiermacher, and he did not hide the fact that his theology of the numinous was worked out as part of a dialogue with Schleiermacher and other Protestant theologians.¹¹⁵⁶ Jung was attracted to the psychological specificity that the term provided, though he later rejected the 'wholly other' component, arguing that the soul could not relate to something that was 'wholly other.'¹¹⁵⁷

In this re-iteration of the definition of religion, the latter was thus nothing other than a careful consideration of the numinous, a particular attitude of the mind. The creed, on the other hand, was a codified and dogmatic form of this original experience, and its main function was

¹¹⁵⁴ It is not clear why this route was easier. Presumably because, as Freud put it, religions were the traditional, ready-made way of stifling neuroses. See *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, 16, 39-40, 63.

¹¹⁵⁵ Jung, 'Psychotherapists or the Clergy,' 347.

¹¹⁵⁶ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1917] 1936), 7, 29. There are 36 references to Schleiermacher in the text of *The Idea of the Holy*. The only other theologian with more references than that in Otto's text is Martin Luther. Otto's affinity for Schleiermacher can also be seen from the fact that early in his career he published a new edition of Schleiermacher's *On Religion*. See Sharpe, *op.cit.*, 162.

¹¹⁵⁷ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12, 11.

to act as a protection against the awe-inspiring immediate experience. As opposed to his earlier views, in the Terry Lectures Jung showed that he was more well-disposed toward the virtues of the creed. He wrote:

The practice and repetition of the original experience have become a ritual and an unchangeable institution. This does not necessarily mean lifeless petrification. On the contrary, it may prove to be a valid form of religious experience for millions of people for thousands of years, without there arising any vital necessity to change it.¹¹⁵⁸

In a similar vein, two years earlier, he had written to Jolande Jacobi:

When I treat Catholics who are suffering from neurosis I consider it my duty to lead them back to the bosom of the Church where they belong. The ultimate decisions rest with the authority of the Church for anyone who is of the Catholic faith. Psychology in this context therefore means only the removal of all those factors which hinder final submission to the authority of the Church.¹¹⁵⁹

Despite this, his usual procedure was more pragmatically minded, and he reinforced whatever beliefs seemed to work.¹¹⁶⁰ As he explained with an obvious nod to James, there was not better truth about ultimate things than the one that helped one live.¹¹⁶¹

In *Psychology and Religion*, the main task was to show the typical way in which the unconscious worked to compensate the inefficient conscious remains of a historical creed. Jung did so by discussing the dreams of physicist Wolfgang Pauli, who was a Catholic whose path however, did not seem to lead him back to the church, but rather to mandalas and symbols of the quaternity. For those who, like Pauli, went through this process, the result was a symbol, an *imago Dei* that expressed the 'life-producing sun in the depths of the unconscious,' the God within, and also ultimately the identity between man and God.¹¹⁶² As

¹¹⁵⁸C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, CW 11, 9. See also page 45: 'In itself, any scientific theory, no matter how subtle, has, I think, less value from the standpoint of psychological truth than religious dogma, for the simple reason that a theory is necessarily highly abstract and exclusively rational, whereas dogma expresses an irrational whole by means of imagery.'

¹¹⁵⁹[C.G. Jung to Jolande Jacobi, 24 June 1935], C.G. Jung, *Letters*, ed. Gerhard Adler, vol. 1 (1906-1950) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 191. In the 1925 seminar, he noted that 'Catholics today have no need of analysis because the unconscious in them is not constellated- it is kept perpetually drained through their ritual. The unconscious of a Catholic is empty.'

¹¹⁶⁰Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, 45.

¹¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 105.

¹¹⁶²*Ibid.*, 58- 61.

