Introduction to the Study of Religion

Part I

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Previously, Dr. Jones was a professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and visiting professor at Virginia Theological Seminary. He has lectured and presented seminars as an invited guest at Georgetown University, the University of Virginia, the Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan, Chengchi University in Taipei, and Harvard University's Buddhist Studies Forum. In 2004 he was awarded a Fulbright Research Grant and spent the year in Taiwan pursuing research in Chinese Buddhism, where he also delivered lectures and seminars.

His publications in East Asian religions include *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State 1660–1990* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), a co-edited volume titled *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), and several articles in scholarly journals. In the area of interreligious dialogue, he has written *The View from Mars Hill: Christianity in the Landscape of World Religions* (Cowley, 2005) and several critical articles on Buddhist-Christian dialogue. His current research interest centers on the Pure Land School of Buddhism in late imperial China.

In addition to academic pursuits, Dr. Jones is a musician who has released two music CDs with his family. He lives in Maryland with his wife Brenda, his son Trevor, and near his daughter Chenoa and grandchildren.

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Scope:

Religion is an important part of the lives of millions of people worldwide; many would say it is the most important part. Every day in every part of the globe, people meet to pray, chant, meditate, read, make offerings, worship, take communion, receive and give counseling, teach and learn, all for the purpose of deepening their understanding and commitment to their religion. They view religion and the religious life from the inside, the place where they meet and experience it.

But there is an outsider's perspective as well. Scholars, journalists, diplomats, and other professionals regularly look at religious communities and activities and bring to their observations questions that the insider might find strange, irrelevant, or even dangerous. As part of their research methods, they explicitly "bracket out" questions of the truth of religious claims and look only at the empirically observable manifestations of religion. For example, they will not wade into the question of whether or not the Bible is the revealed word of God; instead, they will focus on discovering what happens in the lives of individuals and communities as a result of accepting such a claim. Often, religious believers meet such investigations with suspicion.

In a very real way, the suspicion is justified. In this course, we will examine the academic discipline called "Religious Studies," a discipline that began and developed out of a detached or even adversarial attitude toward religion. Beginning in the 16th century, diplomats, weary of the Wars of Religion that followed the Protestant Reformation, began to think and write about religion from a new perspective, one that looked in from the outside and asked troubling questions. During the Enlightenment, various authors began to recommend that religion be studied from a scientific perspective. Beginning with the assumption that religion is a human cultural creation just as much as poetry, kinship, or dining, they set about compiling the "natural history" of religion in a way that omitted consideration of overtly religious concerns.

From this starting-point in a generalized idea of "human sciences," other disciplines emerged during the late 19th century as the "social sciences": anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Each one looked at religion from its own particular disciplinary angle and came up with ways of "explaining" religion, often in very reductionistic ways. That is, psychologists tended to reduce religion to purely psychological terms and sought to understand it exclusively from that angle, while anthropologists looked at religion as a subspecies of the broader category of "culture" and sought to explain it strictly as a cultural process. The result was a very secular set of theories regarding the origin and function of religion. While theories differed in their evaluation of religion as either good or bad for society and individuals, all agreed that religion ought to be investigated in nonreligious terms.

In the early and mid-20th century, a new set of scholars reacted against these reductionist methods and proposed a "phenomenological" approach, one that asserted that religion cannot be reduced to another frame of reference and insisted that religion be studied *as religion*, a phenomenon *sui generis* with a reality all its own. While these scholars certainly did not propose theories from within the theological framework of any existing religion, they still felt it important to respect religion's integrity and wholeness.

Whether reductionistic or not, these theories all had one thing in common: a tendency towards total explanation. With few exceptions, when a thinker struck upon a profound insight into the workings of religion, he or she tended to employ it as an explanation of everything and to deny the idea that other approaches might be fruitful in supplementing their own. Against this totalizing tendency, dissenting voices arose within the discipline calling upon established scholars to consider other perspectives. Feminist scholarship, for example, pointed to the shortcomings of the work done by an all-male academy, asserting that the methods and data employed did more than just fly in the face of certain political leanings: they produced bad scholarship. Others, who emphasized experience in the field and the engagement with actual living religious communities, noted that the actual behavior of real-world communities rarely comported completely with the predictions and explanations of single-voiced theories.

At about the same time, religious bodies themselves came to see that their own ends could be advanced by adopting the outsider's perspective, at least provisionally and with a view to answering specific questions. Theologians began looking to sociological and cultural data to ascertain the questions to which their theological reflection ought to address itself, and religious bodies found demographic and other survey data very handy for planning. In the contemporary world, it seems there is room for some accommodation between religion and religious studies. So it turned out that even the pursuit of ultimate truth could still benefit from nonultimate perspectives

This course will trace these developments in two main parts. First, we will go through the history outlined above in more detail, investigating individual thinkers and movements to see how religious studies arose. After a brief look at the branching-off of religious studies from theology, we will go through the various disciplines of the social sciences: sociology, psychology, anthropology, and phenomenology, noting the major authors and theories found in each. At the end, we will take a look at the feminist and empiricist critiques of these theoretical approaches, and finish with an examination of the ways in which religious studies has come back into the service of religious bodies by providing them with new modes of self-understanding and self-definition.

At the end of the course, the learner should have a solid grasp on the origin and development of religious studies, its major thinkers, theories, and texts, and should have gained new insights into some of the most salient aspects of religious life, belief, and practice, insights that might have applications in his or her own life.

Lecture One
Understanding "Religion"

Scope: Before undertaking the study of religion, one needs to understand the scope of the subject, which requires an attempt to define the word "religion" at the outset. In this lecture, we will examine what definitions do and see how and why various scholars have put forward widely varying definitions. We will begin by looking at the history of the word "religion" as it has been used to mean various things and then turn our attention to the way in which modern scholars understand the word. Some, as we shall see, do not try to define it at all, explaining that definitions only get in the way. Others do put forward definitions, and in these cases we will see what kind of definitions they use and for what purpose. We will see that the definition one begins with often influences the course of research in decisive ways.

Outline

I. Religious studies refer to the study of religion from a secular perspective and have a relatively brief history dating back to the 16th century.

- **A.** Prior to this, discourse took the form of theology, or religious thinking that took place within and in the service of particular religious communities.
  - **1.** Theologians were the intellectual elites within religious communities.
  - **2.** Their discourse assumed the truth of that community's beliefs and sought mainly to help members understand better what they believed and did.
- **B.** Two sets of historical circumstances opened new ways of thinking about religion in modern European history: a growing awareness of religious diversity and the rise of rationalism and science.
  - **1.** During the Protestant Reformation and the Wars of Religion, different religious communities became increasingly aware that they would have to co-exist; many grew weary of the constant conflict between religions.
  - **2.** During the European Enlightenment, new scientific discoveries contradicted religious teachings and the idealization of rationality made religion seem antiquated.
- **C.** Religious studies have a fundamentally nonreligious approach because it grew out of a critical attitude toward religion and sought to explain why such a superstitious and irrational phenomenon could have arisen in the face of scientific progress.

II. This course will examine the academic enterprise known as religious studies.

- **A.** Religious studies does not have a method of study all its own; it is free to draw upon any disciplinary approach that sheds light on the subject.
- **B.** The course will be broadly divided into sociological approaches, psychological approaches, and anthropological approaches to religion.
- **C.** After this, we will consider the phenomenological approach, which was an attempt to establish religious studies as a true discipline with its own methods of investigation and analysis.
- **D.** We will finish with some critiques of these theories and some case studies that will allow us to test the usefulness of these theories.

III. The meaning of the word "religion" has changed over the last five centuries.

- **A.** In the 16th century, it indicated the institutional life of the Christian Church, while the faith practices of non-Christians were considered either idolatry or "fashions."
- **B.** During the Romantic era (18th–19th centuries), religion came to refer to personal attitudes and became synonymous with "faith."
- **C.** As knowledge of other religions increased from the late 18th century on, the word "religion" came to indicate a category of which other religions were equal members.

IV. For purposes of clarity, we need a definition of the word "religion" to guide our considerations. Robert Baird has provided a useful approach by looking at what definitions do for us.

A. Essential-intuitive definitions are actually a refusal to put a definition forward, taking instead the "I-know-it-when-I see-it" approach.

B. Lexical definitions describe how words have been used historically; this is what dictionaries provide.

C. Functional/stipulative definitions allow the authority to provide his or her own definition for a finite context.

D. Real definitions attempt to capture the essence of a reality, and are deployed mostly for polemical purposes (e.g., what does it mean to be a "real American"?).

V. Definitions are not complete fiats but tools for particular kinds of understanding in particular settings.

A. An author may employ a definition to provide clarity and stimulate thought within a given context.

B. Definitions, however, have the danger of applying prior constraints and cutting off other avenues of inquiry.

1. An example of this might be Émile Durkheim's definition of religion as "an eminently social thing."

2. Another example is Clifford Geertz's famous definition of religion as a "system of symbols."

VI. In spite of the great variety of definitions, they break down into two basic types:

A. Some definitions emphasize the supernatural, or the inbreaking of a transcendent reality into human affairs (an example of this would be Peter Berger's definition).

B. Other definitions, such as Paul Tillich's, stress human attitudes toward some aspects of life or reality as being of "ultimate concern."

VII. For the purposes of this course, we will take the first type of definition as normative and emphasize that, in religion, human beings perceive the inbreaking of a transcendent reality into the human realm.

A. Most of the thinkers we will discuss assume that belief in the supernatural is an essential element of religion.

B. Tillich's idea of "ultimate concern" does not allow people to self-identify as nonreligious.

C. We will treat this definition as a functional definition.

Suggested Reading:

Robert D. Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions.*

Mark C. Taylor, ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies.*

It is also instructive simply to look up the entry "Religion" in any dictionary or encyclopedia. Of special interest are the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, and the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Of the two styles of defining "religion" (i.e., "belief in the supernatural" versus "ultimate concern"), which do you find most compelling? How does the definition you chose affect your own thinking about religion?

2. Is a definition of religion really essential to the study of religion, or would you agree with the "essential-intuitive" model that a definition only impedes it?

3. If a definition of religion is desirable, should it be proposed at the outset of one's research in order to guide him or her, or only at the end after the evidence has been gathered and evaluated?

Lecture Two
Theology and Religious Studies Part Ways

Scope: Prior to the emergence of "religious studies," discourse about religion took place within the umbrella of theology; that is, it transpired within and for the consumption of a particular religious community with standing faith commitments. During the time of the Reformation and the Wars of Religion in Europe (15th and 16th centuries), however, a few intellectuals began to wonder if it might be possible to think about religion in broader terms so as to bridge the differences between the contending communities inside and outside of Christendom. From early attempts on the part of Jean Bodin (1530–96) and Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648) to imagine a non-Christian theology, to the later naturalist studies of Bernard Fontenelle (1657–1757) and Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), theories of religion moved steadily away from overtly religious concerns and sought to present more objective accounts of its origin and function.

Outline

I. Prior to the 16th century, "religious studies" as understood in today's academic climate did not exist. "Religion" meant Christianity, and the primary intellectual activity connected with it was theology.

II. The 16th and 17th centuries saw a crisis in religion that provoked nontheological religious responses.

- **A.** In France, the Wars of Religion (1562–98) pitted Protestants against Catholics in a series of wars with no definitive victory for either side. The standoff, settled by the Edict of Nantes in 1598, set up a situation in which Protestant Huguenots and Catholics had to continue to live together.
- **B.** Jean Bodin, a diplomat, grew discouraged with the prospect that Christian theology would solve anything.
  - **1.** As a response to an entrenched pluralistic situation in which "all [religions] are refuted by all," Bodin wrote his famous *Colloquium* in which Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims, as well as two agnostics, discuss their differences calmly and noncompetitively.
  - **2.** He proposed that the best religion would be the oldest because it would be closest to the creation of Adam and Eve and God's initial instructions to them.
  - **3.** He also left the colloquy unresolved and without a clear "winner," with the participants agreeing to continue their discussion.
- **C.** Other religious wars ensued in the 17th century.
  - **1.** In Germany, the Peace of Augsburg (1555) had brought about only a temporary and uneasy détente between Lutherans and Catholics; the spread of Calvinism destabilized things.
  - **2.** The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) engulfed all of Europe into another round of religious conflict between the Catholic League and the Protestant Union.
- **D.** Edward Herbert of Cherbury, a diplomat and peacemaker in this conflict, also tried to refine a religious vision that would transcend the conflict.
  - **1.** Like Bodin, Herbert sought after the religion that would work to unite the greatest number of people without assuming that it would be Christianity.
  - **2.** Unlike Bodin, he did not take the oldest religion as the best but instead sought for the religious ideas that were most widespread and thus the most widely agreed-upon.
  - **3.** His "five common notions" were: There is one God; God ought to be worshipped; virtue is the chief part of religion; we ought to repent for our sins; and there are rewards and punishments in the next life.
- **E.** While non-Christian, these new ways of studying religion were still, in a sense, "theological," as they were concerned with finding religious solutions to contemporary problems and still accepted a biblical view of the world.

III. The Enlightenment brought in new, more secularized currents of thought, and many authors began looking at religion. Scholars, curious about the conditions under which this peculiar phenomenon had arisen, debated the origins of religion from a more detached perspective.

- **A.** Bernard Fontenelle analyzed myths and rituals of classical culture as a way of studying religion by imaginatively reconstructing the thought patterns of primitive humans.
  - **1.** Most intellectuals of the Enlightenment period were content to dismiss religion as mere superstition because so much of what it had to say about the natural world was being proved wrong.

2. Fontenelle assumed that primitive people were not idiots but were attempting to increase their knowledge by seeking explanations for displays of power in nature.
3. With little substantial data and theoretical sophistication to guide them, primitive people put forward the best explanation they could: deities were in control.
4. As humanity progressed, primitive people would gradually move beyond these explanations and discover truer principles of science.
5. This is one of the first times an evolutionary theory of human progress was put forward. Modern primitive tribes who maintained these archaic forms of explanation were simply at an earlier developmental stage; like modern Europeans, they would presumably grow out of it as time went on.
6. In the end, Fontenelle's position was quite charitable toward primitive peoples, whom he considered intelligent people doing the best they could.

B. Giambattista Vico proposed a theory of human nature in which customs of marriage, burial of the dead, and belief in a divine providence were themselves the condition of being human.
1. Vico insisted that we could study religion like any other social form.
2. Religion, being a social phenomenon, was primarily about institutions and practices, not ideas.
3. Like Fontenelle, Vico thought primitive people were scientists who attempted to explain the frightening aspects of nature by projecting human personalities upon them and making them gods.
4. Unlike his predecessors, Vico saw ancient people as lawgivers and founders of institutions. Marriage, burial of the dead, and a belief in providence were so fundamental to the human condition that one should not say human beings invented them; rather, they were the condition of being human.
5. Vico realized that ancient people had no access to modern scientific rationality. He insisted they wrote myths and fables because they *thought* in myths and fables.

C. While both men propounded nonreligious theories of religion, they both tried to save the position of Christianity from critique by declaring that, as a true religion, it could not be analyzed as a human phenomenon like other religions.

Suggested Reading:

Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods.*

J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How might your own religious reflections and beliefs be affected by the spectacle of religious wars with no end in sight?
2. Do you see any similarities between the situations described in this lecture and modern struggles between a supposedly Christian West and the Muslim world? Have you encountered any similar religious responses to the present conflict?

Lecture Three
A Clean Break—David Hume

Scope: While the figures presented in the previous lecture maintained some level of religious commitment while formulating their theories, David Hume (1711–76) made a clean break with religion and embarked on a study of religion from a purely secular standpoint. While somewhat cautious in the expression of his views, to the extent of withholding some of his works for posthumous publication, he was committed to belief in a "one-storey universe"; that is, a universe with no separate, transcendent reality superimposed upon it. Consequently, he studied religion as an object that arose and subsisted in this world for reasons that could be analyzed and described just like any other natural phenomenon; he undertook to write a "natural history" of religion. His theories paved the way for the British tradition of religious studies, which tended to see religion as a kind of primitive (and very inadequate) science.

Outline

I. Although England in the 18th century under King Charles II was a haven for secular thought, a skeptic still needed to be careful.

- **A.** People of the time were more likely than before to speak out against religion.
- **B.** Nevertheless, one had to be cautious.
  - **1.** Fifteen years before David Hume's birth, a Scottish man was hanged for blasphemy for publicly saying that Christianity was nonsense.
  - **2.** Hume himself was frequently denied posts and promotions because of his atheism.
  - **3.** He exercised caution in publishing. Some of his writings on religion were only published posthumously, without the attribution of author or publisher.

II. David Hume was a radical empiricist who insisted that everything we know is gained through sense and experience.

- **A.** He thought that no knowledge was built into our minds; instead, we had to learn it all. Hume denied the idea of instinctual knowledge and could not accept a common explanation of religion which held that people have an "innate religious sense."
- **B.** Hume believed that humans live in a "one-storey universe," lacking a transcendent or spiritual realm. This meant that all his explanations were purely naturalistic.

III. In *Of Miracles*, a part of his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume attacked the idea of miracles and violations of the laws of nature.

- **A.** A miracle was, by definition, a violation of the laws of nature.
- **B.** To be believed, one would have to assert that the nonoccurrence of the miracle would be more improbable than its occurrence. As an empiricist, Hume would not grant that this had ever happened.
- **C.** While seeming to leave the door open for the acceptance of miracles, Hume placed the criteria for judging in favor of a miracle so high that it was unlikely he would ever accept the veracity of miraculous occurrences; thus, his empiricism did not involve an *a priori* negation of miracles.
- **D.** This idea rules out miracles or divine revelation as an adequate basis for religious belief.

IV. In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume demolished the design argument, a traditional argument for the existence of God.

- **A.** The design argument is based on the analogy of the world to a mechanism, which implies a mechanic who designed and built it.
- **B.** The Christian version of this argument draws conclusions not warranted by the premises; one does not get the Christian God from the design argument. To show this, Hume proposed some alternative readings of the data:
  - **1.** The universe was designed by committee.
  - **2.** The universe was the first attempt by a young god who had since abandoned it to make other, better worlds.

3. The universe was, like many machines of this god's day, the product of a "brute mechanic" who did not understand what he was making.

C. Hume thought the world was more like an internally self-generating organism than a mechanism, which must be created by an external force.

V. In his *Natural History of Religion*, Hume attempted to account for the origin and nature of religion as a purely human phenomenon, with no reference to supernatural beings or events.

A. Religion sprung from two sources:
1. The human confrontation with the frightening power of nature, which creates the need to seek a means of control.
2. The tendency to anthropomorphize, which leads people to address natural powers as if they were human.

B. Hume ascribed no progression to the history of religion. Since Hume saw all religion as "low," he did not believe religion moved from lower to higher forms.
1. He did not believe in a pristine primal monotheism that degenerated into polytheism (the "fall from grace" theory held by earlier thinkers).
2. He did not believe that monotheism was better than polytheism or vice versa. Each belief system had its strengths and weaknesses and the human race oscillated between the two.
3. Hume saw monotheism as logically rigorous but prone to becoming dogmatic and inflexible, and sponsoring persecutions. He saw polytheism as overly sentimental and irrational but also broad and tolerant.

C. Due to his empiricist orientation, Hume denied prior arguments in support of religion that relied on any "innate religious sense."

Suggested Reading:

David Hume, *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion.*

Frank E. Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Could someone of Hume's skeptical views have arisen in a different set of historical circumstances?
2. Do theologians and religious people continue to use the argument from design after Hume's critique of it? If so, why? What function might it still serve?

Lecture Four
Auguste Comte—Religion, False but Necessary

Scope: With this lecture, we begin looking at religion from the perspectives of specific academic disciplines. Auguste Comte was one of the founders of sociology, and his theory of religion influenced many of the authors whose works we will consider later. While he agreed with Hume and the British tradition that, as a way of gaining knowledge about the world, religion constituted bad science, he did not follow them through to the conclusion that it ought to be abandoned in favor of good (in his terms, *positive*) science. Instead, he saw that religion has a *function* in society: It promotes social cohesion by bringing people together for common rituals. He worried that, as the advance of science eroded religion's credibility, it might thereby weaken its ability to perform this function. Thus, Comte went beyond the formulation of descriptive theories and tried to devise a religion that would work for a modern, scientific age.

Outline

I. Isadore Auguste Marie François Comte (1798–1857) lived at a time of great social and economic change in France.

- **A.** Comte was born in an age of industrialization and religious crisis.
  - **1.** Hume's empiricism was taking hold of intellectuals while religious faith was eroding.
  - **2.** The advances of science and technology were making the metaphysical claims of religion increasingly untenable among the educated classes.
  - **3.** The French Revolution had toppled the dominance of the church and gave rise to radical, secularist political thought.
- **B.** Comte was born into a Catholic family but had lost his faith as a teenager.
- **C.** At school, Comte fell in with a radical political group called the Ideologues.
- **D.** He entered into a common-law marriage with a woman who was registered with the Parisian authorities as a prostitute.
  - **1.** While with her, Comte began to experience the bouts of paranoia and delusion that would mar his life until the end. He used his experience of madness as data for his theories.
  - **2.** He came to hate her, and she left him finally around 1845.
- **E.** In 1845, he ardently but fruitlessly courted Clotilde de Vaux, with whom he was deeply in love.
  - **1.** Clotilde died of consumption after a year.
  - **2.** The shock drove Comte into insanity, and his productivity fell off.
- **F.** Comte died in September, 1857.

