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**Original citation:**

Francis, Leslie J., Littler, Keith and Robbins, Mandy. (2012) Mystical orientation and the perceiving process : a study among Anglican clergymen. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, Vol.15 (No.9). pp. 945-953.

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/13674676.2012.676257>

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Mystical orientation and the perceiving process: a study among Anglican clergymen

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**Abstract**

This study examines the hypothesised link between mystical orientation and the perceiving process within the Jungian model of psychological type. Data were provided by 232 Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales who completed both the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale and the Francis Psychological Type Scales. The data demonstrated that intuitive types recorded significantly higher scores than sensing types on the index of mystical orientation, supporting the hypothesis based on Ross' thesis.

*Keywords:* Psychological type, mysticism, Francis Psychological Type Scales, psychology, religion, Anglican clergy.

### Introduction

From the early work of William James, the psychology of religion has shown both a theoretical and an empirical interest in mysticism (see James, 1982). Two theoretical discussions of mysticism in particular have led to the development of well-calibrated measures. The theoretical framework proposed by Stace (1960) formed the basis for the Hood Mysticism Scale (Hood, 1975). The theoretical framework proposed by Happold (1963) formed the basis for the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale (Francis & Louden, 2000a). The present study is set within the framework proposed by Happold.

Happold's definition of mysticism embraces seven key characteristics, the first four of which were taken directly from James (1982): ineffability, noesis, transiency, passivity, consciousness of the oneness of everything, sense of timelessness, and true ego. The Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale (MOS) identified three indicators of each of these seven characteristics in order to construct a 21-item measure. In their foundation paper, Francis and Louden (2000a) reported an alpha coefficient of internal consistency reliability of .94 for this instrument (Cronbach, 1951).

*Ineffability* is a negative description emphasising the private or incommunicable quality of mystical experience. According to James (1982, p. 380), those who have this kind of experience report that 'it defies expression, that no adequate report of its content can be given in words'. The MOS accesses ineffability with items like 'experiencing something I could not put into words'.

*Noesis* emphasises how mystical experiences carry states of insight into levels of truth inaccessible to the discursive intellect. According to James (1982, pp. 380-381), those who have this kind of experiences regard them 'to be also states of knowledge ... They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they

remain.’ The MOS accesses noesis with items like ‘knowing I was surrounded by a presence’.

*Transiency* emphasises how mystical experience is brief, inconstant, and intermittent. According to James (1982, p.381), mystical states do not endure for long though they may recur ‘and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as an inner richness and importance.’ The MOS accesses transiency with items like, ‘the passing moments of divine revelation’.

*Passivity* emphasises both the experience of being controlled by a superior power, and the undeserved, gratuitous nature of the mystical experience. According to James (1982, p. 381), mystical states are ‘not passive interruptions, an invasion of the subject’s inner life with no residual recollection of significance, and this distinguishes them from phenomenon like prophetic speech, automatic writing, and mediumistic trance’. The MOS accesses passivity with items like, ‘being grasped by a power beyond my control’.

*Consciousness of the oneness of everything* emphasises how mystical experience conveys the sense in which existence is perceived as a unity. According to Happold (1963, p.47), although it may be expressed in different ways by Hindu, Sufi and Christian contemplatives, the resolution of the dilemma of duality through this sense of the oneness of everything ‘is at the heart of the most highly developed mystical consciousness’. The MOS accesses consciousness of the oneness of everything with items like, ‘sensing the unity of all things’.

*Sense of timelessness* emphasises how mystical experiences appear to have a timeless quality and to occupy an entirely different dimension from that of any known sense of time and to be wholly unrelated to anything that can be measured by what is known as clock-time. According to Happold (1963, p.48), ‘the mystic feels himself to be in a dimension where time

is not, where “all is always now”.’ The MOS accesses sense of timelessness with items like, ‘being conscious only of timelessness and eternity’.