Jung argued, by interpreting the symbols of such images, one could understand the type of relation that stirred one from the unconscious. In his own words, religion amounted to a type of possession:

Religion is a relationship to the highest or most powerful value, be it positive or negative. The relationship is voluntary as well as involuntary, that is to say you can accept consciously, the value by which you are possessed unconsciously.¹¹⁶³

Mandalas were snapshots of such possessions: they were 'natural symbols' that functioned to bring together unions of opposites.¹¹⁶⁴ As he noted, for modern people, the deity was no longer what possessed them, it wasn't what brought together the opposites. Rather there seemed to be other symbols that were highlighted: stars, suns, precious stones, bowls filled with water, serpents coiled up, etc. For Jung, this meant that 'the place of the deity seems to be taken by the wholeness of man.'¹¹⁶⁵

4.9 Conclusion

We started this chapter with a question, namely whether Jung meant to turn his psychology into a religion. In order to answer it, we turned to an examination of Jung's writings on the topic, starting with his student Zofingia lectures, going through his medical-materialist period and then onto the *TSL*, *The Red Book*, eventually ending up with his mature conception of a psychology of the religious-making process articulated in the 1920s and in the *Terry Lectures* of 1937. We decided to stop with these lectures because, even though Jung continued to write on the psychology of religion for the rest of his life, his general conception was set by 1937 and there were no major additions or subtractions to his theory in the period that followed. We can nevertheless characterise Jung's involvement in religious psychology after 1937 as going into four principal directions: 1) he continued the project of comparatively studying the individuation process, through an analysis of Eastern texts on Buddhism, yoga, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, or the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. Some of his readings of these texts were presented in his courses at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology between 1938-1940¹¹⁶⁶; 2) he went into a more in-depth analysis of Christian (and

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹⁶⁶ See C.G. Jung, *Modern Psychology. The Process of Individuation: vol. 3 Eastern Texts/vol. 4 Exercitia Spiritualia of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Notes on Lectures given at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich, October 1938-March 1940*. 2nd Edition (n.p.: n.p., 1952). See also C.G. Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932*. ed. Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton: Princeton University

particularly Catholic) symbolism, as can be seen both from his lectures on Ignatian spirituality, but also from his lectures at *Eranos* on the symbolism of the mass and the Christian trinity.¹¹⁶⁷ Starting in 1945, Jung also engaged in a long dialogue and correspondence with Victor White, a Catholic priest who had an interest in bringing together Catholicism and Jung's psychology¹¹⁶⁸; 3) he reprised the soteriology of the *Red Book*, framing it in the language of psychology, in such works as *Aion* and *Answer to Job*¹¹⁶⁹; 4) he launched into a decades-long investigation of the psychology of alchemy and of its religious components.¹¹⁷⁰

To recapitulate the argument, we have seen how in his early days, Jung was both resolutely Christian and resolutely on the side of the possibility of religious and mystical experience. He argued mercilessly against the anti-mystical current in theology and against medical materialism. He saw these currents as symptomatic of a larger intellectual and religious malaise, which affected contemporary society and whose roots lay in the intellectual development of the West. In particular, he singled out the notion of the normal man and the mechanistic universe, both of which had succeeded in writing off the possibility of experiencing the miraculous. For Jung, the way out of the religious malaise was through the propagation and instigation of such experiences of the miraculous. And he saw psychology and psychical research as playing an important part in this work of propagation and research of the miraculous. In other words, the science of the soul was to become the new *ancilla theologiae*, which would have also presaged a new Middle Ages. In an interlude of several sections, we saw how Jung abandoned this view and adopted 'the soulless psychology' of Freud. We also examined how psychoanalysis was used by Pfister as a tool to propagate Protestantism through the practice of *Seelsorge*. As we noted, Pfister in fact introduced a new modality in the psychology of religion, by effectively changing the latter from a theory of religious experience into a practice for tweaking and channelling experience.

Press, 1996). On Jung's understanding of Eastern religions see also Harold Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985).

¹¹⁶⁷ See C.G. Jung, 'A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity,' CW 11, 109-200. C.G. Jung, 'Transformation Symbolism in the Mass,' CW 11, 203-296.

¹¹⁶⁸ Jung's dialogue with White has been reconstructed by Ann Conrad Lammers, who also co-edited their correspondence. See Ann Conrad Lammers, *In God's Shadow: The Collaboration of Victor White and C.G. Jung* (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1994). *The Jung-White Letters*. ed. by Ann Conrad Lammers and Adrian Cunningham. Consulting editor Murray Stein (London: Routledge, 2007).