II. Comte was one of the founders of Positivism and sociology, which he considered the greatest science.

- **A.** Positivism was a rejection of metaphysics.
  - **1.** Metaphysics studies the existence and nature of things, often using speculation and syllogistic reasoning to reach the invisible realities behind what can be observed.
  - **2.** Positivism, as defined by Comte, attends only to that which can be experienced, observed, and described, without asking about its existence.
  - **3.** Positivism was empirical and accorded well with the growth of science and the anti-clerical politics of post-Revolution France.
- **B.** Comte regarded sociology as the chief science.
  - **1.** Human beings in social groups behaved in ways that could be observed and described; laws of social behavior could be elaborated. Comte saw very clearly that society as a whole would be an actor on the stage of history, and what it did could not be explained by appeal to the behaviors of an aggregation of disconnected, autonomous individuals.
  - **2.** It was the most important science because from it a technology of social engineering would be derived that would guide human development.
  - **3.** His ideas were progressive. He felt that humanity was always inexorably moving forward.
- **C.** Comte applied this progressive view of human social history to religious history.

1. Humanity begins with the theological phase, ascribing all natural phenomena to the action of supernatural beings. These beings can be fetishistic, polytheistic, or monotheistic.
2. The metaphysical phase is a transitional phase where people replace gods with abstract transcendental principles.
3. The scientific or positive phase replaces imagination and abstract speculation with observation and induction.

D. Religion as traditionally conceived and practiced was doomed by the inexorable process of social history. As Frank Manuel has observed, for Comte, religion was of tremendous importance because its progress was an index to the progress of human intelligence.

III. Even though religion was bound to fail as a mode of knowing the world, it still had a function to play in human society.

A. Religion provided rituals and means of association that helped hold societies together.

B. As religion became weaker through the increasingly untenable nature of its teachings, it would also lose its ability to bind society.

C. Thus, a crisis was coming to Europe in which society would fall apart as religion collapsed.

D. This necessitated quick action to create something that would be the functional equivalent of religion.
1. Such a creation would need to maintain the plausibility that religion was quickly losing.
2. It would need to be compelling enough to command assent.
3. It would need rituals and institutions that could provide much-needed social cement.

IV. To fulfill this need, Comte set out to create a new religion of the Great Being.

A. Society needed "spiritual power" to operate.
1. Rituals provided a means to fuse people into a social unit.
2. Society also needed a moral consensus so that people would perform their duties to keep the social unit functioning.
3. Traditional religion did both of these but could do so no longer because its doctrinal basis had lost plausibility with the advance of science.
4. Modern positive science would not do because it lacked the affective and motivational nature of religion.

B. Worship directed toward humanity itself as the "Great Being" was suitable to an age of positive science.
1. Rather than mistakenly anthropomorphizing powers of nature, it directs worship to humanity where it belongs.
2. This religion would affirm the truth that human beings are the real masters of their own destinies and induce them to work together for the common good.
3. This was to be a real religion with church buildings, a priesthood, and even a corps of saints to celebrate the heroes of Humanism from the past. Comte named himself the "high priest of Humanity" and even heard confessions from his followers.

C. This Church of the Great Being actually did come into existence, and a branch of it still flourishes in Brazil.

V. Comte's views had a lasting impact.

A. Several subsequent thinkers read and admired Comte's analyses of history and religion: Freud, Marx, and especially Émile Durkheim.

B. Comte saw that stages of human development were never simply traveled in series, with the gaining of each new stage entailing a break with the prior stage. He saw that all stages remain latent in all people, and that retrogression is possible.

C. Durkheim in particular would seek to show that the religion of the Great Being did not need to be created—it was what religions had been unconsciously doing all along.

Suggested Reading:

Frank E. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris: Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Comte.*

J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud.*

The Positivist Church of Brazil. www.igrejapositivistabrasil.org.br/english.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you perceive any conflict between the untenable nature of religious doctrines and the social necessity for religion or its functional equivalent?
2. Do you agree that history moves progressively through necessary stages of development toward a determinate end?

Lecture Five
Karl Marx—Religion as Oppression

Scope: Of all the thinkers and authors whose theories we will consider in this series, none was more obstinately hostile toward religion than Karl Marx (1818–83). In social theory, Marx's great breakthrough was to realize that material reality comes before any other kind, whether mental or spiritual. In human life, this means that human beings must eat, drink, have clothing, and find shelter before they engage in any of the higher pursuits such as art, politics, or religion. Seeing all of history as a struggle between workers and owners, a struggle that the workers must one day win, Marx analyzed religion as a tool in the hands of owners to keep workers docile and compliant, and he called for an assault, not on religion itself, but on a political economy that made religion necessary in the first place. Later Marxists, however, broke with him and saw historical precedents that showed how religion could actually help workers free themselves from exploitation.

Outline

I. Almost everyone has heard Karl Marx's famous dictum, "Religion is the opium of the people."

- **A.** The phrase is found in an essay titled "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." The full quotation reads: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of an unspiritual situation. It is the opium of the people."
- **B.** The phrase leaves little room for doubt about Marx's implacably hostile attitude towards religion.
  - **1.** As Daniel Pals noted, Marx never proposed a full-blown theory of religion because he did not think religion was worth bothering about.
  - **2.** Marx thought that religion rested upon foundations other than itself.
  - **3.** Once these foundations were knocked out from under it, religion would fall by itself without any special effort needed.

II. Karl Marx is one of the founding figures in the discipline of sociology.

- **A.** He started in philosophy, following the devotion to Hegel common in his youth, but later turned against Hegel's idealism.
  - **1.** Idealism is the view that ideas come before material reality. Matter remains unformed until infused from without by something else: spirits, thoughts, or ideas. Hegel believed that the material reality of human history was an expression of a nonmaterial World Spirit.
  - **2.** Marx was a committed materialist. He believed that only physical matter and energy had any reality, and that ideas were expressions of physical reality.
  - **3.** An idealist might say that thoughts arise within the human brain but are not produced by the brain's physical structure. A materialist would say that these thoughts would be nothing but electrical impulses within the brain.
  - **4.** An idealist would argue that God's spirit and ideas first brought material reality into existence. A materialist would deny any spiritual realm outside of the physical world and interpret God as just a concept that occurred within the material structures of the brain.
- **B.** Using what he called the "transformative method," Marx reversed Hegel's assumption that ideas preceded material reality.
  - **1.** This transformation amounted to a direct inversion: "Ideas manifest in material forms" became "Material forms bring ideas into being."
  - **2.** Rather than affirming that "ideas create the mind and all things," Marx would say that without a full-formed brain, there can be no ideas at all.
- **C.** His change to materialism made him look at the material and economic realities of life for the majority of workers during the European Industrial Revolution.

III. Marx's ideas about the economic basis of human life led him to attend to the social processes that lead to the distribution of material goods.

- **A.** This led to his division of social functions into base (or substructure) and superstructure.

B. Base, or substructure, social functions indicated the physical necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter.
  1. These items were deemed of primary importance because nothing else could happen in society if these were not present and available.
  2. Marx's idea went against the prevailing religious ideas of his day, which generally held that the life of the spirit was primary, and that physical needs belonged to a lower, "animal" reality.

C. Superstructure social functions designated those items that had no independent reality and were not necessary to life but were added on only after "base" social functions had been met.
  1. Functions in this category included art, philosophy, culture, and religion.
  2. These pursuits were less important in Marx's analysis.

D. Marx came to regard superstructure elements in society as somewhat sinister.
  1. He saw human history as a story of unending class struggle between workers and owners.
  2. Superstructure elements could be co-opted by owners in order to create an ideology which could be used against workers.
  3. Religion was a component of this ideology.
  4. The function of religion was to justify the theft of a worker's labor (the "surplus value" of their products) by promising a future compensation.
  5. Religion thus helped keep workers docile and compliant.
  6. Religion could be used to justify the political order and the class structure.

E. For Marx, religion was always bad and had to be opposed if progress was to occur.

F. As a materialist, Marx would never grant that religion's own account of itself held any truth. There was no God, so God could not have revealed it.
  1. Marx accepted the theory put forward by Ludwig Feuerbach that religious realities were projections of human qualities. God was simply a human conception of an idealized humanity and embodied qualities—wisdom, justice, mercy—that humans ought properly to embody on their own.
  2. This meant that religion was fundamentally an illusion, a mistaken perception of a reality that was not really there. In his essay, "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," Marx called religion "the opium of the people."

G. Marx, however, saw no need to oppose religion directly, as it was merely an epiphenomenon (a secondary phenomenon).
  1. Religion, as part of the superstructure, rested on a particular base.
  2. Once the base itself was transformed and the workers liberated, religion would wither on its own.
  3. Thus, Marx saw no point in expending energy trying to eliminate religion.

IV. Later Marxists saw Marx's evaluation of religion as one-sided.

A. Friedrich Engels (1820–95) saw a model for the ideal community society in early Christianity.
  1. In reading the Book of Acts, he saw how the community lived together and held all things in common.
  2. Engels saw that religion represented a stage in the march up to the worker's paradise.

B. Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) realized that Marxism had to fulfill spiritual needs if it were to succeed.
  1. He noted that, in looking at the prophetic tradition in Christianity, one could discern a tool to rouse the peasantry to revolt and claim their rights.
  2. Religion could be the amphetamine of the masses as well as its opium.

V. Later scholars and historians have observed that the Marxist critique of religion runs into trouble on both theoretical and historical grounds.

A. Richard Comstock wrote that by simply inverting all religious notions, one still ends up with something that looks very much like religion.
  1. While Marx denied the validity of a Christian reading of history that saw all things moving toward a final judgment, he also saw history as moving inevitably toward a worker's paradise governed by a dictatorship of the proletariat.
  2. Marx never accounted for the source of the power that directs history toward this goal.

B. James Boon noted Marx's distinction between base and superstructure as too pat.
  1. Religion as a set of ideas may be part of the superstructure and the ideology, but the practice of religion involves a great number of material things.

2. Religion is an inextricable part of the economic landscape and provides a living for a substantial number of people.

C. Rodney Stark disproves Engels's assertion that religion was a product of the aspiration of Roman slaves.

1. Christianity during the Roman period was a religion of the middle and upper classes; laborers were left largely untouched by it.
2. If the middle and upper classes do not need the "opium" the workers need to keep them docile, then the Marxist analysis is wrong.

D. For many critics, the fall of global communism itself is a decisive demonstration of the inoperability of Marxist theory.

VI. Despite these criticisms, Marxist analysis does make some telling points.

A. Even though it reduces religion to economic functions, we cannot deny that religion operates within an economic structure.

B. Marxism has the virtue of alerting students that there is indeed such a thing as the "economics of religion."

Suggested Reading:

Karl Marx, *The Portable Marx.*

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Would you agree with Marx that, in some cases, ruling elites have used religion as a tool to induce workers to accept their lower status?
2. Are there times in history when religion has helped oppressed people find a way to resist their oppression or critique their social order?

Lecture Six
Émile Durkheim—Society's Mirror

Scope: Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), like Auguste Comte, is sometimes regarded as the founder of sociology. In contrast to Comte and Marx, who analyzed society as a system within which individuals thought and acted, Durkheim came to see society as an actor in its own right, producing effects that could not be explained solely in reference to individuals. In fact, he reversed the usual understanding and claimed that society is the *primary* actor in human life, and much of what individuals do and believe is derived from the life of society as a whole, not vice versa. Using materials describing life among Australian tribal cultures, he believed he found the most basic form of religion: the worship of totems during tribal gatherings. He believed that the totem was a symbol for society itself, and the means by which society envisioned itself and imposed its exigencies on its individual members.

Outline

I. Émile Durkheim was one of the founders of the academic discipline of sociology.

- **A.** He took interest in all aspects of society and found social factors at work in the most private phenomena. An early study of suicide showed that some external social factors were involved in the decision to end one's life.
- **B.** *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, a study of religion, is Durkheim's magnum opus. The book outlines a sociological theory of religion based on ethnographic material about aboriginal tribes in Australia.

II. Durkheim was not satisfied with previous theories of religion because they focused attention only on individuals, paid no attention to the social factors of religion, and failed to account for religious behavior.

- **A.** He addressed this concern in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.
- **B.** He noted that in religious situations, people acted in specific ways with regard to their community and ritual objects.
- **C.** Previous definitions of religion as the belief in supernatural powers personifying natural phenomena (naturism) or the belief in detached spirits (animism) did not adequately explain this behavior.
  - **1.** Many of the objects of totemic religion, such as cockatoos or certain plants, were not frightening or even hunted as game. This contradicted the theory that the first impetus for religious reflection was the human encounter with the terrors of nature.
  - **2.** Both naturism and animism presented religion as bad science that gave false knowledge and could not account for the power and durability of religion. Durkheim denied that religion was false in the ordinary sense.
- **D.** Durkheim noted that religious behavior was first of all a *social* behavior and so must have a *social* basis.
- **E.** He identified the basis of religion as a way of looking at reality that dichotomized it into the sacred and the profane.
  - **1.** The "sacred" was a quality found in things that represented the values and motivations of society in toto.
  - **2.** The "profane" elicited behaviors that were directed at purely private ends, with no reference to the values and needs of society.
  - **3.** The two constituted a radical dichotomy: if something was sacred, then it was *not* profane, and vice versa.
- **F.** Durkheim declared religion "an eminently social thing."

III. Durkheim's procedure was to find out how "the sacred" operated in the simplest form of religion known in his day: totemism.

- **A.** Totemism referred to both a form of religion and a form of social organization.
  - **1.** Within large tribes, one found smaller subdivisions. Each tribe had its own totem animal or plant that gave the tribe its identity and served as an idol.
  - **2.** Individuals were known by their clan. The clan totem formed the focal point of worship.

B. Totem plants and animals lacked majesty or utility, yet they were treated as sacred.
  1. Fieldworkers noted that totems, with their own unique taboos, demanded respect and avoidance in specific ways.
  2. Totems served as focal points in religious rituals.
  3. Totems identified clan and sub-clan groups (e.g., the cockatoo clan).

C. Durkheim sought to explain that this quality of the sacred could not be found in any particular thing in the world.
  1. If a cockatoo was sacred to the cockatoo clan, no individual cockatoo contained this quality.
  2. No particular realistic depiction of a cockatoo was sacred in and of itself.
  3. Primitive societies used free-floating words to indicate sacredness.
  4. Durkheim described the sacredness of things in clan-based societies as the "totemic principle," a quality that did not inhere in things but could be imputed to them in specific situations.

D. This analysis led Durkheim to search elsewhere for the source of the totemic principle and its sacred power.
  1. Through a chain of equivalences, he came to identify the totemic principle with society itself.
  2. He established that the sacred was found in things that pertained to society as a whole.
  3. He showed that the clan totem was sacred due to the central place it held in clan gatherings and the taboos that surrounded it.
  4. He saw the totem as a symbol of society itself, serving as a unifying symbol by which the clan could think of and worship itself. This explains why blasphemy, the breaking of taboos or the casual treatment of religious objects, elicits fierce reprisals against those who commit it.
  5. Durkheim admired Auguste Comte for his belief that society is a reality that exists at its own level and generates its own phenomena that can only be studied sociologically. Durkheim turned Comte's idea of a "religion of the Great Being" upside down by asserting that the worship of humanity rather than gods was what religion had been doing all through human history.

IV. This social origin of religion came to explain other phenomena as well.

A. Piacular rites, or rites of repentance and rededication, were meant to reorient individuals to their identity as members of a group. When an individual strayed from the group's values (sinned), piacular rites might take the form of confession, repentance, and reinstatement.

B. Even the soul was nothing more than the sum of social identity and values injected into the individual—an idea comparable to Freud's idea of the superego.

V. Durkheim's theory continues to be widely influential but not above criticism.

A. It is monocausal, meaning that Durkheim does not claim his theory covers only the social aspects of religion but explains religion in toto.

B. It is a bit circular.

C. It pays no attention to the actual ideational contents of religion.

D. It is reductionist, meaning that the theory does not accept that religion is a valid reality in its own right but instead sees religions as a function of social processes that should be *reduced* to sociological explanations.

E. It does not allow for hermits to find a place as an object of study for the scholar of religion.

F. Its applicability to more advanced societies is questionable.

G. Its Australian ethnography has been roundly criticized.

VI. These criticisms do not detract from the power of Durkheim's ideas.

Suggested Reading:

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion.*

J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How much understanding does Durkheim's theory shed on the religion of our more complex and multicultural society?

2. Can you think of instances where a group you belong to uses a symbol of some kind to focus the attention of individuals on the reality of the social group? (For example, a school mascot.)

Lecture Seven
Max Weber—The Motor of Economics

Scope: Max Weber differed from both Durkheim and Marx in that his theories were not reductionistic. That is, they did not see religion as a function of something more fundamental, be it society or economics. Instead, he saw religion and society as mutually interacting; not only did society produce and influence religion, but religion could work back on society to produce effects. For example, he saw the rise of Protestantism as producing a new way of approaching the world that helped give birth to the capitalist economic system. He also saw the individual not only as a product of social forces but in certain cases as a shaper of them, and so he also wrote about charisma, the gift that some individuals have to initiate movements and change structures. In all cases he sought to avoid simplistic, monocausal analyses of religion and to see it as part of a complex blend of actors and forces.

Outline

I. Along with Émile Durkheim, Max Weber (1864–1920) is the other towering figure in this third generation of early sociologists.

- **A.** During his youth, Weber interacted with some of the major figures in German politics and intellectual pursuits.
- **B.** He was a child prodigy and a voracious reader.
- **C.** At Heidelberg University, he trained in law and political economy.
- **D.** He married at age 29 but his marriage seems to have never been consummated.
- **E.** In 1897 he suffered a complete emotional breakdown precipitated by a quarrel with his father, who died before reconciliation could be reached.
- **F.** Afterwards, he took no academic position but remained active as a journal editor and writer.
- **G.** He returned to a professorship in 1918 and died of pneumonia two years later.

II. Weber took a different approach to the sociology of religion than either Marx or Durkheim.

- **A.** Both sociologists had attempted to explain the origin of religion in reductionist terms.
  - **1.** For Marx, religion was an ideology that served the upper classes in the class struggle.
  - **2.** For Durkheim, religion was a tool that social groups used to bring their own collective being into view.
- **B.** In both cases, the actual ideas and teachings of religion were of little importance, since it was the way religion *functioned* that allowed one to understand how it originated and why it was significant.
- **C.** Weber approached religion differently.
  - **1.** He did not seek explanations of the origin of religion, which he saw as unimportant to his studies.
  - **2.** He saw religion as just one factor among many in a complex mix of social forces that shaped social structures and functions.
  - **3.** He understood that religion affected society through its ideas and doctrines (an idea that radically departed from those of Marx and Durkheim).
  - **4.** He recommended the use of *verstehen*, or "understanding," rather than explanation.
  - **5.** He believed that the meanings people ascribed to the affairs of their lives helped determine how they acted. Religion, as a system of symbols, did not just give people an understanding of the world but also gave them an ethos, a propensity to act in certain ways.

III. Weber used this approach in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, his study of capitalism's rise in the West.

- **A.** He noted that capitalism flourished mostly in areas where certain forms of Protestantism had arisen.
- **B.** He therefore thought that there might be a connection between the two.
  - **1.** Weber emphasized that he was not saying Protestantism *caused* capitalism.
  - **2.** He saw the modern European situation as home to the spirit of capitalism; that is, the new capitalists were not greedy for money and did not use it for hedonistic ends.
  - **3.** He saw Protestantism as vitally connected to the rise of *this* kind of capitalism.

4. Weber criticized the simplistic nature of materialistic accounts of the relationship between religion and the economy. He saw that Protestantism had actually preceded capitalism and was a factor necessary for its growth and spread.

C. He noted Martin Luther's teaching that all are equal before God, meaning that all labor was equally valuable.
1. Previous Catholic teaching had valued religious work as vocation and had devalued common and secular labor.
2. Luther's teaching meant that all work could be valued in a religious framework.

D. Weber also noted the Calvinist teaching of predestination as a source of anxiety for Protestants who sought ways to reassure themselves of their election. The idea of predestination had originally been meant to solve a religious problem: the significant differences between Christians and non-Christians in terms of their virtue or piety.

E. Protestantism encouraged an "inner-worldly asceticism" that induced believers to work and earn but to save and invest their earnings instead of spending self-indulgently on pleasures.
1. Weber did not find in his data any indication that people could be induced to work harder by external rewards.
2. Protestantism, by valuing all labor and seeing success as a sign of divine favor, provided the inner drive needed for harder work.
3. For Protestants, simplicity, ardor, and self-denial were indispensable features of the workplace.

F. For Weber, a particular form of religion mattered in a socio-economic setting.
1. The teachings of Protestantism had created a certain ethos.
2. Religion had been an agent of change in the socio-economic sphere, not just an epiphenomenon.
3. Weber acknowledged that the rise of Protestantism was only one of many factors that led to capitalism.
4. He also acknowledged that the relationship between the two was not necessarily lasting.