*True ego* emphasises how mystical experience speaks to the deep, the true inner-self, and how such experience addresses the soul or the inner spirit. According to Happold (1963, p.48) mystical experience gives rise to ‘the conviction that the familiar phenomenal *ego* is not the real *I*.’ The MOS accesses this notion of the true ego with items like, ‘feeling my everyday self absorbed in the depths of being’.

The Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale has now been used in a range of studies, including work reported by Bourke, Francis and Robbins (2004), Francis, Village, Robbins, and Ineson (2007), Edwards and Lewis (2008a, 2008b), Francis, Littler, and Robbins (in press), and Francis, Robbins, and Cargas (in press). A shorter instrument, derived from the MOS, the Short Index of Mystical Orientation (SIMO) was proposed by Francis and Loudon (2004) and has been used by Francis and Thomas (1996), Francis and Loudon (2000b), and Francis (2002).

One set of studies has set out to explore the connection between mystical orientation (as measured by MOS and SIMO) and individual differences in personality (as defined by Jungian psychological type theory). This set of studies was motivated by Christopher Ross’ thesis regarding the centrality of the perceiving process (the sensing function and the intuitive function) in shaping individual differences in religious experience, expression and belief. (Ross, 1992).

In his initial empirical examinations of this thesis, Ross began to chart the distinctive profiles of religiosity among sensing types and among intuitive types. For example, Ross, Weiss and Jackson (1996) found intuitives contrasted to sensors in terms of greater comfort with regard to complexity of religious belief, while sensors tended to be more definite in regard to what counted as religious to them. Sensors evidenced firmer boundaries between

what was secular and what was sacred. Intuitives showed a more welcoming attitude toward religious change, viewing new insights as essential for a healthy religious life and narrow minded religion as a significant problem. Sensing types by contrast saw religious change as a problem, and change in personal faith as an indication of weakness. Ross and Jackson (1993) concluded in their study of Catholics that the pattern of responses to individual items suggested that religion functioned in different ways for sensing and for intuitive types. According to this study religion tended to function as a guide to right living for sensors, and as a source of insight for intuitives. Studies of college students by Burriss and Ross (1996) confirmed the relevance of the perceiving preference of sensing or intuition for orientation to religion, even among less religiously committed groups.

In a subsequent paper, Francis and Ross (1997, p.95) set out to examine differences between sensing types and intuitive types with regard to preferences in Christian spirituality, and to test the following two specific hypotheses.

As consistent with a preference for more traditional patterns of worship and more conservative forms of belief, it is hypothesised that sensors will display a greater preference for traditional expressions of Christian spirituality (like church attendance and personal prayer) in comparison with intuitives, while intuitives will display a greater openness to the experiential aspects of spirituality (like witnessing a fine sunset or being inspired by a star filled sky) in comparison with sensors (Francis and Ross, 1997:95).

Ross' general theory that the perceiving process (sensing or intuition) plays a central role in predicting preferred ways of being religious or expressing religiosity, together with the findings presented by Francis and Ross (1997) that intuitives show a higher appreciation than sensors of experiential spirituality, leads to the clear hypothesis that intuitives will record higher scores than sensors on the indices of mystical orientation.

So far four studies have examined the association between scores recorded on the MOS or the SIMO and individual differences recorded on the Jungian perceiving process. Two of these studies employed the SIMO. Francis and Louden (2000b) administered the SIMO together with the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey, 1998) to a sample of 100 student and adult churchgoers. These data supported Ross' hypothesis with significantly higher scores of mystical orientation reported among intuitive types ( $M = 30.6$ ,  $SD = 7.5$ ) than among sensing types ( $M = 25.6$ ,  $SD = 8.7$ ). Francis (2002) administered the SIMO together with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) to a sample of 543 participants attending workshops concerned with personality and spirituality. These data did not support Ross' hypothesis with no significant differences reported between intuitive types ( $M = 30.2$ ,  $SD = 7.6$ ) and sensing types ( $M = 29.0$ ,  $SD = 7.7$ ).