¹¹⁶⁹ See C.G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, CW 9 Part II. C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, CW 11, 357-470.

¹¹⁷⁰ See C.G. Jung, *Modern Psychology. Alchemy. The Process of Individuation: vol. 1 and 2. Notes on Lectures given at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich, November 1940- July 1941*. (n.p: n.p., 1960). C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12. C.G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, CW 14.

Turning back to Jung, we looked at how he began changing his position on religion already in the *TSL*. We thus noted that despite the outwardly negative evaluation of religion, Jung was in fact outlining (in a psychologically updated fashion) the project of the Liberal Protestant science of religion, articulated by C.P. Tiele, Sabatier and Marillier. As we also pointed out, through his analyses of Miss Miller's experiences, he was in fact fusing this project with that of the religious psychology of Flournoy and James, both of whom had a huge impact on Jung's intellectual development. In the aftermath of the *TSL*, Jung had a religious transformation, which was also reflected in his psychotherapeutic approach. This transformation culminated in the mystical experience recorded in *The Red Book*. *The Red Book* became the template for Jung's later investigations in religious psychology and also signalled his return to the 'medieval' position advocated in the Zofingia lectures. In the aftermath of *The Red Book*, Jung's psychological-religious project became twofold. Firstly, he developed a theory that elaborated his experiences in universal psychological terms, which he set about using as a hermeneutical tool with which to probe the world's religious and spiritual traditions, from yoga to Zen, Taoism, Buddhism and alchemy. In other words, he redeployed the comparative religion project from the *TSL* on the basis of his new understanding of psychology. Secondly, he used his model of individuation as a matrix for psychotherapy, which became a method for treating modern man's loss of meaning, and for eliciting religious experiences.¹¹⁷¹ It was in the guise of psychotherapy that Jung's religious psychology came closest to being a religion, as he himself pointed out in 1942, when he wrote that 'we could call it [psychotherapy] religion *in statu nascendi*.'¹¹⁷² The answer to what this meant went back to Polzeath lectures and to his 1932 piece on the cure of souls: what he was doing was helping to put people in the presence of an experience, in the proximity of the 'fire' or the numinous. He expressed the same notion in a letter sent to P.W. Martin in 1945:

¹¹⁷¹ We can also in fact speak of a third way in which Jung used the experiences of *The Red Book*, namely in order to develop a personal cosmology, which was evident in Jung's late life publications on religion, such as *Aion* and *Answer to Job*. There is in fact a strong esoteric current in Jung, that runs in a straight line from the *Septem Sermones* all the way to his engagement with alchemy and his late works on Christianity. If we have left these out of the account here, it is because they are peripheral to the project of establishing a scientific psychology of religion. Jung did think that his own experience contained the seeds of the future development of religion, and he also found evidence of this development in the alchemical symbols, in the mandalas and in the images of the quaternity that popped up in the dreams and fantasies of his clients. But he always denied resolutely that he was promoting a cult or a new gnosis. For a refutation of one incarnation of the cult hypothesis see Sonu Shamdasani, *Cult Fictions: C.G. Jung and the Founding of Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1998).

¹¹⁷² Jung, 'Psychotherapy and a Philosophy of Life,' CW 16, 79.

You are quite right, the main interest of my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous. But the fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology.¹¹⁷³