IV. In his book *Economics and Society*, Weber proposed other thoughts about the social role of religion. One feature of this work is the three "ideal-typical" roles of religious functionaries in society that Weber distinguished.

A. The magician is a lone figure whose religious authority derives from his or her charisma. The magician commands awe and belief by deploying power through works of magic.

B. The priest is a more institutional character whose authority derives from credentials granted within religious training and educational systems. He or she controls access to religious rituals.

C. Prophets are men and women specially called to address a community on its own ideals, or to new ideals, of ethical culture. The exemplary prophet teaches by example rather than through preaching. The ethical prophet calls for social reform and justice.

V. Late in his career, Weber set out to compose a multivolume study of religion and society in other parts of the world, to be called *The Economic Ethic of the World's Religions*.

A. Due to his early death, Weber only completed three studies: Religions of China, Religions of India, and a nearly completed study of early Judaism.

B. Despite some brilliant insights, these studies are marred by what would be considered dated information and inaccuracies by today's standards.

C. Weber's overall concern with these volumes was to demonstrate why, even when capitalism had appeared outside of Europe, the spirit of capitalism had never materialized.

Suggested Reading:

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion.*

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you see the relationship between religious beliefs and social movements? Does one always act as the cause, while the other is the effect?

2. Weber seems to rule out any possibility of arriving at a general theory of religion. Is he right in taking this approach, or might we still want to theorize about religion as such?

Lecture Eight
Peter Berger—The Sacred Canopy

Scope: Peter Berger, as a young professor in the mid-1960s, took up many of the social theories of religion put forward by his predecessors and rearranged them to show that society mediates a total worldview to its members, a way of organizing reality that he called the *nomos*. In his study *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), Berger delineated a detailed account of the process by which society creates, maintains, and transmits this *nomos* to its members by creating it, projecting it upon the outside world, and then objectifying it as if it were not their creation at all through alienation. He discusses the historical processes by which the *nomos* comes under threat, the mechanisms that society mobilizes to stabilize it, and how religions themselves can become activators of history rather than mere passive followers. In this way, he assigned a positive role for religion as a social and historical force that previous scholars had denied it.

Outline

I. Peter Berger (b. 1929) was one of the founders of the field now known as the sociology of knowledge.
- **A.** A native of Austria, Berger immigrated to the United States shortly after World War II.
- **B.** He attended Wagner College and earned a Ph.D. in sociology from the New School for Social Research in 1952.
- **C.** He quickly established himself as a proponent of the "sociology of knowledge."
  - **1.** This study held that society defines and organizes reality; individuals subsequently appropriate this reality into their own subjective consciousness as "the way things are."
  - **2.** Religion is one of the formations in this overarching reality, called the *nomos*.
- **D.** He was an early proponent of "secularization theory," the view that in the modern world, religion was bound to die out.
- **E.** Berger later recanted this and other religiously hostile views, many of which were propagated in the now-classic book, *The Sacred Canopy*.

II. Peter Berger explored the "sociology of knowledge" in his book *The Social Construction of Reality*.
- **A.** Human beings confront the world without the guidance of instincts; therefore, they need knowledge in order to survive.
- **B.** Individuals cannot construct all the knowledge needed by themselves.
- **C.** Knowledge is taught by others through interaction.
- **D.** Individuals will in turn pass this body of knowledge on to others.
- **E.** The construction, maintenance, and transmission of knowledge are human affairs. Knowledge subsists at the level of the community; it is a *body* of knowledge.
- **F.** Knowledge can grow, develop, and deteriorate, but only at the level of the community.

III. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger developed this analysis to cover religion, the most all-encompassing body of knowledge in any society.
- **A.** The overall body of knowledge that provides a complete worldview is called a *nomos*, from the Greek word meaning "law, regularity, order."
- **B.** The *nomos* is the picture of "the way things are" and achieves this status by a three-fold process:
  - **1.** Externalization, in which people project their conception of the world out into the world.
  - **2.** Objectification, in which this projected conception is given the status of objective reality.
  - **3.** Internalization, in which this objective reality is re-appropriated into the mind of the individual as the representation of reality.
- **C.** This image of reality must be maintained against decay, which requires the implementation of "plausibility structures."
  - **1.** Plausibility structures include such things as educational systems, media, and literary canons.
  - **2.** If plausibility structures are sufficiently strong, most people will accept the *nomos* as a given.

3. Plausibility structures may be weakened by the presence of competing *nomoi* or the appearance of credible contradictory evidence.

D. Active threats to the *nomos* require the development of theodicies, or ways of accounting for counterevidence within the structure of the *nomos*.
1. Ancient Israelites saw their captivity by the Babylonians as punishment for breaking God's covenant.
2. Death can be rationalized into the *nomos* by proper belief in an afterlife.
3. Massive suffering can be understood as a moral punishment.

E. If the theodicy ever failed, the result would be anomy, the collapse of the *nomos*.
1. Most people would do anything to avoid the meaninglessness and chaos that would result from this collapse.
2. Berger noted that some theodicies ended up unintentionally destroying the religions they were supposed to save.

F. Individuals must be induced to accept the commonsensical nature of their society's *nomos*.
1. One way is through alienation, the denial of ownership between humans and the worldview they created.
2. In extreme cases of near-total socialization, human beings exhibit "bad faith," meaning that they are so invested in the *nomos* that they simply cannot act against it.

IV. Berger put forth the prediction that, as science and rational thought advanced, religious *nomoi* would be forced to retreat until they completely lost plausibility and significance—a process he called "secularization."

A. Berger noted that, in American society, this process was already so far along that religious symbolism and ritual subsisted only at the highest and lowest levels of society.

B. Under the criticism of later sociologists such as Rodney Stark, he has since recanted these views.

C. Berger also claimed that he was not debunking religion, and tried to defend himself in his next book, *A Rumor of Angels*, which suggests that a sacred reality probably does exist.

Suggested Reading:

Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*.

———, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the basic premise of the "sociology of knowledge" seem plausible to you?
2. Can you describe the basic elements of your own world view, and remember how you acquired them? Have you ever felt that certain elements had lost their plausibility due to social or scientific developments?

Lecture Nine
Rodney Stark—Rational Choice Theory

Scope: From its inception with Comte, the sociological study of religion has taken it more or less for granted that religion is a regressive force in society. Based on errors and superstitions, it keeps humanity from forging ahead with new discoveries as it brainwashes its followers into clinging to outmoded and counterproductive beliefs and practices. Beginning in the late 1970s, many sociologists, led by Rodney Stark (b. 1934), rejected this assumption and proposed that religion, like any other human activity, is fundamentally rational. This movement, known today as rational choice theory, assumes that human beings are goal-driven, and when choosing a path to a desired goal, will assess the costs they must pay to attain it, costs that might include restrictions on dress, diet, ability to associate with others, and even martyrdom. In applying a set of rational "propositions," Stark et al look to explain many seemingly irrational religious beliefs and behaviors by showing their roots in cost-benefit calculations.

Outline

I. By the mid-20th century, a group of sociologists coming out of the University of California program became dissatisfied with previous "explanations" of religion.

- **A.** They did not like the search for a single "master key" to religion (e.g., Marx's view of religion as an ideological opiate).
- **B.** They felt the views of Marx, Freud, and Durkheim were broad in scope but lacked depth.
- **C.** They saw these previously established viewpoints as metaphors for religion, not theories of religion.
- **D.** They were also dissatisfied with the starting assumption that religion was essentially irrational. These assumptions included:
  - **1.** The tradition from Hume to Frazer that saw religion as bad science.
  - **2.** The psychological construction of religion as neurotic.
  - **3.** The Marxist idea that religion is an opiate that blinds the proletariat to their own plight.
- **E.** They felt that a theory that assumed the irrationality of religion provided no way forward in understanding the dynamism and enduring power of religion.
- **F.** Their alternative was to propose a new theory of religion that differed from previous theories in two important ways:
  - **1.** This theory would assume that religious belief and behavior is basically rational, provided that one understood what it meant to be rational.
  - **2.** This theory would not seek any grand explanation of religion but pose concrete questions about religious phenomena as observed in the real world and attempt to answer them.
- **G.** The result of this procedure is not so much a single theory of religion but instead an extensive and interlocking set of axioms, propositions, and definitions.

II. Stark and William S. Bainbridge proposed an alternative: the rational choice theory.

- **A.** This theory is a deductive theory.
  - **1.** An inductive theory begins with empirical observations and then generalizes.
  - **2.** A deductive theory begins with a very small set of axioms assumed to be true, uses definitions to attain conceptual clarity, and derives subsequent propositions from these.
- **B.** The full rational choice theory is a complex structure of seven axioms, 104 definitions, and 344 propositions.
- **C.** The stance is nonreligious, and so the sociologists claim that they can logically derive a theory of religion that truly explains it building on completely nonsupernatural axioms and their derivative propositions.
- **D.** The rational choice theory is based on economics and exchange theories, among other sources.
  - **1.** The economic exchange theory assumes that people consistently want to make exchanges of all kinds with one another.
  - **2.** People are rational in that they wish to control the exchange ratio so that they get the greatest reward for the lowest cost.
  - **3.** In most cases, human beings will exchange whatever they have for the rewards they can afford.

4. In some cases, however, rewards are scarce and so will be monopolized by those with power (e.g., mansions).
5. Some rewards are not available at all in any empirically verifiable way (e.g., eternal life).
6. This means that all human beings, no matter their level of power, cannot get them.
7. Humans may give up hope altogether or they might accept a compensator.

E. Religion, in this scheme, is defined as "systems of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions."
1. The compensators are mediated by religious specialists (e.g., priests, clergy) who act as intermediaries dispensing the compensators to clients on behalf of gods.
2. Specialists arise as society grows more complex.

F. Like any enterprise, religious organizations will seek to monopolize the business and drive out competitors, which can only be done with the cooperation of the state and its power of coercion.
1. The danger is that monopolies become lazy and do not attend to keeping the customer happy.
2. Thus, religious pluralism such as that found in the United States is good for religion, as it keeps the providers on their toes.

III. There are certain surprising outcomes of this theory that have stood up to empirical observation.

A. The theory has refuted secularization theory.
1. Religion is not just bad science or superstition but a complex of "goods and services" that meet a variety of needs, even in the case of the wealthy.
2. Religious organizations, especially in pluralistic situations, can adapt to meet the needs of the present population of potential "customers."

B. The theory helps explain why "strict religions" are thriving.
1. People do not look only to cost in choosing a religion, but to value as well.
2. Particularly when the "goods and services" are collectively produced, people's observance of the higher demands for contributions and time actually increases the quality of the product, making it a more valuable and better choice.
3. The high level of investment demanded weeds out the "free riders," further increasing value.

C. The theory, unlike others we have studied, attends to what religions actually teach and do.
1. Other theories simply talk about religions as if they are all interchangeable or exemplars of the same thing.
2. The doctrines, rituals, and practices of religions are, in effect, the goods that they are putting on the market.

IV. This theory may sound a little overly formalistic and may appear not to answer all possible questions about religion.

A. The authors stress that this is a *sociological* theory, and thus only need help us understand the growth of structures of exchange.

B. Other questions, such as those about psychological states of mind, or whether or not the sacred actually exists, fall outside the theory's purview.

C. The authors plead that their theory, like any other, must be judged on its robustness, consistency, and usefulness for answering particular questions about religion.

Suggested Reading:

Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge. *A Theory of Religion*.

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Does looking at religion in economic terms detract from the nature of religion, or does it help you to understand what religions actually do in a deeper way?
2. Do you agree that all human interactions, even with God or gods, are based on a rational, cost-benefit evaluation?

Lecture Ten
William James—The Description of Religion

Scope: William James made contributions to American intellectual life on several fronts, of which two will concern us. James enlisted both psychology and philosophy to formulate his theory of religion. Philosophically, James was one of the founders of the school of Pragmatism, which held that abstract truth is not worth studying in itself. Only beliefs and attitudes that produce actions in the world matter. Thus, in his 1897 *The Will to Believe*, James stressed that religious beliefs are not logical conclusions derived from thorough argumentation but passionate convictions that we bring into being and appropriate by sheer force of will. In his 1902 classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James set forth several religious types, based on the kinds of character they produce and the actions they motivate, which he then classified as healthy or pathological.

Outline

I. William James (1842–1910) was one of the founders of psychology.
- **A.** James was born into a prominent New England family. His brother was the novelist Henry James.
- **B.** While at Harvard, he participated in expeditions to the Amazon led by Louis Agassiz.
- **C.** He began his career teaching anatomy but switched two years later to teaching psychology.
- **D.** He was one of the originators, along with C. S. Pierce, of the philosophical school known as Pragmatism.
  - **1.** Pragmatism emphasized the effects that ideas have in producing actions in the world.
  - **2.** Pragmatism rejected the notion that ideas have any intrinsic value in and of themselves.
- **E.** Through Pragmatism, James postulated that religion is interesting not as a set of propositions about life to be accepted intellectually as true but as an active choice that people make.

II. James was one of the American founders of the philosophical school of Pragmatism.
- **A.** By the early 19th century, philosophy had begun to lose faith in pure ideas.
  - **1.** Kant's idea of "antinomies" offered a way to resolve problems that were not solvable through rational means by picking the resolution that produced better results.
  - **2.** The discovery of non-Euclidean geometries loosened the belief that pure ideational structures could accurately mirror the world.
- **B.** The stance of Pragmatism is that ideas are meaningful only insofar as they lead to an effect in the world.
  - **1.** A pure idea that produces no effect might be interesting, but it has no significance.
  - **2.** An effect might include changing one's mood, motivating one to act, or any other concrete result.
  - **3.** James emphasized the primacy of experience and coined the term "stream of consciousness" to describe the locus of experience.

III. In *The Will to Believe* (1897), James applied Pragmatism to matters of religion.
- **A.** Belief was not just an assent to a true proposition decided on rational grounds but an active, willed appropriation of a belief that led to an action.
- **B.** This act of will included other factors besides the rational mind; thus, one needed to pay attention to the emotional component of believing (what James termed the "passional" nature).
- **C.** There were certain choices outside of the realm of pure facts that forced humans to use nonrational methods of deciding. In such questions:
  - **1.** The choice had to be between two genuinely live options, meaning either choice is something that one is willing to consider realistically.
  - **2.** The choice had to be momentous, not trivial.
  - **3.** The choice had to be forced; that is, one does not have the option of forgoing the choice.
- **D.** This idea helped to understand why one person found a belief compelling, while the same belief left another person cold.
- **E.** This idea made psychology essential to the study of religious belief. Since the rational mind could not decide important religious questions, it was the emotional side of the mind that made the difference.

F. Rationality could never be the final cause of any belief because only rarely did a person have access to all the facts.
  1. This limited access to information meant that belief was not founded entirely on reason.
  2. One could not put off believing until all the facts were in. Insofar as one must lead one's life, one needed to act, and all actions were based on *some* belief.
  3. Religious beliefs had to be decided. To remain skeptical out of a fear of being duped meant possibly losing a great good.
  4. This situation was inescapable, and so all people had beliefs of some kind upon which they acted.

G. James explicitly rejected logical investigation of the abstract truths of religion.
  1. James stressed that one *acts* in willing to believe, and this action, once taken, produces palpable effects in one's subsequent life.
  2. The only religion worthy of the name is one that asks everything of you and requires an immediate decision and commitment.

IV. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) James extended his analysis of religion to a description of the effects on individuals of many styles of religious belief.

A. James defined his study of religion as limited to individual experience, leaving out any consideration of theological systems or religious institutions.
  1. His sources for this study are diaries, autobiographies, and biographies—works in which he can find traces of the interior life of religious persons.
  2. This makes his study phenomenological in that its focus is on the individual's experience of perceived truth and its effects, not on the validity of that truth.

B. James brushed aside the question of religion's origins by emphasizing experience and effects.
  1. He saw such claims and theories on origin as inconsistent and speculative for the most part.
  2. The question of origin must be kept separate from the question of value.

C. James proposed to use rather extreme examples of religious experience and behavior in his investigation.
  1. The more prosaic experiences of conventional people are simply not strong enough to shed any light on the phenomenon.
  2. On the other hand, the strong experience of extremists can adumbrate the phenomena in a way that can then provide a way of looking at more conventional religious experiences.
  3. Extremists were the "experts" in religious life; the people whose almost fanatical commitment to religion allowed them to enter more deeply into it so that they could bring back the most extensive reports.

D. James detailed three qualities of religious experience. This personal data was drawn from testimonials of personal religious experience.
  1. The first example is the healthy-minded religious experience, which gives its subject an optimistic outlook and the strength to cope.
  2. The second example is the sick soul, the person whose religious experience leads him or her to think that something is amiss within himself or herself and seek a religious solution.
  3. The third example is the divided self, an experience that indicates the person perceives himself or herself as needing integration through religious practices.

E. James believed that a diversity of religion is as necessary and inevitable as the diversity of individuals and their psychological needs.
  1. He recommended against the call to formulate a "science of religions," which he saw as likely to contend that religion was bad science.
  2. He felt that to study religion was to miss the actual experience of living religion, which could only be understood by listening to the experiences of religious people.

F. James admitted that religion contained a great deal of bad science.
  1. The last chapter of *Varieties* gives copious examples of such egregious assertions.
  2. James, however, considered these critiques to be unimportant in the face of individual religious experience.

Suggested Reading:

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

Wayne Proudfoot, ed., *William James and a Science of Religions: Reexperiencing the Varieties of Religious Experience.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you find James's distinction between healthy and unhealthy religion helpful? Can you think of instances of each in people you know? Does James's analysis help you to understand them better?
2. Do you think that one really understands religion if one brackets out all reference to truth and focuses exclusively on people's experience of religion?

Lecture Eleven
Sigmund Freud—The Critique of Religion

Scope: Sigmund Freud is widely recognized as the father of psychiatry. His theory of religion was based on a model of psychiatric pathology: religion as neurosis. He attacked religion on several fronts. He noted that religious rituals mirrored the ritual behavior of disturbed patients. Like a neurosis, religion thus represented a sort of safety valve that was perhaps useful for relieving pressure but not as good as getting to and resolving the real problems of life (just as a fear of spiders might channel negative energy but can be relieved by discovering the real, repressed fear of, for instance, one's mother). Religion, by displacing real human needs and fears onto unreal, symbolic entities, was a form of alienation that prevented people from coming to grips with their real problems and frustrations. People were better off without it, just as his patients were better off without their neuroses.

Outline

I. Psychologist and author M. Scott Peck's case study about a woman's fear of spiders offers a reference for Freud's severe critique of religion.
- **A.** Peck treated a woman who was so afraid of spiders that she could not enter a room if she thought there were spiders in it.
- **B.** The woman's mother constantly invaded her daughter's personal life.
- **C.** Dr. Peck saw a connection between the woman's mother and her fear of spiders.
- **D.** The breakthrough came when the woman blurted out, "My mother is just like a spider!"
  - **1.** The woman began to recognize that she was trapped by her mother like a bug in a spider's web and could not break free.
  - **2.** Because she could not face her anger towards her mother, the woman transferred it to spiders. This provided a safety valve for her feelings of anger.
- **E.** Once the woman realized this connection, she overcame her fear of spiders and began to deal directly with her anger towards her mother.

II. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was the founder of the psychoanalytic technique that gave this woman back her life and relieved her of her fear of spiders.
- **A.** Freud was born in 1856 in the Moravian town of Freiberg.
- **B.** In college he majored in medicine, specializing in neurology and physiology.
- **C.** Later mentors impressed on him the power of nonphysical interventions (such as hypnosis) to cure mental illnesses.
- **D.** Noting that he could help some of his patients simply by talking to them, Freud founded the field of psychoanalysis.
- **E.** The Nazi invasion of 1938 disrupted Freud's eminent and controversial career in Vienna, Austria.
  - **1.** Though atheist, Freud's family was Jewish and came under suspicion.
  - **2.** He reluctantly paid Nazi extortionists and immigrated to London, where he died of cancer 15 months later.

III. Freud put forward startling new ideas about the workings of the mind.
- **A.** He postulated an *unconscious* level of the mind, where unwelcome or frightening thoughts and feelings could be repressed.
- **B.** He put forward a theory that children experienced sexual feelings of longing and jealousy for their parents, which shocked his contemporaries.
- **C.** His theories of religion were expressed mainly in three books, two of which we will discuss: *Totem and Taboo* and *The Future of an Illusion*.

IV. *Totem and Taboo* (1913) presented monotheistic religion as arising from a primal murder in which a patriarch was killed by his sons in order to acquire his harem of females (the mothers of these sons).
- **A.** The guilt induced by this murder frightened these sons, and they resolved never to do it again.

B. The murder induced a horror of incest, since desire for the mother had been the motive of the murder.

C. Since the father was now gone, the sons could not apologize to him for atonement. They recreated him as a father-god and established the worship of him.

D. It has been easy to criticize this idea as mere speculation without a shred of evidence, yet there are many arresting points about this story.

1. Though Freud presents this as the kind of phenomena that his psychological theories would predict, he never claimed this primal murder was a single, historical event.

2. Modern evolutionary theory posits an occurrence very much like this that accounts for some of our current social forms.

V. *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) cast religion as a coping mechanism that, while helpful in relieving the stresses of privation and frustration, created symptomatic behaviors very like those of Freud's neurotic patients.