The other two studies employed the MOS. Francis, Village, Robbins, and Ineson (2007) administered the MOS together with the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005) to a sample of 318 guests who had stayed at a Benedictine Abbey. These data supported Ross' hypothesis with significantly higher scores of mystical orientation reported among intuitive types ( $M = 77.9$ ,  $SD = 17.4$ ) than among sensing types ( $M = 71.4$ ,  $SD = 18.3$ ). Francis, Robbins, and Cargas (in press) administered the MOS together with the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005) to a sample of 580 participants from a range of religious and spiritual traditions attending the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, 2004. Again these data supported Ross' hypothesis with significantly higher scores of mystical experience reported among intuitive types ( $M = 78.7$ ,  $SD = 18.5$ ) than among sensing types ( $M = 71.3$ ,  $SD = 15.8$ ).

The aim of the present study is to build on this research tradition by adding a fourth study to the series in order to discover whether there may be further support for the aberrant finding reported by Francis (2002) or further support for the growing consensus in favour of



Ross' thesis as evidence by Francis and Louden (2000b), Francis, Village, Robbins, and Ineson (2007) and Francis, Robbins, and Cargas (in press).

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

A questionnaire was mailed to all full-time stipendiary parochial clergy serving in the Church in Wales. A total of 593 questionnaires were successfully delivered, and 391 were returned, generating a response rate of 66%.

### **Measures**

*Mystical orientation* was assessed by the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale (MOS: Francis & Louden, 2000a). This is a 21-item measure containing three items to assess each of the seven key characteristics of mysticism identified by Happold (1963): ineffability, noesis, transiency, passivity, consciousness of the oneness of everything, sense of timelessness, and true ego. Respondents were asked to assess 'how important each experience is to your own faith', using a five-point scale anchored by: 1 = low importance, 3 = medium importance, 5 = high importance.

*Psychological type* was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005). This 40-item instrument comprises four sets of 10 forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving). Recent studies have demonstrated this instrument to function well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis, Craig, and Hall (2008) reported alpha coefficients of .83 for the EI scale, .76 for the SN scale, .73 for the TF scale, and .79 for the JP scale.

### **Sample**

The present analysis is based on the 232 male respondents who provided full data on the relevant scales used in the study. The sample comprised 22 clergy under the age of forty, 43 in their forties, 109 in their fifties, 56 in their sixties, and 2 in their seventies.

### **Data analysis**

The data were analysed by the SPSS package, using the correlation, reliability and t-test routines. The scientific literature concerned with psychological type has developed a highly distinctive way of presenting type-related data. The conventional format of 'type tables' has been employed in the present paper to allow the findings of this study to be located easily alongside other relevant studies in the literature.

### **Results**

The first steps in data analysis concerned an examination of the internal consistency reliability of the Francis Psychological Type Scales. Satisfactory alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951) were reported for all four scales: EI, .81; SN, .73; TF, .72; JP, .81.

The type distribution of the sample of 232 Anglican clergymen is presented in table 1 in the conventional format. In this study, the participants displayed preferences for

-Insert table 1 here –

introversion (69%) over extraversion (31%), for sensing (64%) over intuition (36%), for feeling (54%) over thinking (46%), and for judging (78%) over perceiving (22%). The most frequently occurring types were ISFJ (21%) and ISTJ (19%).

The second step in the data analysis comprised an evaluation of the measure of mystical orientation. Table 2 presents the 21 items of the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale, together with the item rest-of-test correlations and the proportions of the

- insert table 2 about here -

respondents who rated the importance of the experience for their own faith a four or a five on the five-point scale. The scale achieved the satisfactory alpha coefficient of .92. All the 21

items contributed positively to the homogeneity of the scale, with item rest-of-test correlations ranging between .39 and .71. These data supported Ross' hypothesis with significantly higher scores of mystical orientation reported among intuitive types ( $M = 65.1$ ,  $SD = 15.8$ ) than among sensing types ( $M = 59.8$ ,  $SD = 15.1$ ).