Jung's mention of the 'approach to the numinous' echoed his own definition of religion given in *Psychology and Religion*. But did this make his psychology a religion? According to Jung, it did not, for he was not proposing a creed, or a dogma, but merely helping to facilitate an experience.¹¹⁷⁴ And that experience could lead just as well to individuation as well as back into the fold of Christianity or other traditional 'religious' faiths. As he himself put it in a speech given in 1937 in New York, in the aftermath of the Yale lectures: 'I am speaking just as a philosopher. People sometimes call me a religious leader. I am not that. I have no message, no mission; only an attempt to understand.'¹¹⁷⁵ Such a statement was apt to relativise his own understanding of individuation as the central process that underscored the religious experiences of humanity. In fact, as Jung made clear on occasion, he was quite clearly aware of the fact that individuation, as he conceived it, was inextricably linked with Christianity. As he put it at the end of the 1952 *Answer to Job*, individuation was 'the Christification of many.'¹¹⁷⁶ To relativise individuation was thus to take a step back from what he was saw as the promotion of a particularly Christian method. But then, we might ask, what was it that Jung was promoting? From his own perspective, he was proposing neither Christianity, nor a religion of psychology, nor even individuation, but a kind of meta-narrative about religion: a practice that claimed to be able to foment experiences of the numinous and a theoretical structure that investigated their formation. Ultimately however, this meta-narrative was based upon one of the central tenets of Jung's own Liberal Protestant conviction: the notion that the experience of the numinous was the primary element in religion and that theoretical constructs were secondary and imperfect elaborations upon it.

¹¹⁷³ C.G. Jung to P.W. Martin, 20 August 1945. C.G. Jung, *Letters I*, 377.

¹¹⁷⁴ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12, 16.

¹¹⁷⁵ C.G. Jung, 'Is Analytical Psychology a Religion,' in *C.G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*. ed. William McGuire and R.F.C. Hull. 3rd. edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 98. See also Shamdasani's comments in 'Is analytical psychology a religion?,' 542-44.

¹¹⁷⁶ C.G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, CW 11, 470.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that we need to view the psychology of religion no longer as a mere sub-discipline of psychology, but as one of a variety of attempts to start a science of religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As was shown in chapter 1, this perspective allows us to understand the continuities with earlier nineteenth century comparative religion, anthropology and history of religions, such that the sub-discipline no longer seems to appear out of the blue, but can be seen to grow out of a common trunk of post-Kantian, Liberal Protestant assumptions about the mind and the place of 'religion' within it. In addition to this intellectual positioning of the psychology of religion, my argument has sought to highlight the conceptual mechanisms that drove the sub-discipline, and the main reasons why the discipline failed to take off in the first decades of the twentieth century. As I tried to show through the examples in the following three chapters, the presuppositions and practices of the psychology of religion led its practitioners to an intellectual impasse: on the one hand, the sub-discipline dissolved 'religion' by analysing it into psychological and even physiological concepts, while on the other hand, the psychology of religion became, in the hands of some of its votaries, the proclamation of a new 'religion' or a thinly veiled theological exercise. In addition to spelling the end for the sub-discipline in the early decades of the twentieth century, this central conundrum also leads us to question whether the psychology of religion as an independent discipline is at all possible. As I have suggested, it is not—all attempts to re-found it will inevitably fall prey to the strictures that I have outlined: the psychology of religion can never be anything other than either simply psychology or a version of Liberal Protestant theology.

To recapitulate the argument, the psychology of religion was formed as both a reaction against, and a continuation of, nineteenth century projects to construct a science of religion. While the religious psychologists reacted, in part, against the perceived intellectualism of people like Max Müller and E.B. Tylor, they also continued their project of trying to uncover the psychological processes that underscored the varieties of religious phenomena. Our narrative began in chapter 1 with an in-depth examination of projects for a science of religion, drawn out of the Gifford Lectures and from the French tradition of the *science des religions*.

As we have seen, the large majority of these projects were either based on psychological conceptions of religion or pointed out that psychology had an important role to play in the understanding of religious phenomena. One could thus say that the nineteenth century sciences of religion in fact laid the groundwork for the psychology of religion, by repeatedly stating that religion was a primarily a psychological phenomenon.