A. Freud understood religion to be an illusion, which he carefully distinguished from a simple delusion.

1. *Delusions* are simple departures from reality without any basis.

2. *Illusions* are real possibilities. What makes a belief an illusion is not its relation to reality but the reason why we believe in it.

3. Freud believed that illusions were based on "wish-fulfillment"; people believed in them not on the basis of facts, but because they *wanted* them to be true.

B. Freud believed people were under several kinds of pressure, one of which was societal.

1. Life in society demands that we suppress most of our basic urges.

2. Similar to Marx, Freud understood that religion acts as a comfort that compensates us for our privation and frustration.

3. Religion serves as a hedge against social chaos by giving people reasons to control their impulses.

4. Through religion, "external coercion becomes internalized," anticipating Berger's notion of the *nomos*.

C. Freud posited that the reason we have civilization (and, by extension, religion) is that without it we are left exposed to brute nature.

1. As Fontenelle and Hume had said previously, people humanize nature in order to make it tractable.

2. In Freud's view, we recalled a previous situation in which we were helpless and dependent to make nature truly amenable to our wishes.

3. By doing this, we manufacture a nurturing figure and project it into reality.

4. Freud's projection thesis played off of Feuerbach. Whereas Feuerbach said that God was a projection of our best aspects, Freud thought God was a repository of our more unworthy hopes and fears.

5. The projected God or gods must also help people to cope with the cruelties of fate. This is the task Berger defined as theodicy.

6. Freud argued that religion was a symbol of repressed infantile or archaic needs.

7. These needs are threefold: they protect us from the terrors of nature, they reconcile us to our fate, and they compensate us for the privations forced on us by life in society.

D. Freud also explained religion by using the metaphor of psychological illness.

1. Freud demonstrated that religion cannot be accepted at face value because its proofs are inadequate. Individuals cannot possibly believe in its teachings based on intelligent choice.

2. He saw religion as a neurosis because it was like a neurosis. Religion may be good for relieving the pressure caused by repression, but we are ultimately better off facing our frustrations directly.

3. While most infantile needs and neuroses work only within the individual, Freud believed that religion represented a manifestation of these needs at the group level.

4. The cure for an illusion is to bring the repressed issues into consciousness so they can be faced and resolved using adult intelligence.

5. If religion is not eliminated, then humanity will never face the real facts of existence (e.g., nature does not love us, fate is cruel, society demands that we curb our impulses).

VI. While enormously influential, many thinkers have criticized Freud's theories on various grounds.

A. Many thinkers have pointed out that Freud's theory of religion is not scientific. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud offers no evidence at all, even from his own clinical experience.

B. Charles Elder explained that Freud argued by analogy rather than by inference.

1. Analogies are heuristic; they do not convince us that something is factually true but encourage us to look at things in a certain way.

2. Argument by analogy gives Freud's theory some power to shape our thinking about religion, but it does not mean that Freud was factually correct in his assertions.

C. Many working therapists have parted ways with Freud's belief that psychoanalysis should remain committed to atheism. Examples of these individuals are C. G. Jung and M. Scott Peck.

VII. Despite these criticisms, once one encounters Freud's ideas, it is difficult to see religion in the same way as before.

A. Freud did succeed in getting people to see that at least some religion was clearly unhealthy.

B. One possible therapeutic outcome of analysis may be the exchange of unhealthy religion for a healthier one.

C. Freud's work has given us the idea of the unconscious.

Suggested Reading:

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*.

———, *Totem and Taboo*.

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*.

J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Charles Elder asserted that Freud's theories cause us to look at religion in a new light rather than establish the facts about the origin and essence of religion. Do you find that Freud's thought does this for you?
2. Is it possible that some, if not all, religious thought and behavior is neurotic and unhealthy?

Lecture Twelve
Carl Jung—The Celebration of Religion

Scope: Carl Gustav Jung, or C. G. Jung, began his career in psychiatry as one of Freud's most promising disciples. As Jung began to reflect more independently on human psychology and its pathologies, however, he found himself increasingly convinced that religion, far from being the chronic impediment that Freud believed it to be, was also potentially a source of health, balance, and connection for people; in fact, it was a *necessary* component of mental health. Religion, he said, was the sense that we were connected to a reality larger than our individual selves. We might call this larger reality by many names, but it represented a kind of synchronicity, a larger web of significations, a collective unconscious that was inbuilt into the human psyche. Its contents included archetypes, universal symbolic representations that helped people to organize and give meaning to their existence. In tandem with rational, discursive thought, symbols and archetypes enabled people to approach the world in a balanced, meaningful way.

Outline

I. Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) was one of Sigmund Freud's most famous followers who later set off on his own and founded his own school of thought.

- **A.** Jung was born in Kesswil, Switzerland, in 1875.
  - **1.** He was very introverted and solitary as a child.
  - **2.** He claimed that he embodied two distinct personalities, which he called Person 1 and Person 2.
  - **3.** He was very interested in philosophy and studied paranormal psychic activity.
  - **4.** He went to medical school in Basel, specialized in psychiatry, and took a position in a Zürich clinic.
  - **5.** He married Emma Rauschenbach in 1903. She remained Jung's close collaborator until her death in 1955.
- **B.** In 1906 Jung established a relationship with Sigmund Freud that ultimately broke off in 1913.
  - **1.** The two men initially found their views compatible, and Freud found it useful to have a follower who was not Jewish.
  - **2.** The two men broke over their diverging theories on: the nature of the unconscious; sexuality as the root of all action; paranormal events; and the role of religion.
  - **3.** Jung was also very uncomfortable with certain details of Freud's life, as well as Freud's apparent desire that Jung take on the role of loyal son and protégé.
- **C.** After the break with Freud, Jung experienced a "creative illness" that transformed his outlook.
  - **1.** He had visions of Europe dripping blood. World War I broke out thereafter.
  - **2.** He resigned his medical practice to devote himself fulltime to reading and writing.
- **D.** After World War I, Jung began traveling the world.
  - **1.** He was especially influenced by his time in India.
  - **2.** He read voraciously in world mythology, explored symbol-production within his own psyche, and did a massive study of alchemy.
- **E.** Jung died in Zürich, Switzerland, in 1961.

II. Jung's analysis of the mind differed significantly from Freud's, especially in the matter of the unconscious.

- **A.** Jung described himself as a "phenomenologist" of the mind.
  - **1.** Experience was fundamental, whether it had a referent in reality or not.
  - **2.** Jung, as a clinician and therapist, was more interested in the effects and functions of mental constructs than in their objective reality.
- **B.** Jung viewed the unconscious as neutral, whereas Freud saw it as a dumping-ground for repressed contents. The unconscious was simply all things of which one was not conscious.
- **C.** Jung believed that the unconscious had two parts: the personal and the collective.
  - **1.** The personal unconscious embodied whatever was put in by one's own individual life experiences. Its content consisted in complexes.
  - **2.** The collective unconscious was inherited as part of being human.
- **D.** Jung saw the collective unconscious as especially important to his more positive evaluation of religion.

1. The collective unconscious was not a mystical connection or hive mind shared among people.
2. The collective unconscious was simply a constant structure that came with being human.
3. The collective unconscious's contents were archetypes: symbolic representations of reality in symbolic form that would be empirically verified as universal by observing their universal recurrence (e.g., "dual mothers" or "dual natures").
4. Primary access to archetypes came through dreams.

E. Jung saw the unconscious and its archetypes as instincts, which means that they are nonrational but express basic and powerful needs.
1. Premodern humans dealt with these needs mythologically and analogically, through attention to dreams and other methods.
2. Modern society has precipitated a crisis by its thorough rationalism, distrust of myths, and discounting of dreams, forcing basic and powerful needs to fester.
3. With this idea, Jung broke with many thinkers who took an evolutionary view of humanity's ascent and regarded religion as part of a "primitive childhood phase."
4. For Jung, attention to archetypes is a permanent need that we will never outgrow.

F. Jung felt that the unconscious, a source of creativity and coping resources, was instrumental in supporting his views of religion.
1. Whereas Freud believed that mental health was gained by bringing all the contents of the unconscious to consciousness and owning them, Jung felt that this could not be done.
2. Though humans never outgrow the archetypes of the collective unconscious, when specific religious forms become obsolete or inappropriate, we need to invest them in more appropriate and effective forms.

G. Jung's example of the Christian idea of the Trinity from *Psychology and Religion* offers an example of this idea.
1. The Christian idea of the Trinity is an inadequate symbol for the divine because in world myths, humanity's higher nature has always been represented by a circle divided into four quadrants.
2. Jung presents two possibilities for filling in the fourth quadrant of the Trinity: the feminine (represented by the Virgin Mary) and the base instinct (represented by Satan).
3. These possibilities supply a missing opposition that is necessary to make the symbol of the divine function properly.
4. Modern rationality cannot see anything but logical contradiction in the coincidence of opposites, and so it sees no way of incorporating these oppositional symbols into a coherent picture.

III. Jung approached religion by attending to its effects rather than the reality of its referents. He did not wonder whether the referents of religion really existed but merely noted that people experienced the objects of religion and asked what flowed from this experience.

A. He regarded divinities and symbols as archetypes in the mind rather than realities in their own right.

B. He saw religion as part of the human heritage and a valid support for the human psyche, unlike Freud, who considered religion an illusion and an illegitimate crutch.

C. He believed that despite the possibility of religious pathologies (when an individual identified too closely with an archetype) there were also healthy forms of religion.

D. His stance on religion was pragmatic.
1. Some symbols enable the mind to focus on its "shadow," a negative but powerful aspect of our instinctual nature.
2. By having myths and rituals that deal with these shadows, an individual can own it, incorporate it into the self, and achieve integration.
3. By being overly rational, however, an individual dismisses the shadow as irrational, sees it as contradictory to his or her values and tries to extinguish it, or takes it as a symbol that represents something else and tries to interpret it in such a way as to fit into his or her rational framework. These strategies fail to deal with the shadow as a part of the psyche, and so rationality causes it to fester.
4. Jung was not concerned with the "reality" of the symbol for the shadow. He saw worrying over its metaphysical status as a distraction.
5. Jung's phenomenological stance, which led him to dismiss questions about the reality of religious claims, alienated him from some religious people.

IV. Jung's phenomenology of the mind has exerted a great influence over many other thinkers.

A. His ideas gave birth to a way of thinking that looks at humanity as a universal being and pays special attention to recurring symbols, dreams, and myths.

B. The writings of Joseph Cambell, who was influenced by Jung's ideas, served as a resource for George Lucas's *Star Wars* series.

C. Mircea Eliade's research followed a path very similar to Jung's.

Suggested Reading:

Carl Gustav Jung, *The Portable Jung*.

———, *Psychology and Religion.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Is Jung right in thinking that the reality of religious objects is less important than the effects of religious beliefs, symbols, and practices on mental health?

2. Does it matter that Jung's analysis of religion omits such things as ethics, community rituals, social action, or other items beyond the individual's own mental make-up?

Timeline

1530 ..... Jean Bodin born.

1555 ..... Peace of Augsburg.

1562 ..... Beginning of the Wars of Religion.

1583 ..... Edward Herbert of Cherbury born.

1596 ..... Jean Bodin dies; Edward Herbert of Cherbury dies.

1598 ..... Cessation of the Wars of Religion with the Edict of Nantes.

1618 ..... Beginning of the Thirty Years' War.

1648 ..... Cessation of the Thirty Years' War.

1657 ..... Bernard Fontenelle born.

1668 ..... Giambattista Vico born.

1711 ..... David Hume born.

1724 ..... Immanuel Kant born.

1744 ..... Giambattista Vico dies.

1748 ..... David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* published.

1755 ..... David Hume's *Natural History of Religion* published.

1757 ..... Bernard Fontenelle dies.

1773 ..... Jakob Fries born.

1776 ..... David Hume dies.

1779 ..... David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* published posthumously.

1781 ..... Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* published.

1789 ..... French Revolution begins.

1790 ..... Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (which contains "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment") published.

1798 ..... Auguste Comte born.

1799 ..... French Revolution ends; Friedrich Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Cultured Despisers* published.

1804 ..... Immanuel Kant dies.

1818 ..... Karl Marx born.

1820 ..... Friedrich Engels born.

1832 ..... E. B. Tylor born.

1842 ..... William James born.

1843 ..... Karl Marx's "Towards the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion" written; Jakob Fries dies.

1854 ..... James Frazer born.

1856 ..... Sigmund Freud born.

1857 ..... Auguste Comte dies.

1858 ..... Émile Durkheim born.

1864 ..... Max Weber born.

1869 ..... Rudolph Otto born.

1870 ..... Max Muller addresses the Royal Institute of London on a "science of religion."

1871 ..... E. B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* published.

1875 ..... C. G. Jung born.

1880 ..... Lorim Fison and Alfred William Howitt's *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, a study of aboriginal tribes, published.

1881 ..... A. R. Radcliffe-Brown born.

1883 ..... Karl Marx dies.

1884 ..... Bronislaw Malinowski born.

1890 ..... James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* published.

1891 ..... Antonio Gramsci born.

1895 ..... Friedrich Engels dies.

1897 ..... William James's *The Will to Believe* published.

1898 ..... Marcel Griaule born.

1902 ..... William James delivers lectures that will become *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

1904–5 ..... Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* published.

1906 ..... C. G. Jung begins collaboration with Sigmund Freud.

1907–20 ..... Carl F. T. Strehlow's seven volumes of *Die Aranda: und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* published.

1907 ..... Mircea Eliade born.

1908 ..... Claude Lévi-Strauss born.

1910 ..... William James dies.

1912 ..... Émile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* published.

1913 ..... Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* published; Ferdinand de Saussure dies.

1917 ..... Émile Durkheim dies; E. B. Tylor dies.

1920 ..... Max Weber dies.

1922 ..... A. R. Radcliffe's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* published.

1925 ..... Max Weber's *Economy and Society* published posthumously.

1926 ..... Clifford Geertz born.

1927 ..... Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* published; Sir Walter Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen's *The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People* published.

1929 ..... Peter Berger born.

1934 ..... Rodney Stark born.

1935–39 ..... Griaule works among the Dogon in the French Sudan.

1937 ..... C. G. Jung delivers Terry Lectures at Yale, the basis for his *Psychology and Religion*; Antonio Gramsci dies; Rudolph Otto dies.

1939 ..... Sigmund Freud dies.

1941 ..... James Frazer dies.

1942 ..... Bronislaw Malinowski dies.

1955 ..... A. R. Radcliffe-Brown dies.

1958 ..... Marcel Griaule dies.

1961 ..... C. G. Jung dies.

1966 ..... Peter Berger's *The Social Construction of Reality* published.

1967 ..... Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* published.

1968 ..... Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* published.

1970 ..... Peter Berger's *A Rumor of Angels* published.

1973 ..... Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* published.

1986 ..... Mircea Eliade dies.

1988 ..... *The Principles and Practice of Zen* released.

1992 ..... Carol Tavris's *The Mismeasure of Woman* published.

2006 ..... Clifford Geertz dies.

Glossary

alienation: In Karl Marx's thought, alienation means that people lose their sense of investment in the products of their labor; a craftsman who creates a cabinet from scratch will see it as an extension of himself, while a worker in a factory who only installs the knobs will not. In Peter Berger's work, the word means that people relinquish responsibility for the world view (*nomos*) that they have created for themselves, for instance by claiming that their view of reality was revealed by God.

androcentrism: In feminist studies, this means a bias toward male points of view when collecting and interpreting data. It takes forms of religious thought and practice that are specific to the male members of a community as normative for all human beings, and when women's thought and practice differ from men's, they are treated as deviating from the human norm.

animism: In general anthropology, a form of religion characterized by imputing a spiritual intelligence to all natural phenomena (e.g., the "spirit of the bear" that hunters believe will take away their luck in the bear-hunt if they are too boastful). In E. B. Tylor's writings on religion, it denotes a particular theory that religion originated in dreams of the recently deceased that led primitive peoples to believe in a spirit that left the living upon their death.

archetype: A term used by Jung to indicate a symbolic representation that functioned as part of the structure of each individual's mind, but was not based in the individual's experience but rather was part of the person's evolutionary heritage. It thus was held in common with all other human beings and functioned in much the same way in all people's mental life.

bad faith: In Peter Berger's work, this term describes a person who is so committed to the world view (*nomos*) of his or her society that he or she cannot imagine that one could look at things any other way. This in itself would be equal to his term "alienation," but to this he adds the further dimension that such a person cannot even conceive of acting in any other way than that prescribed by his society's world view. For example, he points to a man who is so convinced that his society's view of marriage is rooted in the nature of reality itself as revealed by God, that he cannot even physically carry out an act of adultery. If he tries, he becomes impotent.

base: In Marxist thought, the "base" (or substructure) is the production of material goods that sustain human life. It supports the "superstructure," which includes art, culture, and religion, which are nonessential functions. For Marx, the base was vastly more important than the superstructure.

bricolage: A French term used by Claude Lévi-Strauss to indicate a kind of "make-shifting" or "jerry-rigging" of ideas into structures of thought. In both their mythologies and overall world views, people do not invent whole systems, but rather piece them together out of pre-existing common themes, motifs, and elements, rather like someone who builds structures out of materials that happen to be at hand.

collective unconscious: A term used by Jung to denote a level of unconscious mental activity separate from the individual's own personal unconscious. Whereas the latter is formed by the individual through his or her own life events and responses, the collective unconscious was part of a common human heritage. It is not a mystical connection by any means but simply a common structure, as the human brain has the same basic structure from person to person. Its contents are the *archetypes* (q.v.).

compensators: In Rodney Stark's rational choice theory of religion, which is based on exchange theory (*q.v.*), compensators substitute for rewards within exchange relationships. Rather than receiving an actual reward, one accepts a compensator as a sort of "I.O.U." Thus, since one cannot obtain actual physical immortality at any cost, one may pay the cost (in terms of a lifetime of ethical discipline) for a promise of immortality in heaven after death.

***Ding an sich* (things-as-such)**: Kantian term for objects external to the mind. Kant claimed that we can never know what things are in themselves apart from the mind's apprehension and interpretation of them. All we can know is the "image" of the object that the mind constructs.

emic: A term sometimes used to denote the insider's or native's perspective. It is the opposite of etic.

empiricism: The philosophical view that the mind contains no innate knowledge. Whatever a person knows, they learned through experience at some point. This position is identified preeminently with David Hume.

essential-intuitive definition: This term actually indicates a refusal to define a word like "religion," claiming that definitions do not advance understanding, and that they are unnecessary because people intuitively know religion when they encounter it.

ethos: Clifford Geertz's term for the aspect of religion that motivates people to act in certain ways. He opposes this to "world view," which is a religion's way of seeing reality.

etic: A term sometimes used to denote the outsider's perspective. It is the opposite of emic.

exchange theory: A theoretical framework used by Rodney Stark as a basis for his theory of religion. It assumes that much, if not all, human interactions are exchanges, and that exchanges involve both cost and reward; one must give something to get something. The theory explores and explains how and why human beings decide to engage in exchanges, either with each other or with gods.

externalization: In Peter Berger's work, this is the first part of a three-step process of reality-construction. This step entails taking a human idea about what the world is like and projecting it outward onto reality.

false consciousness: A term used by both Marx and Berger. In Marx, it means the control of the working class by an ideology formulated by the ruling class to mislead them into thinking of the capitalist system as "natural." In Berger, it means that people accept their own construction of reality as objectively given, having forgotten that they created it in the first place.

functional definition: A definition proposed by an author or speaker in which he or she states that, in the context of the current presentation, a given word will have a particular meaning. Sometimes also called a *stipulative* definition, it is used simply to add clarity to a presentation and cannot be judged as correct or incorrect; it may only be judged for its usefulness.

functionalism: In anthropology, this is a way of approaching other cultures that emphasizes how cultural practices advance the material well-being of a society and/or individuals. Later anthropologists criticized it, saying that in its zeal to find how such things as rituals and institutions "worked," this approach ignored native concepts of what they meant.

hermeneutics: In general, the study of principles of interpretation. During the early- to mid-20th century, scholars of religion began shifting their energy from efforts to "explain" religion to studies aimed at "interpreting" it.

hierophany: Eliade's term for a manifestation of the sacred within ordinary, profane space and time. A hierophany becomes a point of reference for the organization of space and time.

homo religiosus: Eliade's term for the religiously oriented person, one who has an experience of the sacred, or at least lives in a community that remembers such an experience, and who organizes various aspects of his or her life around this experience.

illusion: A term used by Sigmund Freud to indicate something that a person believes simply because they want it to be true. It is different from a delusion, which has no bearing on reality, and an error, which is a mistake about reality. An illusion could, in fact, be true, but that is not why a person believes it. Thus, God may exist, but people believe in God more because they need to than because they have discovered his existence.

internalization: In Peter Berger's work, this is the last step in a three-step process of reality-construction. After projecting human conceptions of reality onto the world itself (externalization), and granting these conceptions the status of objective reality (objectification), individuals reappropriate these conceptions as their own image of the world.

intersubjectivity: The ability of individual knowers to share and talk about what they know, and thus to have knowledge in common.

language: See ***langue***.