Table 3 also demonstrates that the perceiving process is not the only aspect of

-insert table 3 about here-

psychological type associated with significant differences in mystical orientation scores.

Given the complex interactions within the component parts of psychological type theory,

table 4 attempts to clarify the situation by examining the mean scores of mystical orientation

-insert table 4 about here-

according to the eight dominant and auxiliary pairs. In the table mystical orientation scores have been ranked in descending order. What is revealing in this table is that the four highest scores all include intuition (as either dominant or auxiliary) and the four lowest scores all include sensing (as either dominant or auxiliary).

### **Conclusion**

The present study has built on previous research by means of careful and deliberate replication, in order to test the empirical grounds for Ross' thesis that individual differences in mysticism are related to the Jungian perceiving process (sensing and intuition). Now in three studies the measures have been held constant (the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale and the Francis Psychological Type Scales) and the samples have been varied to include 318 guests who had stayed at a Benedictine Abbey (representing Christians from a range of denominations), 580 participants attending the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions (representing a wide range of spiritual and religious traditions), and 232 Anglican clergymen (representing religious professionals within one tradition). Data from all three studies confirmed Ross' thesis by demonstrating significantly higher mystical orientation

scores among intuitive types than among sensing types. Two main conclusions emerge from these studies that are of wider significance within the empirical psychology of religion.

The first conclusion concerns the conceptualisation and measurement of the construct of mystical orientation. These three studies, together with other studies that have used the same instrument (Francis & Loudon, 2000a; Bourke, Francis, & Robbins, 2004; Edwards & Lewis, 2008a, 2008b), have demonstrated the usefulness of the Mystical Orientation Scale (MOS) both in the sense of high internal consistency reliability and in the sense of generating stable findings over different studies. This instrument can be commended for further use.

The second conclusion concerns the contribution made to the empirical psychology of religion by Jungian psychological type theory. These three studies, together with the wider developing literature reviewed by Francis (2009) and by Ross (2011), have demonstrated that psychological type theory is capable of generating useful, insightful and empirically testable theories relevant to illuminating individual differences in religious experience, religious expression, and religious belief.

This study has also demonstrated the contribution that can be made to the psychology of religion through patient replication and extension of previous work. Further studies testing the present findings among different samples should be welcomed.

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Table 1

*Type distribution for Anglican clergymen in Wales*

<b>The Sixteen Complete Types</b>				<b>Dichotomous Preferences</b>	
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 45 (19.4%) +++++	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 48 (20.7%) +++++	INFJ <i>n</i> = 13 (5.6%) +++++	INTJ <i>n</i> = 21 (9.1%) +++++	E <i>n</i> = 72 (31.0%)	I <i>n</i> = 160 (69.0%)
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	S <i>n</i> = 149 (64.2%)	N <i>n</i> = 83 (35.8%)
+++++	+++++	+	++++	T <i>n</i> = 106 (45.7%)	F <i>n</i> = 126 (54.3%)
++++	+++++			J <i>n</i> = 180 (77.6%)	P <i>n</i> = 52 (22.4%)
	+			<b>Pairs and Temperaments</b>	
ISTP <i>n</i> = 3 (1.3%) +	ISFP <i>n</i> = 7 (3.0%) +++	INFP <i>n</i> = 15 (6.5%) +++++	INTP <i>n</i> = 8 (3.4%) +++	IJ <i>n</i> = 127 (54.7%)	IP <i>n</i> = 33 (14.2%)
		++		EP <i>n</i> = 19 (8.2%)	EJ <i>n</i> = 53 (22.8%)
ESTP <i>n</i> = 1 (0.4%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 10 (4.3%) ++++	ENFP <i>n</i> = 5 (2.2%) ++	ENTP <i>n</i> = 3 (1.3%) +	ST <i>n</i> = 67 (28.9%)	SF <i>n</i> = 82 (35.3%)
				NF <i>n</i> = 44 (19.0%)	NT <i>n</i> = 39 (16.8%)
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 18 (7.8%) +++++	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 17 (7.3%) +++++	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 11 (4.7%) +++++	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 7 (3.0%) +++	SJ <i>n</i> = 128 (55.2%)	SP <i>n</i> = 21 (9.1%)
++++	++++	++++	++++	NP <i>n</i> = 31 (13.4%)	NJ <i>n</i> = 52 (22.4%)
+++	++			TJ <i>n</i> = 91 (39.2%)	TP <i>n</i> = 15 (6.5%)
				FP <i>n</i> = 37 (15.9%)	FJ <i>n</i> = 89 (38.4%)
				IN <i>n</i> = 57 (24.6%)	EN <i>n</i> = 26 (11.2%)
				IS <i>n</i> = 103 (44.4%)	ES <i>n</i> = 46 (19.8%)
				ET <i>n</i> = 29 (12.5%)	EF <i>n</i> = 43 (18.5%)
				IF <i>n</i> = 83 (35.8%)	IT <i>n</i> = 77 (33.2%)