We then moved on to the ways in which religious psychologists attempted to reconstruct religious experience and proceeded to examine the main concepts that drove the sub-discipline: conversion and mysticism. In the second chapter, we thus looked at how the concept of conversion was used by American psychologists as a focal point from which to describe religion. By following the implications of their methods, we argued that the very procedures they used to describe the conversion experience led them to an untenable position with regard to their object of study and, implicitly, to their discipline. This position was one whereby, on the one hand, they had to admit that if religion could ultimately be described in general psychological terms (e.g. as a series of states or as a process of transformation), then there was nothing particular about religion *qua* religion. The questions about religion were in this case questions about general psychology and about physiology. As we have seen, E.D. Starbuck in fact embraced this position later in life, when he appears to have adopted a kind of positive medical materialism. On the other hand, since religion was ultimately just a psychological phenomenon, then it followed that psychologists were the only legitimate interpreters of it. Psychology was then handed the task of forming a theology or a religion out of the raw data of experience. James Henry Leuba took it upon himself to do just that. Finally, as we have seen, conversion was given a definite blow by Pratt's observation in 1920 that the conversion which the psychologists were studying was not a natural form of experience, but one which was learned and taught by American theologians. The psychologists were thus, in his words, using 'Science to verify Theology.'

In the third chapter, we turned to an examination of mysticism and outlined a taxonomy of psychological approaches to it. Firstly, we argued that the main distinction that can be drawn among these conceptions is between those who saw mysticism in a primarily static fashion (i.e. ecstasy) and those who saw it as a process. Secondly, we pointed out that there were a number of permutations possible in both camps. Ecstasy could thus be seen as nothing more than a heightened state of affectivity, a kind of catatonic stupor, or it could be equally seen as a harking back to an earlier evolutionary form of consciousness or as a kind of super-consciousness (a prefiguration of a higher evolutionary consciousness). An equally wide

variety can be found among those who saw mysticism as process. As such, one could either take it to be a process whereby the mystic's self was gradually replaced the subconscious (as with Delacroix), or as a process of liberation from the bonds of paternal incestual attachment (as with Flournoy), or, finally, as a pathological to-and-fro between normality and an evolutionary earlier mental stage (as with Janet).

In chapter 3, we also saw how the project for a psychology of religion was moved away from the affective primacy of the Americans and into an account that focused more on the type of consciousness (or subconsciousness) and on the intellectual elements that obtained in religious experience. While Flournoy maintained his adherence to the mantra of affective primacy, Janet's model was based on a comprehensive account of the whole mental conduct involved in the production of mystical experiences. This included both feeling as well as thoughts, even if of a disorganised character. At the same time, Delacroix's narrative was expressly framed as a criticism of the de-intellectualization of religious experience in the work of the Americans and as a re-visitation and psychological update of the Tiele-Marillier model. However, the introduction of the intellect back into religious experience could do but little to stave off the dissolving effect of psychological description. This was because the dissolving effect was not due to the supposedly affective essence of religion, but rather, because the translation of religion into the secular language of psychology effectively erased the distinction between the two domains. Janet was one of the few psychologists to notice this dissolving action, which he also celebrated, since he thought that psychotherapy could fully take over the stimulating function of religion.

In the final chapter, we saw how Jung's psychology of religion was a synthesis between the comparative science of religion outlined in chapter 1 and some of the earlier religious psychologies analysed in chapters 2 and 3. Jung's project was first of all a psychological analysis of what he regarded as his own, life-defining religious experience—a process that he began already in *The Red Book*. Secondly, Jung used the template of his experience as the basis for a psychology of the religious making process, which was to be accomplished through a wide-ranging comparative analysis of religious traditions, ranging from alchemy to yoga. Thirdly, through the practice of psychotherapy, Jung tried to bring his clients to similar kinds of religious experiences. Starting from the notion that neurosis was a variety of the Jamesian divided self, Jung argued that psychotherapy was a method that brought about its healing and that such healing was much like a conversion. In this respect, psychotherapy performed the same function that religion performed for James.