***langue* (language)**: Saussure's name for the overall phenomenon of a given language, e.g., English in and of itself.

lexical definition: A definition that reports on the way that a word has been used historically by providing examples from literature and other sources. It can be judged correct or incorrect.

maker's knowledge: This is Giambattista Vico's idea that people can know best what they themselves have created. For example, we may know an automobile exhaustively because we created it and know what all the individual parts

do, while the human body, which we did not create, must be "reverse engineered" in order to discover all its parts and their function. On this basis, Vico believed that we can know human phenomena, such as religion, in a rigorous scientific manner, because they are human creations.

materialism: Whereas idealism (of the Hegelian sort) holds that ideas precede material or physical reality, materialism holds the opposite: without a physical brain, there simply are no ideas. Materialism often also entails a belief in a "one-storey universe," meaning a universe where everything rests on physical processes, and denies the existence of any kind of nonphysical or "spiritual" reality. In the case of Karl Marx, it led to a depreciation of such things as art, culture, and religion, subordinating them to the material realities of food, clothing, and shelter.

naturism: Durkheim's word for a theory on the origin of religion popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. This theory held that religion began as people projected their own personalities onto natural phenomena, thereby anthropomorphizing them (for example, a god of thunder or fire). Proponents of this view, such as David Hume, held that primitive people did this in order to gain some control over natural events that frightened them.

nomos: In Peter Berger's work, *nomos* denotes the overall world view of a human community, the taken-for-granted picture of the "way things are."

numinous: A term coined by Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) based on the Latin word *numen* (spirit or divinity) to describe the feeling apprehended in religious encounters with the holy.

objectification: In Peter Berger's work, this is the second step in a three-step process of reality-construction. After the first step, externalization, in which human beings project their conceptions of reality onto the external world, in this second step, they grant these conceptions the status of objective reality, true representations of "the way things are."

***parole* (speech)**: Saussure's name for actual acts of speaking within a language. As such, it was the concrete instantiation of language, which itself could only exist as an abstraction.

phenomenology: Based on the Greek word *phainomenon* ("image"), this was a branch of philosophy whose founder in Western culture was Immanuel Kant. Phenomenology denies that the human mind can have any direct, unmediated access to the external world, and can only know the "image" of reality arising from an interaction of raw sensory data as processed into concepts. It thus focuses on reasoning about reality as represented within the mind, not as it is in itself.

plausibility structures: In Peter Berger's work, these are structures that maintain and transmit the overall world view (or *nomos*) of a society. It includes religious institutions, rituals, educational systems, public displays, and any other way in which members of a society reinforce and teach their view of the world.

Positivism: As invented by Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Positivism is the philosophical position that knowledge is gained simply by describing phenomena as they are experienced, without worrying whether they actually exist or not. It thus stresses observation and description rather than speculation and scholastic reasoning, and denigrates that which cannot be observed and described.

Pragmatism: A philosophical orientation that attaches importance to ideas only insofar as they produce observable effects in the world, whether this be to motivate action, encourage certain moods, or give rise to cultural forms and institutions. Pure ideas that do nothing in the world have no real significance.

rational choice theory: This is a sociological theory of religion that rejects the premise that religion is essentially irrational and begins with the presupposition (or axiom) that human beings are as rational about their religion as they are about anything else. It sees rationality specifically in the tendency to evaluate the investment of one's time and resources (that is, the cost) against the anticipated benefit (the reward) in order to show that, for religious people, their faith is a "good deal."

real definition: A definition that claims to represent the "real" essence of a word or asserts a "real" connection between the word and its referent. It is often used in polemical contexts, e.g., statements about the definition of a "real American" might be used to propose an ideal and inspire an audience to emulate it.

sacred: Commonly meaning simply that which is held apart from ordinary life through the imputation of special religious significance; certain writers have used this word in more narrow ways as a technical term. For Émile Durkheim, it was a quality imputed to rituals, individual persons, and institutions through which members of a social group symbolized their social reality to themselves. For Mircea Eliade, it meant a real, transcendent reality that was

a source of life, creativity, and awe that sometimes broke in to the ordinary, profane reality of everyday existence; such an inbreaking, while not easy to grasp empirically, could still produce effects in human social organization and behavior, and it was the task of scholars of religion to document these observable effects.

savage philosopher: In E.B. Tylor's theory of cultural and religious progress, this was the theoretical primitive intellectual genius, who ruminated alone about the nature of things, made new discoveries, and imparted his discoveries to his fellows.

secularization: In general, this is the idea that religion retreats before the advance of science and rational forms of business and government. The areas of life that are governed by religious conceptions become progressively smaller, and more and more activities are carried out without reference to them.

secularization theory: Among many social scientists, this is the theory that secularization is an inevitable process that will, at some future date, culminate in the death of religion. This theory was proposed by many thinkers from Hume to Frazer to Berger, but given the continued perdurance of religion, some social scientists have repudiated it as a prediction. See also *secularization*.

semiology: A new academic discipline proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure as the study of signs and the way they convey meaning.

sign: In Saussure's linguistics, a mental construction consisting of two parts, the *signifier* (generally a "sound-image" or mental image of the way a word sounds) and a *signified*, or concept to which the signifier refers. This definition was opposed to the naïve idea that words simply refer to external realities.

signified: See **sign**.

signifier: See **sign**.

sociology of knowledge: Peter Berger's name for a theory of the social generation, maintenance, transmission, and defense of knowledge about the world. This theory claims that what individuals know about their world is, for the most part, created and mediated to them at the level of society itself.

solipsism: The philosophical position that no objective world exists outside the mind, but that all that we perceive is generated within the mind itself, as in a dream.

sound-image: The term preferred by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure over "word." A sound-image was the mental image of the way a word sounds, and represents the "signifier" half of the construct "sign." See also **sign**.

speech: See **parole**.

Structuralism: The philosophical orientation (pioneered by Claude Lévi-Strauss) that looked at the deep structures out of which any culture could be generated. Through a comparison of cultural elements such as myths and rituals, one could arrive at an understanding of the universal "structure" of human thought.

stipulative definition: See **functional definition**.

substructure: See **base**.

superstructure: In Marxist thought, the superstructure comprises those nonessential elements of social and economic activity: art, culture, religion, and so forth. It is opposed to the "base," which includes the production and distribution of essential material needs (food, clothing, shelter, and so on) which make the superstructure possible.

symbolic anthropology: A style of ethnographic research utilized by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz that took culture to mean a more-or-less systematic network of interlocking symbols that gives human activity meaning and helps orient people in the world.

syntagm: Lévi-Strauss's term for an actual instance of cultural performance. It relates to culture in the same way that speech relates to language.

***tabula rasa* (literally, blank slate)**: David Hume's idea that the human mind has no innate or instinctive knowledge of the world. He declared that everything we know, we have gained through experience.

theodicy: In theology, this term means "defense of God," and denotes the ways in which a particular view of God is defended against counterevidence. For example, it might include accounts of God's mercy in the face of human

suffering. In Peter Berger's work, the meaning of this term expands to include any way in which a society maintains the plausibility of its overarching world view in the face of counterevidence and adverse circumstances.

thick description: A term used by Clifford Geertz to denote a way of writing ethnography. Whereas a "thin description" would only describe the surface details of a people's cultural practices, a "thick description" would attempt to piece together the web of significations that make these practices an intelligible system.

totemic principle: A term coined by Émile Durkheim as a translation for a concept found in many languages to indicate a generic quality of sacredness perceived to exist in the world. He ultimately identified it as the power that societies exert over individuals, which they perceive in clan gatherings and other rituals.

totemism: A religious system whereby a social group (usually a family or clan) uses an image of a plant or animal as its emblem. The totem animal or plant then becomes the centerpiece of ritual, and taboos surround it so that it cannot be handled or treated as profane. For ethnologists and scholars of religion working in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, totemism was the focus of their studies, and Tylor, Freud, Durkheim, and many others wrote on it, often referring to the same field materials from Australia and North America.

unconscious: A term used by both Freud and Jung to indicate levels of mental functioning and activity of which an individual is not aware. In Freud's thought, the unconscious was the site of repressed feelings and thoughts, and so was a kind of dumping ground that needed to be cleaned out for mental health. Jung viewed it more neutrally as the site of whatever mental contents, good or bad, that escaped the individual's consciousness.

verstehen: A term used by Max Weber to designate his approach to religion. The word means "understanding," and indicates that we should "read" religion in order to interpret it rather than analyze it in order to uncover its origin the laws of its operation. This approach treats religion more as a text to be interpreted rather than as a phenomenon to be explained.

Wars of Religion (1562–98): A series of wars fought mostly in France, but with the participation of other nations, that pitted Protestant Huguenots against Catholic loyalists. Neither side vanquished the other, and both were compelled to live side-by-side in an uneasy truce after the Edict of Nantes (1598). This enforced coexistence prompted some of the first nontheological religious writing in modern Europe.

world view: In general, the way a person or a community sees the world and understands its significance. Clifford Geertz opposes this to the term "ethos," by which he means the predisposition to certain modes of action that a world view underwrites and legitimizes.

Introduction to the Study of Religion

Part II

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Charles B. Jones is an Associate Professor in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., a position he has occupied since 1996. He received a B.A. in Music from Morehead State University in Kentucky in 1980, a Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) from the Divinity School at Duke University *magna cum laude* in 1988, and a Ph.D. in History of Religions with a specialization in East Asian Buddhism from the University of Virginia in 1996. Combining the elements of this eclectic religious education, Dr. Jones has maintained a triple focus in his teaching and publications: Chinese Buddhism, theories and methodologies of religious studies, and interfaith relations.

Previously, Dr. Jones was a professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and visiting professor at Virginia Theological Seminary. He has lectured and presented seminars as an invited guest at Georgetown University, the University of Virginia, the Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan, Chengchi University in Taipei, and Harvard University's Buddhist Studies Forum. In 2004 he was awarded a Fulbright Research Grant and spent the year in Taiwan pursuing research in Chinese Buddhism, where he also delivered lectures and seminars.

His publications in East Asian religions include *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State 1660–1990* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), a co-edited volume titled *Religion in Modern Taiwan: Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), and several articles in scholarly journals. In the area of interreligious dialogue, he has written *The View from Mars Hill: Christianity in the Landscape of World Religions* (Cowley, 2005) and several critical articles on Buddhist-Christian dialogue. His current research interest centers on the Pure Land School of Buddhism in late imperial China.

In addition to academic pursuits, Dr. Jones is a musician who has released two music CDs with his family. He lives in Maryland with his wife Brenda, his son Trevor, and near his daughter Chenoa and grandchildren.

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Part II

Introduction to the Study of Religion

Scope:

Religion is an important part of the lives of millions of people worldwide; many would say it is the most important part. Every day in every part of the globe, people meet to pray, chant, meditate, read, make offerings, worship, take communion, receive and give counseling, teach and learn, all for the purpose of deepening their understanding and commitment to their religion. They view religion and the religious life from the inside, the place where they meet and experience it.

But there is an outsider's perspective as well. Scholars, journalists, diplomats, and other professionals regularly look at religious communities and activities and bring to their observations questions that the insider might find strange, irrelevant, or even dangerous. As part of their research methods, they explicitly "bracket out" questions of the truth of religious claims and look only at the empirically observable manifestations of religion. For example, they will not wade into the question of whether or not the Bible is the revealed word of God; instead, they will focus on discovering what happens in the lives of individuals and communities as a result of accepting such a claim. Often, religious believers meet such investigations with suspicion.

In a very real way, the suspicion is justified. In this course, we will examine the academic discipline called "Religious Studies," a discipline that began and developed out of a detached or even adversarial attitude toward religion. Beginning in the 16th century, diplomats, weary of the Wars of Religion that followed the Protestant Reformation, began to think and write about religion from a new perspective, one that looked in from the outside and asked troubling questions. During the Enlightenment, various authors began to recommend that religion be studied from a scientific perspective. Beginning with the assumption that religion is a human cultural creation just as much as poetry, kinship, or dining, they set about compiling the "natural history" of religion in a way that omitted consideration of overtly religious concerns.

From this starting-point in a generalized idea of "human sciences," other disciplines emerged during the late 19th century as the "social sciences": anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Each one looked at religion from its own particular disciplinary angle and came up with ways of "explaining" religion, often in very reductionistic ways. That is, psychologists tended to reduce religion to purely psychological terms and sought to understand it exclusively from that angle, while anthropologists looked at religion as a subspecies of the broader category of "culture" and sought to explain it strictly as a cultural process. The result was a very secular set of theories regarding the origin and function of religion. While theories differed in their evaluation of religion as either good or bad for society and individuals, all agreed that religion ought to be investigated in nonreligious terms.

In the early- and mid-20th century, a new set of scholars reacted against these reductionist methods and proposed a "phenomenological" approach, one that asserted that religion cannot be reduced to another frame of reference and insisted that religion be studied *as religion*, a phenomenon *sui generis* with a reality all its own. While these scholars certainly did not propose theories from within the theological framework of any existing religion, they still felt it important to respect religion's integrity and wholeness.

Whether reductionistic or not, these theories all had one thing in common: a tendency towards total explanation. With few exceptions, when a thinker struck upon a profound insight into the workings of religion, he or she tended to employ it as an explanation of everything and to deny the idea that other approaches might be fruitful in supplementing their own. Against this totalizing tendency, dissenting voices arose within the discipline calling upon established scholars to consider other perspectives. Feminist scholarship, for example, pointed to the shortcomings of the work done by an all-male academy, asserting that the methods and data employed did more than just fly in the face of certain political leanings: they produced bad scholarship. Others, who emphasized experience in the field and the engagement with actual living religious communities, noted that the actual behavior of real-world communities rarely comported completely with the predictions and explanations of single-voiced theories.

At about the same time, religious bodies themselves came to see that their own ends could be advanced by adopting the outsider's perspective, at least provisionally and with a view to answering specific questions. Theologians began looking to sociological and cultural data to ascertain the questions to which their theological reflection ought to address itself, and religious bodies found demographic and other survey data very handy for planning. In the contemporary world, it seems there is room for some accommodation between religion and religious studies. So it turned out that even the pursuit of ultimate truth could still benefit from nonultimate perspectives.

This course will trace these developments in two main parts. First, we will go through the history outlined above in more detail, investigating individual thinkers and movements to see how religious studies arose. After a brief look at the branching-off of religious studies from theology, we will go through the various disciplines of the social sciences: sociology, psychology, anthropology, and phenomenology, noting the major authors and theories found in each. At the end, we will take a look at the feminist and empiricist critiques of these theoretical approaches, and finish with an examination of the ways in which religious studies has come back into the service of religious bodies by providing them with new modes of self-understanding and self-definition.

At the end of the course, the learner should have a solid grasp on the origin and development of religious studies, its major thinkers, theories, and texts, and should have gained new insights into some of the most salient aspects of religious life, belief, and practice, insights that might have applications in his or her own life.

Lecture Thirteen
Brief Excursus on Immanuel Kant

Scope: In this lecture, we will turn aside momentarily from our look at theorists of religion in order to consider the contributions of Immanuel Kant, whose thought altered the course of Western thinking and whose ideas will set the stage for many of the thinkers who follow. Kant was the founder of phenomenology, a trend that turned the eye of philosophy away from the world we seek to know and towards the mind that seeks to know it. The external world, he said, remains ever distant from us; the only information we actually have derives from the phenomena, or "images," that the mind constructs and interprets from sense data. Many of the theorists we will consider in upcoming lectures, following Kant, attended less to the way people use religion to know the world objectively and more to the way they construct webs of symbols through which they interpret the world and give meaning to their lives.

Outline

I. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) revolutionized the Western philosophical approach to the world.

A. Previous philosophy took it for granted that when we think about the world, we are engaging an objective reality outside of ourselves. The major difference was whether the mind's fundamental approach was empirical or rational.

1. In an empirical approach, the mind takes in information about the world and learns about it that way.

2. In a rational approach, the mind begins with a picture of the world already implanted (for instance, by God).

3. In the case of religion, an empirical approach would suggest that we learn about God through a natural revelation we encounter in the world, while a rational approach would maintain that we have a kind of "innate religious sense."

4. Many rationalists since Descartes dreamed of a philosophy that operated like mathematics.

B. David Hume disputed the idea that we have any innate knowledge of the objective world.

1. He said the human mind was a *tabula rasa* at birth, and all human knowledge was gained through experience.

2. Basic ideas such as cause and effect could not be simply deduced by pure reason nor proved theoretically; they were merely the sum of our past experiences.

C. Hume's idea woke Kant up from his "dogmatic slumbers" and set him thinking about how we know things. It precipitated an 11-year lull in his heretofore prolific writing career, which ended with the magnificent synthesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

D. As a result, Kant shifted his focus from the external world to the mind that comes to know it. This is known as the famous "turn to the subject."

II. These trends led to the development of a philosophical style called either "German idealism" or "phenomenology."

A. The word "phenomenology" comes from the Greek *phainomenon*, or "image."

B. Phenomenology is a style of thought that shifts the focus from propositions about the external world to the "image" of it in the mind of the subject.

1. External objects (*Ding an sich* in German, or "things-as-such") are unknowable because any knowledge of them is mediated to the mind via the senses.

2. The mind receives only raw sensory data, which it then interprets by forming it into an image and correlating it with other images and concepts.

3. The mind is structured in such a way that certain categories of knowing, or ways of handling the data, are built in (e.g., space and time).

C. These categories of knowing are not innate knowledge; rather, they are ways of organizing and handling data so as to create knowledge. Take, for example, a tree.

1. Let's look at a tree. To begin with, all we get is shape and color, perhaps texture and sound. The mind has to begin by taking all this and forming it into a coherent mental image.

2. To do this, the mind uses inbuilt mechanisms (such as space and time) for constructing images. We process the image as extending in space and enduring over time, even though in reality no such thing may be true.
3. We then have a concept of the tree where the image is correlated with memory, language, and past experience.
4. This complete image is all we will ever know, and so it is useless to ask whether or not it accurately reflects the world as such.
5. This approach is neither empirical nor rational. Phenomenology breaks through the conflict between empiricism and rationalism.

D. The assumption that an objective, external reality exists is a better hypothesis for understanding the continuity and intersubjectivity of the world. The basic sameness of the structure of all human minds means that, even though we do not perceive the *Ding an sich* directly, we all process the "images" of them in the same way, so we can still communicate with one another about them.

E. As a result, the new task for European philosophy was not to understand the world as such, but to understand the individual's experience of the world.

III. Kant's thoughts on the beautiful and the sublime come from his analysis of beauty and sublimity in "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment."

A. The statement, "that is a beautiful lectern," is in part an act of cognition. This act of cognition, however, only covers the recognition of the object as a lectern.
1. "That is a lectern," is a "determinative" judgment, which states the fact.
2. "It is beautiful," is a "reflective" judgment, which expresses a feeling.

B. Kant turned to the structure of the mind and the mechanisms by which it *experiences* beauty.
1. He noted that, in judging something beautiful, we usually do not claim it as a purely private determination; we think our judgment can be communicated to others.
2. The communicability of judgments of beauty is possible not because the object is beautiful in and of itself but because human minds all have the same structure.
3. If one person finds beauty, then others should as well. This makes the experience of the beauty of an object both *universal* and *necessary*.

C. Kant's application of these ideas to the experience of the sublime had a great influence on religious studies.
1. Like the beautiful, the sublime is appreciated for its own sake, producing a sense of pleasure and manifesting itself in the harmonization of the mind's faculties.
2. Unlike the beautiful, sublimity is found in the sense that the object transcends even its own form.
3. Unlike the beautiful, the sublime evokes more than just feelings of pleasure and joy. It can confront us with fear and awe.
4. Unlike the beautiful, the sublime is not necessarily adapted to our sensibilities. The sublime, said Kant, can "outrage" us.

IV. Kant's ideas of religion specifically impacted later thought.

A. He believed that "reality" was a quality that could be encountered in different degrees of density or intensity.
1. Everything in the world is not equally "real"; some things are more "real," or have a denser existence, than others.
2. The extreme of this idea is God, who for Kant was the most real thing in the cosmos and the ground of possibility from which other realities came forth.
3. This idea recurs later in the thoughts of Mircea Eliade.

B. He used moral or practical reasoning to "justify" religious belief.
1. Kant postulated that human beings, starting from a state of moral evil, can aim themselves toward the "highest good."
2. This aim cultivates virtue and makes an individual strive for happiness, although the first was considered more important than the second.
3. One is justified in believing in the afterlife or the immortality of the soul in order to believe that moral perfection is attainable.

C. He saw happiness as just only when it was deserved.
1. This meant that someone had to determine worthiness and assign happiness accordingly.

2. Thus, an omniscient Providence must be at work in the world.

D. He realized that we are morally deficient and thus incapable of achieving the highest good by our own power. For the pursuit to be reasonable, we can believe in grace, a higher power that supplements our own.

E. While Kant denied the existence of God or the immortality of the soul at the theoretical level, he thought they could be "justified" as a way of making sense out of our pursuit of a moral good.

1. This thought meant that morality gave rise to theology, not the other way around.
2. It also meant that the "truth" of a belief can be questioned, while the belief itself can be justified by pointing to its good effects.
3. The fact that one cannot theoretically disprove the immortality of the soul or God's providence and grace means that one may go ahead and believe them since to do so is more beneficial than not to.
4. This way of thinking leads to Pragmatism, a philosophical stance that holds the truth of propositions is uninteresting. What beliefs do to and for those who hold them is what makes them interesting to investigate.