<b>Jungian Types (E)</b>			<b>Jungian Types (I)</b>			<b>Dominant Types</b>			<i>Anglican clergymen in Wales</i>
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	
E-TJ	25	10.8	I-TP	11	4.7	Dt.T	36	15.5	
E-FJ	28	12.1	I-FP	22	9.5	Dt.F	50	21.6	
ES-P	11	4.7	IS-J	93	40.1	Dt.S	104	44.8	
EN-P	8	3.4	IN-J	34	14.7	Dt.N	42	18.1	

Note: N = 232

+ = 1% of N



Table 2

*Mystical Orientation Scales: item rest of scale correlations and item endorsement*

	<i>r</i>	agree %
Experiencing something I could not put into words	.51	50
Feeling moved by a power beyond description	.60	59
Being aware of more than I could ever describe	.62	62
Sensing God in the beauty of nature	.39	66
Knowing I was surrounded by a presence	.67	47
Hearing God speak	.41	58
Brief glimpses into the heart of things	.62	40
Transient visions of the transcendental	.56	18
Passing movements of divine revelation	.57	36
Being overwhelmed by a sense of wonder	.64	63
Being in a state of mystery outside my body	.52	8
Being grasped by a power beyond my control	.54	21
Feeling at one with the universe	.53	32
Being absorbed within the divine	.67	41
Merging of the past, present and future	.58	20
Feeling at one with all living beings	.53	29
Losing my everyday self in greater being	.71	32
Being conscious only of timelessness and eternity	.58	23
Feeling my everyday self absorbed in the depths of being	.71	21
Losing a sense of time, place and person	.62	16
Sensing the unity in all things	.58	27

Table 3

*Mean mystical orientation scores by dichotomous preferences*

Type	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> <
Extraversion	72	62.0	14.5		
Introversion	160	61.5	16.0	0.2	NS
Sensing	149	59.8	15.1		
Intuition	83	65.1	15.8	2.6	.01
Thinking	106	61.9	17.6		
Feeling	126	61.5	13.6	0.2	NS
Judging	180	59.6	14.8		
Perceiving	52	68.8	15.8	3.8	.001

Table 4

*Mean mystical orientation scores by dominant and auxiliary preferences*

Comparisons	N	Mean	SD	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> <
Dominant thinking with auxiliary intuition	15	74.5	16.7		
Dominant feeling with auxiliary intuition	26	65.4	12.3		
Dominant intuition with auxiliary feeling	18	62.4	15.6		
Dominant intuition with auxiliary thinking	24	61.0	17.1		
Dominant feeling with auxiliary sensing	24	60.3	12.8		
Dominant sensing with auxiliary feeling	58	60.0	13.9		
Dominant sensing with auxiliary thinking	46	59.5	17.2		
Dominant thinking with auxiliary sensing	21	59.1	16.9	2.1	.05