Ultimately, even though its methods were self defeating, the psychology of religion was nevertheless successful in opening up a field of new practices and new ontologies, both via Jung and Pfister, as well as through its partial absorption back into the field of comparative religion.¹¹⁷⁷ This latter process was carried forward by several factors: firstly, the early textbooks on the scientific study of religion (such as Jordan's *Comparative Religion* or Morris Jastrow's *The Study of Religion*) both included the psychology of religion in their survey and considered it a legitimate field of study within the broader science of religion.¹¹⁷⁸ Despite this free publicity, in fact, the ascendance of the phenomenological science of religion in the 1920s ensured that only certain bits of the religious psychology would be taken up. As such, while the statistical analyses of Starbuck and Leuba were quickly discarded by phenomenologists like Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950) for their purely 'exterior,' quantifying method, the works of James and Delacroix were more easily assimilable to a point of view that tried to enter into and re-create the stream of thought of historical religious characters.¹¹⁷⁹ Thirdly, and in a sense most importantly, Delacroix's notion of a 'particular mental state' which underscored mystical experiences was instrumental in the formation of Mircea Eliade's understanding of religion as an irreducible phenomenon.¹¹⁸⁰ This is perhaps not without importance, given the primary role played by Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) in the field of comparative religion in the second half of the twentieth century. In his later

¹¹⁷⁷ One should also note that there were attempts to re-boost the the psychology of religion in the second half of the twentieth century. Such attempts continue even today. However, the majority of these later projects bear little connection with the narrative examined here. For summaries of contemporary projects see Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic & Contemporary*.

¹¹⁷⁸ Jordan, *Comparative Religion*, 284-93. Jastrow, *The Study of Religion*, 273-96. Also Pinard de la Boullaye, *L'Étude comparée des religions. vol.1: Son histoire dans le monde occidental* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1922).

¹¹⁷⁹ See Gerardus van der Leeuw, 'Some Recent Achievements of Psychological Research and their Application to History, in particular the History of Religion' [1926], in *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods and Theories of Research*, vol.1, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 399-406. Delacroix's work was also taken up by Evelyn Underhill, even though she rejected his psychological interpretation. See Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. 3rd edition (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1912), ix, 17, et *passim*. I have also found one historian of religion who was a direct continuator of the psychologists of mysticism. This was Ernst Arberman (1891-1959), a professor of the history of religion at the University of Stockholm. In the late 30s, Arberman began work on a massive project aimed at offering an almost exhaustive account (both physiological and psychological, as well as historical and phenomenological) of the phenomena of ecstasy in the world's religions. He never finished it, but three volumes were edited by one of his students. See Ernst Arberman, *Ecstasy or Religious Trance in the Experience of Ecstasies and from the Psychological Point of View*. 3 vols. (Stockholm: Bokförlaget, 1963-70). At the same time, it should be noted that James' book *Varieties of Religious Experience* has had an enormous popularity among twentieth century historians of religions. In 1965 for example, E.R. Dodds claimed in the first of four lectures delivered in Belfast that 'these are lectures on religious experience in the Jamesian sense.' See E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1965] 2000).

¹¹⁸⁰ Eliade had read Delacroix's *Studies* at some point before 1927, and cited approvingly Delacroix's distinction between the essence and the manifestation of mysticism. See Mircea Eliade, 'Itinerariu Spiritual: Misticismul,' in *Itinerariu Spritiual: Scrieri de tinerețe*, ed. Mircea Handoca (București: Humanitas, 2003), 344.

theorizations on the role and meaning of the history of religion, Eliade developed his own brand of *sui generis* psychology, by introducing notions such as 'metapsychoanalysis' or the 'transconscious.'¹¹⁸¹ This *sui generis* psychology was, in part, an attempt to respond to the challenge of Jungian psychology, which, in its comparative reach tended to analyse the same symbols and myths as his own history of religion—hence threatening the postulated independence and irreducibility of religion. By introducing a 'transconscious' that corresponded to the transcendent potentialities of religious and mystical experience, Eliade was attempting to reinforce the ramparts surrounding his own discipline.¹¹⁸² And in doing so, he was drawing on the long tradition established by Müller and Tiele, and subsequently continued by Delacroix: that of using psychological terms in order to advance a theological position.

¹¹⁸¹ See Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. trans. Philip Mairet. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), 35.

¹¹⁸² On the transconscious see Mac Linscott Ricketts, 'The Nature and Extent of Eliade's "Jungianism,"' *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* XXV, 2 (1970), 225-28.

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