V. The "turn to the subject" had a profound impact on the way people studied religious questions.

A. It set the program for Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory.

B. It affected the pragmatic psychology of William James.

C. It informed the symbolic studies of anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz.

D. It played into the phenomenological approach of Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade.

Suggested Reading:

Frederick Charles Copleston, *History of Philosophy, Volume VI: Wolff to Kant*. See especially chapters 10–16.

Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Would your own outlook on the world and your place in it change significantly by shifting your focus from questions about the world itself to those regarding the nature of your own subjective experience of it?
2. How does such a point of view affect the way you understand people who might have a very different view of the world and ethics than your own?

Lecture Fourteen
The Victorians and *The Golden Bough*

Scope: The discipline of anthropology came into being during the mid-19th century under the guidance of two men in particular: Edward Tylor (1832–1917) and James Frazer (1854–1941). Because they saw it as a general study of human nature, their method was to take phenomena from all around the world and subject them to comparative analysis in order to distil a common human nature. Tylor sought the origin of religion in early human history by imagining how a primitive thinker (the "savage philosopher") tried to make sense of the world. In Frazer's classic, *The Golden Bough*, he collected enough examples of religious behavior to fill 12 volumes, and subjected all of his data to close analysis in order to get behind the modern manifestations of literate religion to much more primal and universal forms. He also proposed a progression in human knowledge and skill that went through three stages: magic, religion, and science.

Outline

I. The discipline of anthropology emerged in the mid-19th century as explorers began inundating an eager reading public with stories of primitive societies and exotic customs and rituals.

- **A.** The sheer variety of materials, which exhibited both deep differences and provocative patterns, called for systemization and analysis.
- **B.** The discipline was called anthropology (the study of man) because its goal was to discover something about human nature in general, not specific societies in particular.

II. Edward Burnett Tylor created a literary landmark with his two-volume study, *Primitive Culture* (1871).

- **A.** Tylor posited the "savage philosopher," the primitive genius who sat alone and thought about things, as the main carrier of religious advance.
- **B.** Tylor devoted much of the study to the theory of animism as the wellspring of religion.
  1. People in primitive cultures have dreams of recently deceased individuals and assume that the figure seen in the dream is the person.
  2. Since they also dream of living people, they reify this dream-image into a spirit detachable from the living person.
  3. Since these spirits are detachable, then theoretically spirits may exist that do not inhabit physical bodies at any time. Hence, they can be divinities or other spirits.
  4. This is the origin of religion, which for Tylor is always a "belief in spiritual beings."
  5. Animism also stands at the root of all mythology. Primitive people develop stories that help to explain why they behave in certain ways. For Tylor, myths are explanatory, not literary.
- **C.** Tylor also brought up the idea of survivals, cultural patterns that persisted beyond the time when they were relevant.
  1. Survivals were always throwbacks, not useful in the modern context (e.g., using Christmas trees).
  2. Survivals could not be valorized in their own right because they no longer made sense. For Tylor, the word was equivalent to "superstition."
  3. Tylor concluded that all of religion, as a belief in spiritual beings, was a survival that had no real place or function in the modern world but instead held on simply from custom and habit.
- **D.** Tylor posited the idea of progress or evolution in human understanding.
  1. Prior to Tylor, the dominant religious theory about human history assumed the creation story in the Bible and a perfection that had been lost in The Fall.
  2. This theory was called degenerationism: the view that primitive people were actually higher than modern people and saw no connection between modern primitive tribal societies and earlier societies.
  3. Bringing forward evidence from archeology and paleontology, Tylor turned the model upside down and stated that ancient primitives were the same as modern primitives and that humanity had been on an ascent.
  4. Tylor assumed a basic sameness in human mental capacity and activity, so that ancient primitives were really no different from modern, industrialized people.

5. This idea justified the comparative method. Only if you assumed the basic sameness could you justify studying people from a variety of times, places, and levels of cultural development in an effort to understand "the human."

III. James George Frazer followed in Tylor's footsteps, but extended and refined his theories.

A. Frazer began his multivolume magnum opus, *The Golden Bough*, with a story from the Greek travel writer Pausanias about a strange custom.

1. In Aricia, the King of the Wood took office by slaying his predecessor.
2. Having attained his office, the King became the consort of the hunter-goddess Diana.
3. The King could be challenged only by one who had first obtained the "golden bough" from a sacred tree.

B. Frazer assumed that this custom contained elements from far older beliefs and practices. He searched the entire world to find analogues to help understand it.

1. He explained the whole process of magic in terms of sympathetic and contagious magic.
2. He found other instances of fertility goddesses with male human consorts.
3. He pointed to other examples of tree worship and marriage between people and trees thought to embody divinities.
4. He found other instances of kings with primarily priestly functions.
5. He found myths from other cultures where a young male god is killed with the help of mistletoe, which Frazer claimed was the "golden bough" due to its color.
6. He found ways of understanding the custom of the King of the Wood. By fanning out from this starting point, he covered a global journey through many religious beliefs and rites.

C. Frazer developed an evolutionary scheme out of this material. Like Tylor, he believed that humanity went through an infancy, childhood, and maturation process.

1. At the beginning, there is only magic and the effort to perform specific tasks through manipulation.
2. This is followed by a period of religion where people pray to divinities to get things done.
3. All ends with science which, like magic, uses techniques to do specific things but, being based on sound principles, is more effective.

IV. Evaluation of the Victorian theorists.

A. Both Tylor and Frazer, as well as other writers, built on the new discoveries of Darwinian evolution, geology, and archeology to support their theories.

B. Both men looked for a universal religiousness in humankind, believing that the evolution of the human mind followed similar scientific processes.

C. Both men believed that religion was now outmoded and must finally give way to science.

D. Both men believed that religion was based on the individual and was primarily about gaining knowledge about the world.

1. Tylor's "savage philosopher" and Frazer's King of the Wood were trying to understand the world around them.
2. Neither author paid attention to the social functions of religion and so believed that, with the rise of science, religion was bound to fall away.
3. Frazer sees all ritual as forms of technology. For example, fire festivals have no social purpose but are only efforts to keep the sun from vanishing after the winter solstice.

Suggested Reading:

James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the Victorian belief in a universal human nature governed by uniform scientific laws compare with the current trend toward valuing cultural diversity and particularity?
2. Both Tylor and Frazer exercised enormous influence over later philosophy and cultural studies. Have you noticed similar enterprises to explore a universal dimension in human religion and myth?

Lecture Fifteen
British Functionalism

Scope: During the 1920s, a school of anthropology arose that grew impatient with Frazer's style of "armchair anthropology," which fed off of data collected by others and confined itself to theorizing. It also expressed dissatisfaction with the technique of taking individual bits of belief and ritual out of their total cultural context. This school, represented by Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) decided that anthropologists needed to do their own fieldwork using native languages, and that they should study one culture intensively in order to understand it adequately, and leave the comparison for later. The name "functionalism" arose as they taught that all cultural forms, religion included, served a function in helping the local society to survive and thrive. Thus, in examining religious beliefs and rituals, the interpretive task was not to find out what they meant in themselves, but how they functioned.

Outline

I. Functionalism is a movement in Western anthropology that arose during the 1920s and is still current today.

- **A.** Functionalism grew out of a negative assessment of the work of the Victorian anthropologists.
  - **1.** The work of Victorian anthropologists was felt to be too speculative and grand in its theories.
  - **2.** They took individual cultural phenomena out of their contexts and compared them with other out-of-context phenomena to find patterns.
  - **3.** They relied on questionable ethnographies gathered from all over the world, and they never learned any local languages. Consequently, they never got to know any given culture in its complexity and completeness.
  - **4.** Their construal of religion as bad science had no explanatory power.
  - **5.** Functionalists felt that the search for the origin of religion was a dead end. What mattered was how religion functioned.
  - **6.** They were not concerned at all with the truth or falsity of religious beliefs.
- **B.** Functionalists became their own ethnographers, going abroad to do their own fieldwork after studying the local language.
- **C.** Functionalists understood local cultures to be like organisms, with each part performing a certain function in order to ensure the survival of the whole.
  - **1.** Their task was to identify the function of each component.
  - **2.** They tended to look past negative understandings of cultural practices in order to find their own reason for it (e.g., Marvin Harris's accounts of the Israelite prohibition on pork and the Aztec cult of human sacrifice).

II. Bronislaw Malinowski is generally held to be the founder of functionalism.

- **A.** He envisioned the functions of society as mirroring the functions necessary to keep a biological organism alive.
  - **1.** These functions were: nutrition, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, relation, movement, and growth into the secondary needs of society.
  - **2.** To understand any aspect of culture, one had to identify which of these functions was fulfilled.
  - **3.** His landmark study, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), was concerned with commerce and economics among Trobriand Islanders and was hailed as the starting point for "economic anthropology."
- **B.** His analysis of myth illustrates these ideas more clearly.
  - **1.** He began by criticizing previous studies of myth that concentrated solely on the text of the story. He saw these interpretations of myth as purely literary and speculative, saying nothing about the place of the myth in the overall structure of a society.
  - **2.** He saw fieldwork as a way to see how the myths function—how they intersect with rituals, provide instructions and models for activities.
  - **3.** This approach would show that myths do not *explain* anything; instead, what they relate to are often the most familiar aspects of social and family life.

C. His recounting of a Trobriand myth reflects this approach.
   1. The heads of the four main Trobriand clans emerge from the underworld. As they come out, there is a seemingly nonsensical dialogue between the Dog and the Pig, in which the Dog asserts the lowly nature of the Pig and its own superiority.
   2. Spending time with the Trobriands and observing the relationships between clans shows how this story is a force that causes a certain relationship to ensue.
   3. The story functions within the competition for status to the advantage of the Dog clan.
   4. Fieldworkers would see that the myth is told right away to any newcomer to the village, providing him or her with a succinct and speedy education in the local social structure and legal relationships of the village.
   5. Malinowski sought to demonstrate that, contrary to Tylor and Frazer's findings, myths are not simply local variants of universal motifs designed to explain puzzles of the natural world or manipulate them. Instead, they are living narratives that work integrally with all other aspects of local culture to shape relationships. They *function* rather than *explain*.

III. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown was the other great fieldworker and functionalist.

A. He saw society itself as the unit that had to function, not the individual.
   1. The needs of the individual were of no account.
   2. The functions that one looked for had to be practices and beliefs that enabled the society to thrive.
   3. These functions specifically preserved the structure of a society so that the individual could be integrated into the whole.
   4. Any item of folklore, ritual, or belief had to contribute to legitimizing and extending the structure.

B. He put great stress on ritual.
   1. Rituals took and regulated people's emotions so that they would be inclined to subordinate their behavior to the needs of society.
   2. The primary sentiment to be inculcated was a sense of dependence on power.

IV. Functionalism was useful in promoting fieldwork and the intensive investigation of single societies as self-contained wholes, but it had drawbacks as well.

A. It tended to neglect the interactions of societies with outside forces (e.g., the presence of colonial powers or neighboring societies).

B. It discounted what local people had to say about their own practices and muted the native voice.

C. It had the potential to make anthropology into a spinner of "just-so stories," according to E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

Suggested Reading:

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society.*

Michael Lambek, ed., *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion.*

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the thought that a religious doctrine or practice has a function that aids in the working and survival of an individual or a community, and that this function is something other than what the devotees say it is, lead you to think that you have understood that teaching or practice better? Alternatively, does it seem to you to miss the point? Why?

2. Imagine that the situation is reversed, and that someone is proposing to you that something you do regularly in your life (religious or otherwise) cannot be understood in the terms in which you describe it, but rather has to be understood in reference to functions that you yourself had not thought of. Would that seem satisfactory to you? Would you feel you had gained a new insight into your life, or that the questioner had not understood you?

Lecture Sixteen
Symbolic Anthropology—Ferdinand de Saussure

Scope: Symbolic anthropology in turn mounted its own rebellion against the functionalists. During the 1950s and 1960s, a growing number of scholars felt that functionalism muted the native voice: if the researcher could find out how a ritual or practice "functioned," then they had no need to attend to what local informants actually said about it. In getting into symbolic anthropology, we will begin not with an anthropologist but with a linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). His theories of signs as mental constructs of signifier/signified relied on Kantian thought to show how people used language to make sense of the world. His distinction between *langue* (a language in itself such as English or French) and *parole* (individual acts of speaking) opened a new way of understanding the relationship between culture and cultural acts, and gave scope for once again bringing the native voice into a theoretical framework.

Outline

I. Symbolic anthropology grew out of the dissatisfactions with functionalism.
- **A.** Scholars began to desire a way to interpret local cultures as dynamic and interactive rather than merely explain them.
- **B.** Scholars wanted to pay attention to the native (emic) accounts of what rituals and beliefs meant rather than just the outsider's (etic) account of what they did.

II. The key to culture was found in the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure.
- **A.** Saussure began his analysis by looking at the nature of the sign rather than words and their referents.
  - **1.** The sign is the basic unit of language and is purely mental. Rather than pointing outward to an object, it consists of two parts: the signifier and the signified, both of which are contained in the mind.
  - **2.** This idea followed Kant's dictum that we do not know the world as it is but only as we construct it.
  - **3.** Saussure added that we also assign a sign to the concept. The word, as he saw it, is a "sound-image" that is associated with the concept.
  - **4.** The act of constructing the world into a set of signified concepts involves relating concepts to one another and constructing a web of signification.
  - **5.** Signs do not point to different things in the world. Assigning the word simply reinforces the distinction already made.
  - **6.** Signs put a "fence" around concepts and distinguish them from other concepts (e.g., the French and English words for sheep).
- **B.** Saussure saw signs as arbitrary, which means there is no reason why one sound-image should necessarily denote any given thing.
  - **1.** Different languages have different words for the same thing, all of which are no less rooted in reality than another.
  - **2.** Different language-groups construct the world into different clusterings of concepts, thus creating a different world to live in.
- **C.** The arbitrariness of the sign means that it is both mutable and immutable.
  - **1.** It is mutable because the fact that there is no necessary connection between the sound-image and the thing means that the sound-image can change.
  - **2.** It is immutable because language is created by communities, not individuals. Individuals are not free to change language at will; instead, they find it and pass it on.
  - **3.** This was the basic insight of Comte when he established sociology as a discipline.
  - **4.** This gives scope to think of language as a growing, evolving thing with a life of its own that transcends the individual.
- **D.** Saussure also distinguished two separate aspects of any language: the language as such (*langue*) and actual instances of speaking (*parole*).
  - **1.** *Langue* denoted the language as conceived as a totality: all the words in the vocabulary and all the grammatical rules for putting those words together in meaningful ways.
  - **2.** *Parole* signifies all actual instances of speaking: the active deployment of words and structures.

3. *Parole* is the only concrete existence any language has. *Langue* is a pure abstraction that does not exist anywhere.
4. Without *langue*, there is nothing for *parole* to instantiate concretely.
5. This analysis of *langue* and *parole* gave scholars in other fields a way to think about other areas of human behaviors that manifest in concrete ways based on underlying structures, including religion.

III. The applicability of this linguistic theory becomes apparent if you substitute the words "culture" or "religion" for "language."

A. Culture itself becomes a web of signifiers and signifieds, woven together to create a meaningful world.

B. The mechanisms for transmitting culture and religion across generations become visible by using Saussure's analysis of the mutability and immutability of language.

C. The distinction between *langue* and *parole* provided a way to talk about such dyads as "culture/cultural performance" and "religion/religious acts."

D. The symbolic approach provided a way to value the native voice once again, something that had been lost in functionalism.

IV. We will examine two anthropologists who drew on Saussure's analysis of language to theorize about culture and religion.

A. Claude Lévi-Strauss tended to emphasize the *langue* dimension.

B. Clifford Geertz preferred the *parole* dimension, taking more interest in actual cultural performance.

Suggested Reading:

Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*.

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you find it surprising to think of words as *not* referring to things in the real world? Does Saussure's argument in favor of this proposition strike you as convincing?
2. Do you find that Saussure's analysis can be applied to areas of study outside of linguistics? If so, which?

Lecture Seventeen
Symbolic Anthropology—Claude Lévi-Strauss

Scope: Saussure's distinction of *langue* and *parole* led symbolic anthropologists to go in two distinct directions. The first direction is represented by the Structuralists, led by Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908), and it tilted toward *langue*. This meant that they looked at culture as such, much as a linguist might look at a language as an overall set of symbols (vocabulary) and rules for their use in speech (grammar) rather than at individual acts of speech. Lévi-Strauss thus tried to identify the individual, recurring symbols by which people gave meaning to their lives and the rules for their assembly into cultural forms (myths, practices, rituals, and so on). By drawing together many examples of a myth or a ritual wherein a finite set of elements were pieced together to form the whole (a process he called *bricolage*, or "make-shifting"), Lévi-Strauss sought to get at the fundamental workings of the human mind as it built culture.

Outline

I. Strauss represents the "structural approach" to culture and religion and is widely regarded as the founder of Structuralism.

- **A.** Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908).
  - **1.** He was born in Belgium in 1908 but lived and studied in France.
  - **2.** He taught sociology at the University of São Paulo in Brazil.
  - **3.** While in Brazil, he explored aboriginal tribes around the Amazon in search of a truly primitive culture.
  - **4.** On the border near Paraguay and Bolivia, he found the Tupi-Kawahib, a completely unknown, undiscovered, and uncontaminated tribe.
  - **5.** As an anthropologist, he wanted to study people who were untouched by "Western filth." Having finally found such people, however, he discovered them to be so different that he could not communicate with them and learn what they had to teach without risk of contaminating them and ruining his own project.
- **B.** Lévi-Strauss began to piece together a way of approaching the "savage" mind that did not depend on mastering their language or talking directly to them.
  - **1.** Following the Kantian tradition, he decided that there were structures of the mind that caused people to manipulate symbols as a way of organizing their world, their societies, and their activities.
  - **2.** These structures could be found by attending to the other ways in which they deployed symbols and then relating symbols to one another.
  - **3.** The result of this was much like Saussure's *langue*.

II. Lévi-Strauss was sympathetic to the project of Frazer and the Victorians but felt they had not gone deep enough to generate useful analysis of symbols; they had merely catalogued them.

- **A.** Lévi-Strauss used a linguistic model based explicitly on Saussure's analysis via his colleague, Roman Jakobson.
- **B.** Lévi-Strauss thought a comparative method would yield not just catalogues but a way to find the deeper structures of human thought. Frazer's project had been like learning many languages and discovering they all had ways of saying the same thing without learning about *language itself*.
- **C.** Lévi-Strauss wanted his comparative method to go beyond surface similarity to find the deep structures of human thought: the *langue* behind the *parole*.
- **D.** Lévi-Strauss rejected the standard functionalist method of learning a local culture intensively and reclaimed the project of learning about human nature as such.
  - **1.** His method would allow him to study myths in European translations without travel to field locations.
  - **2.** The relationship between symbols would be clear enough to look at their juxtapositions and arrive at conclusions about deep structures that made language and ritual possible in the first place.
  - **3.** Thus was born Structuralism, a mode of cultural analysis that quickly took hold of the Western imagination and escaped Lévi-Strauss's own control, spreading out into art, philosophy, and literature.

III. Lévi-Strauss borrowed Saussure's concepts of *langue* and *parole*, rechristening them as culture and syntagm.

A. Culture refers to the overall system within which a community of people operates to structure and give meaning to their common life.
  1. Culture, like *langue* in Saussure's analysis, can only exist in the abstract and is not concretely contained anywhere *in toto*.
  2. Culture becomes visible to analysis only when enacted in cultural acts.

B. Syntagm refers to an actual cultural act (e.g., a ritual, the telling of a myth, the setting of the table for a festive dinner).

C. Beyond the concrete acts of syntagm and the abstract reality of culture, Lévi-Strauss thought to find the universal "structure" of human thought, a task that could only be done comparatively. Large-scale, global comparisons of cultural artifacts would weed out the purely local and reveal the truly universal.

D. He saw this deep structure as comparable to the innate structures of the human mind that enable us to learn language.

E. Just as speech took place through the transformation of deep grammatical structures, Lévi-Strauss thought that cultural acts took place through transformations of another kind of mental structure. This structure could be mapped out by the tabulation of comparative elements in such categories as myths and rituals.

IV. Lévi-Strauss's analysis began with a differentiation between nature and culture.

A. Animals thrive through nature. Acting on instinct, they survive without any mental transformation of elements of their world. They deal with things directly without having to symbolize them.

B. Human beings, lacking these instincts, need to give things in the world significations in order to organize them and deal with them.
  1. This is done by taking natural phenomena and imbuing them with meaning.
  2. The meaning ranges along two axes: static states and transitional states.
  3. In a traffic light, for example, red and green indicate two static states while yellow indicates a transitional state.

C. The example of a traffic light illustrates a triangular structure from which Lévi-Strauss believed he could draw the line from nature to culture.
  1. Assigning a color to a message about stopping one's car is not arbitrary. In human vision, the color yellow lies in the center of the frequencies that we can see, and so has the greatest intensity. Red and green are less intense, and so are seen less distinctly.
  2. Since the transitional state is the most important one to communicate, yellow becomes the most natural color for this since it is the most intense of the three.
  3. By this procedure, we have successfully moved from a purely natural phenomenon (color) to a cultural message (prepare to stop). This indicates that we are closing in on a natural structure of the mind that operates in the natural world to generate symbols.

D. Another example is natural food.
  1. Natural food is transformed culturally by cooking and naturally by rotting.
  2. This can be translated into significations and hierarchies between foods that are cooked (meats) and "rotted" (cheeses and yogurts), and others where the "rotting" is simulated by steaming or boiling.
  3. By arranging such foods on a table, one creates a meaningful tableau; by seating people around the table, one assigns social roles.

E. This form of analysis would yield insights into human nature universally rather than just local knowledge about a particular culture.

V. Lévi-Strauss used a method of tabulating the recurring elements of myth to derive structures of thought.

A. Such recurring themes might be the son who unwittingly kills the father (Oedipus) or the faithful wife wrongly accused (e.g., Sita in the Ramayana).

B. Such encoding was necessary to communicate cultural truths that could not be stated directly or that were desires for wish-fulfillment.

C. The myths themselves generally occurred as parts of large cycles or complexes, becoming composite elements in larger compositions.
  1. This was necessary because the message that the ancestors were trying to communicate through myths were liable to become garbled by time.

2. A chiastic, repetitive structure in which the message is repeated with variation ensures that it gets across.

VI. Lévi-Strauss did not wish to make it appear that actual cultural acts and gestures came about by a systematic erection of structures.

A. When people speak, they take the materials that are at hand within their *langue* in order to generate *parole*.

B. Culturally significant acts are always improvisational in character. People take elements of culture that are readily at hand and build them together according to the products that the structures make possible. Lévi-Strauss referred to this process as *bricolage* ("jerry-rigging" or "make-shifting").

C. Like Jung, Lévi-Strauss posited that the collective unconscious and its archetypes are rooted in the natural makeup of the mind.

Suggested Reading:

Michael Lambek, ed., *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion.*

Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Must one accept an either/or choice when faced with the functionalist and symbolic alternatives? Extending the linguistic analogy, could one choose *both* to learn another language well *and* study the deep structures of language itself?
2. Do you agree that the human mind is deeply structured to process symbols, and that we can usefully discover that structure?

Lecture Eighteen
Symbolic Anthropology—Clifford Geertz

Scope: Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) represents Pragmatism, the second trend in symbolic anthropology. In a highly influential article published in the 1960s, as well as in ethnographic studies of Indonesian and Moroccan culture, Geertz has presented religion as a network of symbols requiring "thick description" in order to tease out all of its interconnected meanings. Unlike Lévi-Strauss, he has not sought to describe its overall structure. Rather, he has focused attention on how symbol-systems impel people to maintain certain moods and to undertake certain types of activity. In adopting this perspective, Geertz has been able to show how breakdowns or transitions in a symbol system lead to social disorder as well. Following a thorough discussion of Geertz's approach to religion, we will consider ways in which the structuralist and pragmatist approaches might both find a place in anthropological analysis of religion.

Outline

I. Clifford Geertz was not satisfied with the functionalist approach but for different reasons than Lévi-Strauss.

A. Functionalism did not adequately distinguish between culture and social structure.

1. Social structure simply denoted the patterns of interaction that allowed social groups to function through communication and exchange.

2. Culture was the collective imputation of significance to the actions that took place within those structures.

3. Culture was thus a "web of significations" that made social action meaningful.

4. By merely observing actions without attending to this web of significations, one could not distinguish between an involuntary eye-twitch and a wink.

5. Borrowing a term from his teacher, Gilbert Ryle, Geertz called upon anthropologists to provide "thick descriptions" of local culture—ethnographies that went beyond descriptions of the observable to an account of the web of meanings that observables had for the native informants.

B. Functionalism could not diagnose the crises brought on by change.

1. Geertz used the example of a Javanese funeral that went wrong.

2. A strict functionalism could not say how the crisis ensued or what it might mean beyond threatening the survival of the group.

3. A symbolic approach could yield an account of why the situation became a crisis by robbing people of the meaning that would enable them to know what a funeral was for.

II. In his essay "Religion as a Cultural System," Geertz gave religion a specific definition as a starting point.

A. "Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."

B. This definition sees religion as a model of the world in two senses: "model of" and "model for." This distinction allows him to see religion as both a world view (a way of seeing the world as a meaningful, coherent whole) and an ethos (a set of standards for conduct and action within the world).

C. The world view is the "model of" aspect of religion that provides a picture of reality in actual fact. World view is essential; without it, we do not know who we are and have no way to orient ourselves in reality. People are troubled by chaos that arises in three arenas: the inexplicable, suffering, and moral evil.

1. The inexplicable: things or events that we cannot understand or explain in principle within our current world view.

2. Suffering: when we reach the limit of our endurance of suffering and can make no sense of it.

3. Moral evil: events like the Holocaust that confront us with impenetrable evil that we cannot understand.

4. All of these threats of chaos (or anomy) need to be addressed in order to reassure people that they know where they are and what is what. Only then will they have confidence that they can get along in the world.

D. The ethos is the "model for" aspect of religion that provides a set of prescriptions for action: moods and motivations.

1. Moods indicate propensities to feel certain ways or to adopt a particular emotional tone (e.g., the bellicosity of Plains Indians or the cool introspection of the Javanese).
2. Motivations indicate propensities to act in certain ways (e.g., to be a smoker is to be likely to smoke a cigarette in the near future if one is not already doing so).
3. Moods go nowhere and are scalar in intensity. Motivations carry one forward into action. Both are based on world view.

E. Both models mutually interact. If reality is a certain way, then certain patterns of action make the most sense. If these actions seem to work, then the world view must be correct.

F. Ritual brings these two models into the closest interaction.
1. Ritual is both a creation of a certain reality and a response to that reality.
2. Ritual, as such, makes the conceptions of a religious world view seem "uniquely realistic."

G. Geertz uses the description of a dramatic ritual in which the witch Rangda and the monster-buffoon Barong come into combat as a reflection of this interaction.
1. The basic plot reinforces the point that there is no pure, unambiguous good or evil in the world.
2. The strife between opposing forces is never resolved, only quelled for the time being until the defeated force regroups.
3. The audience in the drama is never merely passive; the emotional effect of the ritual leaves them convinced of the power of their world view.
4. Having had their world view reinforced in the ritual, they then carry it into their daily lives.

III. Geertz's exposition of religion is very different from Lévi-Strauss's, even though both are symbolic anthropologists.

A. In Saussurean terms, Lévi-Strauss stressed the *langue* aspect of culture—its static, theoretical structures that support all cultural activities.

B. Geertz stresses the *parole* aspect—the actual speech acts (e.g., cultural performances).
1. His book *Islam Observed* spent much time describing how the lives and daily activities of Muslims in Indonesia and Morocco differed but devoted no time at all to Muslim belief.
2. He was quite critical of Lévi-Strauss and stressed that the attempt to describe a static structure of ideas had no way to account for historical dynamism and cultural change.
3. He spent no time trying to systematize the symbols and describe the "web" they form, but instead described how they lead to certain moods and motivations.
4. According to James Boon, while Lévi-Strauss's static structures would be of no use in trying to understand crisis and change, Geertz's dynamic, pragmatic model might not be of any help in understanding static displays and symbolic gestures that go nowhere (e.g., jokes).

C. Both approaches have much to recommend them and should be applied together. An example of this is Thanksgiving dinner.
1. Lévi-Strauss will help one understand why the Thanksgiving table is set in a certain way.
2. Geertz will help one understand why a certain person gets to carve the turkey.

IV. Symbolic anthropology also gives us a way of organizing the three kinds of theories we have looked at into different spheres of operation.

A. Psychology relates what happens within the psyche of the individual in both socialized and unsocialized aspects.

B. Sociology gives us a way to analyze the actual exchanges that take place between social actors.

C. Anthropology looks at culture, now understood as a publicly shared system of meanings.

D. For example, when a black motorist is stopped by a white policeman, each individual construes the event in terms of his or her own individual life experiences. They both participate in a structured exchange. When they go back to their own social groups, the meaning they ascribe to the exchange may be quite different.

E. Religion also has individual aspects that may be healthy or pathological and lead to personal and social integration or impede it. Religion may be enacted in exchange relationships both within its own group and with the surrounding society.

F. All three theories assume the stance of methodological atheism.

G. The fourth set of theories, phenomenological, tries to recover a sense that religions point to something in the world and are not mistaken when they perceive the sacred at work.

Suggested Reading:

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures.*

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you find yourself leaning toward Lévi-Strauss's or Geertz's approach to cultural understanding? What in your preferred author's thought appeals to you?
2. Has anthropology been moving in a steady trajectory of improvement as one theoretical framework replaces the other, or is there, as James Boon asserts, a place for all three of the approaches we have examined?

Lecture Nineteen
From Fries to Otto

Scope: The phenomenological approach to religion began as a protest against previous scholars' reductionism. The progenitors of this discipline argued that religious phenomena could not be reduced to sociology, economics, or psychology but had to be studied *as religion*. Kant had devised arguments to keep phenomenology from deteriorating into solipsism by showing that experiences of reality make more sense when connected to a real, external world. Similarly, the phenomenologists of religion argued that religious sensibilities are best understood as responses to a real religious object. Rudolf Otto identified this as the holy, a reality to which human beings responded with both awe and fascination. The experience of the holy, for him, was the foundation of religion, and this response could best be accounted for if one assumed that the holy was indeed objectively real. As such, the experience of it could not be investigated by any discipline other than religious studies.

Outline

I. A review of Immanuel Kant's ideas regarding religion.

- **A.** Kant allowed two modes of proving or justifying religious belief: reason and morality.
  - **1.** His theoretical proof of God showed nothing more than that God was the locus of the greatest density of being and thus the matrix out of which all other possibilities arose.
  - **2.** Where reason failed, morality came into play. Thus, the providence and grace of God and the immortality of the soul, while not proven, were not disproved either.
  - **3.** As an alternative, one could "justify" belief in these by pointing to the beneficial effects they had on the moral lives of the people who believed them.
- **B.** Missing from Kant's ideas is something that, even in his day, some people thought essential to religion: feeling.
  - **1.** Kant lived at the outset of the Romantic period, which had a religious analogue in the movement known as Pietism.
  - **2.** Pietism stressed feeling as the basis for religion. A massively influential book published near the end of Kant's life, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* by Friedrich Schleiermacher, defined religion as a "feeling of ultimate dependence."
  - **3.** Kant's rationalism and moralism seemed rather thin to someone wishing for more affect in their religion.
- **C.** Kant did address feeling in one area: the aesthetic experience of beauty and the sublime.
  - **1.** These experiences were defined by the feeling of disinterested pleasure that they produced through the harmonization of the mental faculties.
  - **2.** Aside from the experience of the sublime, there was no explicit connection between the aesthetic feeling and religion.
  - **3.** Aesthetic feelings had no object to which they could be attached.
  - **4.** The only thing that saved aesthetics from a completely private subjectivism was the shared structure of minds that made it possible to communicate and share the experience.

II. Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843) refined Kant's phenomenology in order to account for aesthetic experience.

- **A.** Kant had left no room for proof of religious realities in his system. Questions of God, free will, and the immortality of the soul could neither be proved nor disproved, and so one was entitled to adopt the conclusion that provided the best practical or moral effects.
- **B.** Fries was not happy with Kant's cold, calculating approach to art and beauty.
  - **1.** In addition to reason and morality, Fries added feeling to the repertoire of ways we come to know the world.
  - **2.** To have an aesthetic experience of beauty or a religious experience of something sacred meant one was apprehending something in the external world.
  - **3.** Using the Kantian argument against solipsism, Fries felt justified in saying that these feelings, which he called *ahndung* (intimations), had to correspond to something real in the world. Beauty and the sublime could be seen as real.

4. These feelings were called intimations rather than cognitions because the object of the experience transcended the world of sensory objects. Beauty and the sublime, therefore, were not there for us to perceive. As transcendent realities, they could only be intuited.
5. Fries felt this was a better explanation for the intersubjectivity and communicability of the aesthetic experience.
6. Fries, like Kant, was not particularly religious and only intended to amend Kant's aesthetics, not defend religion or make a place for it in a Kantian framework.

III. Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) was deeply influenced by Fries' refinement of Kant's phenomenology.

A. Otto accepted the proposition that a feeling or intimation could underwrite a valid cognition of an external reality.

B. Otto, unlike Fries, declared that the religious feeling was more than just a feeling of beauty. He found more resonance in Kant's description of the experience of the sublime. The sublime is a "sterner" beauty that confronts the individual with something alien, attractive, and potentially frightening (e.g., Martin Luther's encounter with the thunderstorm).

C. Otto decided that religion was based on an encounter with an entity he called the holy. Otto used the word numinous to designate this reality.
1. The experience of the holy was unlike any other experience.
2. The encounter with the holy evoked a unique human response of both awe and fascination: the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.
3. The holy was the "wholly other"—utterly beyond ordinary human experience (*mysterium*).
4. Otto described the *tremendum* in terms of three categories: the experience was overpowering, awesome, and infused with energy and urgency. The *tremendum* also attracted (*fascinans*).
5. The experience was one of ultimacy, finality, and satisfaction. It seemed to possess the greatest density of reality.
6. The encounter induced in the individual a response that Otto called creature-feeling. It made one vividly aware of one's own transience and contingency in the face of the ultimate.
7. Only those who had had this experience could really understand religion.

D. Otto did not necessarily reject Kant's insistence on the moral component of religion. While many religious leaders had based moral convictions upon encounters with the holy, there seemed no necessary reason why the two should be linked. Many religions did not connect them.

E. Otto saw religion as a *sui generis* subject for study, meaning that it could not be reduced to another discipline such as psychology, sociology, or anthropology. This was a move against reductionism.

F. There has been much dissatisfaction with Otto's views.
1. His views take an experience that few people have and make it the essence of religion.
2. His views suggest that scholars who wish to study religion cannot if they do not have this experience themselves.
3. Some secular-minded scholars claim that Otto engaged in a hermetic study of religion open only to initiates.
4. His views are Lutheran in their concept of the utterly individual nature of the encounter.
5. His views have no room for any kind of social role for religion.

G. Otto provides the last link for the opening of a phenomenological study of religion. His views inspired the musings of Mircea Eliade, who corrected the limitations of Otto and brought the phenomenological method into full flower.

Suggested Reading:

Gregory D. Alles, "Toward a Genealogy of the Holy: Rudolf Otto and the Apologetics of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69/2 (June 2001), 323–41.

Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent do you agree that the experience of a feeling can be a source of knowledge about something in the world? Does the experience of beauty, for example, mean that beauty really exists?

2. Do you agree that a strong experience of encounter with the holy is the basis of *all* religion? Is religion ultimately reducible to a feeling?

Lecture Twenty
Mircea Eliade

Scope: While Otto called the reality behind all religious experience the holy, Mircea Eliade (1907–86) preferred to call it "the sacred." He also extended on Otto's thought by looking not only at the response of individual persons to the sacred but to the way that an inbreaking of the sacred into the human world had social and cultural effects as well, from the selection of sites for the founding of cities or the erection of ridgepoles in homes, to the arising of Jungian-like archetypes in human storytelling and communications. For Eliade, the sacred was a formative power in human communal life, and he devoted his energies to exploring the recurring patterns in its appearance. This led him to bring back into play the wide-ranging comparative methods of Frazer, for which he has received some of the same criticisms, but he has easily been the most influential Western scholar of religion in the 20th century.

Outline

I. Mircea Eliade built on Otto's idea of the holy as a real phenomenon that breaks into the world.
- **A.** He used the term "the sacred" instead of "the holy."
- **B.** Like Otto, he concentrated on how people experienced the sacred instead of how they conceptualized it.
- **C.** He believed that all humans responded to the sacred, even those who did not encounter it firsthand.
  - **1.** People use symbols to represent various aspects of the sacred.
  - **2.** People establish towns, build sanctuaries, and organize space and time with reference to the sacred.
  - **3.** Modern, secularized humanity, while rejecting the sacred, still feels a nostalgia for the experience of "archaic peoples."
  - **4.** People who retain the experience of the sacred and continue to respond to it are *homo religiosus* (religious humans).

II. Mircea Eliade's idea of sacred space.
- **A.** Though scientifically, we conceptualize space as continuous and uniform, religious people experience space as divided into profane space and sacred space.
  - **1.** Profane space is the ordinary space in which we live and go about our daily activities free of all reference to larger reality.
  - **2.** Sacred space is the space where the sacred breaks into our ordinary reality and manifests itself (a hierophany).
  - **3.** Sacred space is experienced differently. When one enters a sacred space, he or she acts in accordance with the environment (e.g., a church).
- **B.** Hierophanies create points of reference that help people orient themselves in an otherwise trackless world. They help create a cosmos out of chaos.
  - **1.** *Axis mundi*, or "world-axis," is the location where the sacred breaks into ordinary reality.
  - **2.** Cities might be founded on hierophanies (e.g., the vision of the eagle and snake that established the site of Mexico City).
  - **3.** A church, temple, or shrine may provide a center for organized, habitable space.
  - **4.** The entire world can be centered on a central, sacred point (e.g., Jerusalem or Mecca).
- **C.** Outside of the sacrally organized space lies the danger of chaos.
  - **1.** Chaos can be seen as a wilderness and a strange land.
  - **2.** Such places, being outside the sacralized and organized world, are considered dangerous.
  - **3.** Such places are also charged with transformative power through the ability to unmake and remake an individual. Many initiation rites take place there (e.g., Jesus' 40 days in the desert).
- **D.** People need such a point of orientation to know where they are in the world.
  - **1.** Settled peoples erect a central structure (such as a cathedral with a steeple) where the sacred breaks in and which serves as a central point of reference.
  - **2.** Wandering peoples carry with them a token (such as a sacred pole) so that they will always be at the center regardless of where they are.
  - **3.** Eliade illustrates this need through the example of an Australian nomadic tribe that lay down and died when their sacred pole was broken.

E. The idea of sacred space is best illustrated by a map found in a 13th-century monastic Psalter which shows a sacred conception of the world.
  1. Jerusalem lies at the center, representing the spot where God was manifested in Jesus.
  2. As one moves away from the center, one sees more signs of chaos and disintegration represented by deformed people around the periphery.
  3. Outside this globe lie representations of chaos (e.g., dragons).

III. Mircea Eliade's idea of sacred time.
  A. Just as space holds an unequal density of profanity and sacrality, so too does time.
    1. Profane time is ordinary, unexceptional time.
    2. Sacred time is either the *illud tempus* (the "once upon a time") when sacred events happened or ritual time that recaptures and makes that sacred time present once again.
  B. The *illud tempus* is the time of creation and the time when all was new and fresh in the world.
    1. This time is not historical but mythical.
    2. This time is often recurrent, based on the phases of the moon and the cycles of the seasons.
    3. This time is recaptured by religious rituals which retell the myths again.

IV. Mircea Eliade's idea of symbol.
  A. The sacred as such is never on display; it is a Kantian *Ding an sich*.
    1. It can only be inferred by observing how people experience it.
    2. The typical way of laying out what people think about the sacred is by deploying symbols to encode it.
    3. Symbols characterize particular aspects of the sacred, and they form structures by relating to one another so as to provide insight into the structure of the sacred.
  B. Eliade explored symbols and catalogued them, showing how certain ones recur in many places and times.
    1. The sun represents the universal.
    2. The moon symbolizes death and rebirth.
    3. Water typically symbolizes chaos and formlessness.
    4. Sky-father and earth-mother symbols recur frequently. The growth of plants is seen as their union in sexual intercourse.

V. Mircea Eliade's idea of ritual and myth.
  A. Rituals serve to place human life into the context of the sacred through reenactment and symbolism.
  B. Rituals take place in sacred time.
    1. Their liturgies reiterate what the divine powers did in the distant *illud tempus*.
    2. Myths, then, are vitally important to rituals, as they tell the stories of the actions of the divinities at the time of creation.
    3. Myths give people an understanding of the progress of their own lives and activities by relating them to divine models.

VI. Mircea Eliade never proposed an ultimate definition of religion.
  A. He assumed that people could tell the sacred from the profane intuitively.
  B. His method was historical and comparative. The object was to describe *homo religiosus*, the universal religious person.
  C. He sidestepped the official theologies of religious bodies by focusing on the experience of the sacred rather than conceptualizations about it.

Suggested Reading:

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.*

Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Are there religious ideas and actions in your own life that do not fit neatly into the received teachings and practices of your religion? If so, where did they come from? What do they mean?

2. Many have noted the deep affinity between Eliade and Jung, who were good friends; Jung's Bollingen Foundation, in fact, keeps many of Eliade's books in print. Can you see the connection?

Lecture Twenty-One
The Women's Studies Perspective

Scope: As should be obvious, all of the thinkers we have examined so far have been male. Starting in the 1970s, writers such as Valerie Saiving and Rita Gross have critiqued the study of religion through the eyes of an all-male academy, and their analysis has had a profound effect on more recent scholarly approaches. Fundamentally, feminist scholars argue that such past, androcentric analyses have not been merely insulting or impolitic but bad scholarship. Field researchers, being mostly men, have largely been denied access to female informants, and so the information they have on the female experiences and practices of religion have been filtered through male interpretations. This has led theorists to take a male norm to be the human norm, and when gender differences are noted, the feminine becomes a deviant form of humanity. In this lecture, we will explore their criticisms and their recommendations for new styles of research and analysis.

Outline

I. Carol Tavris and Rita Gross provide an introduction to the feminist critique of religious studies.
- **A.** Carol Tavris, in her book, *The Mismeasure of Woman*, introduces the topic by analyzing self-help books aimed at women.
  - **1.** She sees these self-help books as deficient because they counsel women to emulate male virtues, and poorly at that.
  - **2.** She wonders what it would look like if self-help books were written for men that took women's characteristics as normative.
  - **3.** These exercises demonstrate that the only problem women face might be inappropriate judgment by male standards; in reality, there is nothing wrong with women at all.
  - **4.** This idea is the basic thrust of the feminist critique of religious studies.
- **B.** Rita Gross makes a distinction between a "women's studies" critique of religious studies and a "feminist" critique of religious studies.
  - **1.** The women's studies critique faults the practice of scholarship in religion for using inappropriate data and inadequate methods of analysis, which produces bad scholarship.
  - **2.** The feminist critique is actively engaged scholarship intended to advance a social or political agenda.
- **C.** This lecture will focus on the women's studies approach, since it has few political overtones and could be proposed as normal scholarly practice.

II. All of the theories presented so far have been those of European and American male scholars.
- **A.** They represent the dominant models for religious studies from its inception until the mid-20th century.
- **B.** Beginning in the 1970s, however, the rise of feminist thought began to have an impact on the methods and models of religious studies.

III. In 1976, Valerie Saiving published a now-classic article critiquing religious studies from a feminist angle.
- **A.** She argues that androcentrism is a male bias that pervades religious studies.
- **B.** She spells out the ways in which this bias works in the study of primitive cultures.
  - **1.** It was difficult for fieldworkers to gain access to native women for their point of view; thus, the informants were largely male, even when the questions were about women.
  - **2.** The ethnographers were prone to utilize androcentric models in formulating questions and interpreting answers.
  - **3.** The theorists of religious studies who depended upon these ethnographic reports were also prone to androcentric biases.
- **C.** This problem runs deeper and affects scholarship when evidence of a specifically female perspective is brought to attention.
  - **1.** Androcentrism prevents scholars from formulating appropriate questions.
  - **2.** Issues of concern to women are not regarded as serious questions and the data such questions might yield are considered nondata.
  - **3.** The male model is taken as the normative model. Anything specifically female is thus seen as deviant or subhuman.

D. Rita Gross expands on this problem by pointing to the process from which androcentrism arises.
  1. The male norm and the human norm are collapsed and considered to be the same thing.
  2. It follows that a description of male religious life will provide an adequate account of a community's religion.
  3. If research shows that women's religious lives differ from men's, then the female mode is interpreted as deviant.

E. A case example of this is Eliade's account of male and female initiations.
  1. Studies of an African tribe found that in male initiations, the "wilderness" is rigidly marked off from the settled world of the village.
  2. Women's initiations, however, identified girls with spirits of the wild and gave them a way to bring these spirits into their homes.

F. This is bad scholarship because it distorts both the female and the male phenomena.
  1. Women's perspectives end up being ignored or denigrated altogether.
  2. The ways in which the female members of the community understand the proceedings gets no attention.

G. Saiving's conclusion is that we need to go back out to the field and begin collecting data on women.

IV. Rita Gross has critiqued the scholarly community for ignoring these problems.

A. Many male scholars claim that the material they study is inherently androcentric, and so there is nothing they can do to make the material more politically palatable.
  1. Since we do not have the data on female members of religious communities, it is not certain that the material is in fact androcentric.
  2. If it were, this does not preclude scholars from being more critically aware of this fact.

B. Religion departments have dealt weakly with the problem by designating someone (always a female scholar) as the resident specialist in feminist issues.
  1. This designation absolves the rest of the department from engaging with the issues.
  2. This designation is a fundamental problem of scholarship in general and leads to distortions of both male and female data.

C. Her recommendation is to develop an awareness of sex-role differentiations in religion so that scholars are clear about both the male and female perspectives within both the religious and scholarly communities.
  1. All human cultures exhibit sex-role differentiation beyond what might be dictated by pure biology.
  2. There are thus always two norms for the human, one appropriate to each gender.
  3. To collapse these norms into one (the male) and treat the other as deviant will never be adequate.

V. The film *The Principles and Practice of Zen* offers an example of these issues.

A. The film captures Zen life in Japan.

B. The entire first half follows the life of a young novice monk inside a monastery.

C. The promise of the film's title is that we will be learning about Zen Buddhism as such, yet there is not a woman in sight.

D. The film focuses almost exclusively on a mid-winter retreat that puts the trainees through extreme hardship on the way to enlightenment. Its model is the warrior model.

E. Since the film omits women altogether, we cannot raise the question of whether their practice and teaching methods, if different from the men's, would be considered deviant.

F. We do not really know the Zen community because we do not see how the male Zen monks interact with women.

G. As a counterpoint, there is a female Zen master in America who rubs the shoulders of drowsy meditators rather than hitting them with a stick.

VI. Since sociological data consistently shows that women participate in religion at much higher levels than men, their perspective must be brought into account.

Suggested Reading:

Rita Gross, *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction.*

Valerie Saiving, "Androcentrism in Religious Studies" in *Journal of Religion 56* (1976), 177–97.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you see differences in the ways that men and woman perceive their relationship to the world and to their own religious communities? If so, how should scholars deal with these differences? If not, do you believe that there is only one human community that can be described in one way applicable to both genders?
2. Is the introduction of feminism into scholarship a purely political act, or is Saiving correct in saying that scholars, if they really want to do their jobs well, ought to attend to women's perspectives?

Lecture Twenty-Two
Theory Versus Reality—Case Studies

Scope: Theorists tend to speak in generalities, taking the data that comes from a variety of directions and filtering out the differences in order to arrive at universal rules or patterns. In this lecture, we will look at a few particular studies of such things as the Dogon in French colonial Sudan and the Koyukon of Canada and northwest Alaska in order to see religion in various local settings in more detail. This will give us an opportunity to assess for ourselves the usefulness (or otherwise) of broad-ranging, all-encompassing theories of religion, and lead us to ask about other ways of studying it in real-life situations.

Outline

I. Theory is a vital tool for understanding human behavior in all areas, including religion.
- **A.** As Auguste Comte pointed out, without theory there is no knowledge, since only theory relates disparate facts to one another.
- **B.** This point has also been affirmed by other scholars such as Donald Wiebe and Rodney Stark.

II. Nevertheless, theory can become overly neat, pat, and formalistic. In declaring one's allegiance to a particular theory, one can begin bending the facts to fit it.
- **A.** Jonathan Z. Smith pointed out how Mircea Eliade made this mistake.
  - **1.** In seeking to illustrate the importance of the *axis mundi* in orienting people, Eliade told the story of an Australian aboriginal tribe where the people lay down and died after their sacred pole broke.
  - **2.** Smith rechecked the ethnographic data and found that no such thing had ever happened.
- **B.** After Durkheim published *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, other sociologists and anthropologists critiqued it harshly.
  - **1.** The anthropologist Arnold van Gennep pointed out that the evidence was much more ambiguous than Durkheim had admitted and could be interpreted to show just the opposite of his theory with equal justification.
  - **2.** Another sociologist showed that the outlines of Durkheim's theory were in place long before he ever read the Australian ethnographies.

III. Reality and the exigencies of gathering data are always messier affairs than the clarity of theory would indicate.
- **A.** In this lecture and the next we will look at four specific case studies to see how theory relates to the actual data of religious people's lives.
- **B.** The two cases in this lecture will shed light on the practices of data collection.
- **C.** The two cases in the next lecture will show how well some of the theories we have seen serve in interpreting data.

IV. One fascinating case is that of the anthropologist Marcel Griaule (1898–1956) working among the Dogon in the French Sudan between 1935 and 1939.
- **A.** He arrived at the scene with a developed idea of how to conduct field research and gather facts—what James Clifford calls a French style of anthropology.
  - **1.** He was more than happy to make use of the French colonial power to induce cooperation.
  - **2.** He used a team of fieldworkers to get multiple perspectives on rituals and religious activities.
  - **3.** He used technology extensively.
  - **4.** He intimidated his informants so they would not lie to him.
- **B.** He unexpectedly gained acceptance among his informants despite these research methods and came to learn things on their terms as an initiate.
- **C.** He was introduced to a blind elder named Ogotemmêli in 1947, who taught him the deeper knowledge of the Dogon.
  - **1.** The result was the book *Conversations with Ogotemmêli*, which recounts Griaule's initiation into higher Dogon knowledge and a system of philosophy "worthy of Plato."
  - **2.** After this book, Clifford saw Griaule's anthropology become more exegetical; that is, he began to interpret Dogon culture more like a symbolic anthropologist.

D. His case shows us many things about the other factors that play into the actual practice of anthropology, including colonial power, natives who refuse to be passive subjects for research, and material limitations.

E. His case shows us the interactive nature of the relationship between ethnographer and informant.
  1. The ideal of the "fly on the wall" ethnographer is a fiction.
  2. The ethnographer is part of a story in which all characters interact.

F. His case teaches us that, no matter what one's theoretical commitments to a certain style of data collection are, one's actual data will be constrained by the people among whom one lives.

V. Another interesting case is that of the anthropologist Richard K. Nelson and his fieldwork among the Koyukon of Alaska and northwest Canada.

A. He does an excellent job of surveying previous ethnographies of the Koyukon and describing their world view.

B. He shows a good awareness of his own limitations as an outsider with his own world view and a limited grasp of the local language.

C. His account of the relation of the Koyukon to the natural world focuses on their dependence upon nature for subsistence and their need for good luck. This need for good luck leads to a profusion of taboos, some of which have to do with restricting the activities of women.

D. He starts at the point that Griaule took 10 years to reach: placing himself at the feet of his informants and letting them initiate him into their knowledge.

E. He then exegetes this knowledge for a Western audience unfamiliar with many of the basic presuppositions of Koyukon "ideology."
  1. Human beings and other creatures are related to one another since in the Distant Time all animals had human forms.
  2. The world is alive and watching at all times.
  3. The Koyukon belief system is always flowing and changing as people test taboos.
  4. They feel no need to enforce their taboo system consistently; instead, they allow individuals to choose their own level of observance.

F. If we take the feminist critique into account, we might wonder why Nelson never asks the women how they experience and interpret such taboos.

G. In some respects, Nelson is upfront about his own role as an ethnographer.
  1. He talks openly about some of the negative aspects of his year of fieldwork.
  2. He indicates that he has deliberately chosen *not* to write about the less-savory characters he encountered.

H. Nelson's basic humility and willingness to learn allowed for a good job of exegesis and usefully laid out a world view and way of relating to nature that differs from our usual mode in interesting ways.

VI. Fieldwork is not a process that can be completely controlled, no matter how committed one is to a certain theory of data collection.

Suggested Reading:

James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.*

Richard K. Nelson, *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think it is possible to become so attached to a particular theory or point of view that it becomes more important than the data of real life? Have you encountered examples of this?

2. How do you judge the usefulness, adequacy, or truth of a given theory?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Theory in Action—Case Studies

Scope: While the previous lecture highlighted the difficulties involved in relating neat theories to complex field data, this lecture will illustrate the usefulness of theoretical orientations in approaching religion by spotlighting two instances in which scholars did so with mixed success. First, we will look at the religion of African-American slaves in the antebellum south and utilize a Marxist analysis to test the adequacy of the latter for understanding the former. Second, we will examine the interpretation made by Rodney Stark in his retelling of the rise of Christianity in late Roman antiquity. The selections will give learners an opportunity to see what happens when social scientific theory is applied to actual religious data.

Outline

I. In 1978, Albert Raboteau published his fascinating story of religious attitudes among slaves in the antebellum American South.

- **A.** One section of particular interest examines the interplay between religious beliefs (specifically Christianity) and the masters' and slaves' perceptions of the institution of slavery.
  - **1.** This section gauges slaves' religion and their prospects for making an escape or rebelling.
  - **2.** This makes it particularly apt as a way of looking at the utility of Karl Marx's theory, since he held that religion was a tool for the oppression of the working class.
- **B.** Masters' attitudes evolved over time, from resistance to the Christianization of slaves to allowing missionaries to preach to them under tight constraints.
  - **1.** All through the antebellum period and right up to the end of the Civil War, many masters refused to even allow missionaries to try and convert their slaves.
  - **2.** Many masters worked very hard to prevent their slaves from becoming Christians, fearing the revolutionary power of slaves being able to appeal to a power higher than the master and unwilling to admit that Africans had souls.
  - **3.** Many masters, however, did allow their slaves to have a religious life and provided for preaching on their plantations.
  - **4.** The masters seem to have acted very much in the way Marx would have expected, trying to use religion to prop up the institution of slavery by keeping the slaves docile.
  - **5.** The masters wanted the slaves to accept a religious worldview that justified their being enslaved.
- **C.** Slaves' attitudes run the gamut from drawing strength and solidarity from Christianity, to seeing in it a call to escape, to indifference.
  - **1.** Some slaves used their religion as an otherworldly compensation. They do not seem to have done this out of a genuine acceptance of the white masters' world view but only when they saw the chance for escape.
  - **2.** Escaped slaves who had previously looked up to Jesus and the rewards of Heaven as compensators looked to the story of the Exodus as their model when they escaped.
  - **3.** While on the plantation, adopting the religious stance could itself be seen as an act of resistance. Trust in God gave many slaves the strength and moral position to stand up to their masters.
  - **4.** Some slaves also took their enslavement as a disproof of religion. They took Christianity to be the religion of the masters and could not fathom a good God who allowed them to be sold into slavery.
  - **5.** There were instances in which the religion of the slaves led to situations that transcended the entire rebellion/docility polarity altogether. There were also instances in which the shared religion led to genuine mutuality among masters and slaves.
- **D.** If we apply Marxism to the data, we find both a confirmation and disconfirmation of these views.
  - **1.** The masters indeed did just as Marx said, using religion as an ideology they hoped the slaves would adopt.
  - **2.** Slaves' attitudes were more complex than any version of Marxism could predict.
- **E.** Marxism proves only a marginally useful heuristic for understanding slave religion. It assumes that the oppressed are rather easily bamboozled by the religion foisted upon them.
- **F.** Stark and Bainbridge's rational choice theory provides more explanatory power. If religion is a general compensator and if people accept compensators only when the real thing is not available, then it is less

surprising that slaves accepted the otherworldly compensators of Christianity when escape was not possible, but took the chance to escape when it presented itself.

II. The early history of Christianity according to Rodney Stark's sociological theories.

A. The standard history of early Christianity tends to follow the account in the New Testament and recounts journeys of early propagators and the life of early church communities.

1. There is an emphasis on the establishment of churches in new cities, internecine disputes, and persecutions.

2. The standard approach simply accepts that Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire after the 4th century, and either does not ask why or merely assumes that the preaching of the doctrine was compelling enough to make strangers instantly convert.

B. Rodney Stark (b. 1934), a sociologist and proponent of rational choice theory, decided to apply sociological analysis to the spread of Christianity.

1. His question was: "How did a marginal Jewish messianic sect become the official religion of the Roman empire in a mere three centuries?

2. Using quantitative data, he learned that Christianity grew at a realistic 40 percent per decade.

3. He ascertained that Christianity spread among well-to-do urbanites, not peasants and slaves; this is consistent for what is, in his definition, a cult movement.

4. He applied well-tested sociological theorems to show, for example, that Christianity spread along preexisting social and familial networks.

C. Stark shows that the rational choice theory works to help us understand the rise of Christianity.

1. Roman paganism was failing the empire in serious and threatening ways.

2. Christianity clearly worked in ways that paganism did not.

a. The birth rate increased due to the high status of women.

b. Survival rates during plagues increased because Christians provided nursing.

c. Women raised their children as Christian because the wives, unlike their pagan husbands, cared more about their children's religious upbringing.

3. Christianity's collectively produced "goods" were attractive enough to convince people to pay the relatively high cost of joining.

D. Stark claims to avoid reductionism by asserting that doctrines and practices do matter; they constitute the very "goods" that religious "consumers" get.

E. Many contemporary church historians have found Stark's analysis useful and illuminating.

III. All these points offer an important lesson about theory.

A. Theories are tools that help us to interpret the data that we find in the religious beliefs and practices of real people and real communities.

B. If we dedicate ourselves to a particular theory to the exclusion of others, we will impoverish our ability to interpret.

C. Since theories are tools, then we should have a whole toolbox full of them so that we can use the appropriate one to answer the questions we seek.

D. Never use data to prove the theory; always use theory to interpret the data.

Suggested Reading:

Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South.*

Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think Stark's analysis of the rise of Christianity takes anything away from the religious claims of Christianity, or do you believe Stark is right in claiming not to detract from the importance of religious teachings?

2. Did any material on slave religion challenge any of your assumptions about religion and oppressed groups?

Lecture Twenty-Four
How Religion Uses Religious Studies

Scope: As should be clear, religious studies grew as an alternative to traditional theology; that is, as a nonreligious discourse about religion. Its own attitude toward religion varies from a simple bracketing out of religious questions as irrelevant, to an out-and-out hostility to religion (especially in Hume, Marx, and Freud). As time went on, however, religious groups themselves began to find uses for the methods and theories of religious studies. For example, Peter Berger's idea of the "religious marketplace" has been taken seriously by some churches, so that they perform sociological surveys and collect demographic data before committing resources to the building of a new church. Many theologians consult cultural data in order to determine what questions their theology needs to address. Even theories as inimical to religion as Marxism have appeared in religious guise as Liberation Theology. This last lecture will explore the always-tentative reunion of theology and religious studies in contemporary life.

Outline

I. A summary of previous lectures.

- **A.** We began by looking at the rise of religious studies as it broke away from theology and tried to fashion an overarching vision of religion for a fractured Europe.
- **B.** Under the rationalism of the European Enlightenment, religious studies developed its own theories of religion that made no appeals to theological concerns or the supernatural.
- **C.** We explored the various disciplinary approaches to religious studies.
  - **1.** The sociological approach.
  - **2.** The psychological approach.
  - **3.** The anthropological approach.
  - **4.** The phenomenological approach.
  - **5.** The women's studies approach.
- **D.** Case studies put some of these theories to the test to help us understand religious data from the lives of real people. In many cases, there was a deficiency to these theories.

II. What are all these theories good for? Can they still be applied today? Yes they can, provided we make two adjustments:

- **A.** We take away from these theories their explanatory function.
- **B.** We take away from these theories their exclusivity.

III. These theories (except Geertz's) have been explanatory in nature.

- **A.** They were presented as science, giving us explanations of the origin of the phenomenon and seeking to understand the laws by which it behaved.
- **B.** In 1870, Max Muller gave an address at the Royal Institute of London in which he called for a "science of religion."
  - **1.** All our theorists thought they were doing just that.
  - **2.** Their theories were: empirical, rational, and revisable as new evidence came in, making no appeal to supernatural factors at work in religion.
- **C.** Many modern commentators have stated that the theories we have seen are anything but scientific.
  - **1.** Charles Elder points out that when Freud draws an analogy between religious behavior and obsessive neurotic behavior, he thinks this explains religion.
  - **2.** An analogy, however, is not a theory.
- **D.** Clifford Geertz provides a clue for an alternative when he calls for the interpretation of religion rather than its explanation.
  - **1.** Someone wanting to pose a scientific explanation of *Alice in Wonderland* would be rather odd. Someone who wants to interpret the book in order to help us better understand it would be on the right track.
  - **2.** Geertz proposes what many scholars of religion do nowadays: hermeneutics.

E. While there are many specifically hermeneutic theories, we do not need to throw out the theories we have been studying and adopt new, interpretive ones; instead, we can adapt these theories in a hermeneutic mode.

1. This is what Elder proposes to do with Freud's theory: Saying religious behavior is analogous to obsessive behavior is not a scientific explanation, but it does give us a lens through which to look at religion.

2. Wittgenstein's statement, "Everyone is really going to Paris," as a heuristic model, changes the way one looks at people in motion.

3. If, as symbolic anthropology asserts, religion is a system of significations by which people create and communicate meaning, then it is more appropriate to *interpret* it and not try to *explain* it.

IV. Another feature of these theories that we should expunge is their tendency to exclusivity.

A. If theories are heuristic devices that shine light on a subject from a distinct angle, then it follows that the more theories we have, the more aspects of the subject will become apparent.

B. Following Durkheim, if religious symbols are the way societies represent themselves to themselves, then perhaps we might understand intra-Christian debates about the nature of God as discussions about the values the people themselves ought to embody.

C. Following Marx, religious activities do involve economic exchanges and endorse certain systems of exchange and distribution; thus, it is possible to spot injustice in a religion through Marxist analysis, even without accepting Marxist explanations as all encompassing.

D. Following Freud, there are cases of religious people going through Freudian analysis who find their religion more balanced in the end, even though Freud would have liked for them to abandon it altogether.

V. Whatever individuals think of these theories, religious organizations themselves now regularly make use of them.

A. At the 2004 convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, a marketing consultant mapped out demographic shifts within the diocese and offered advice on where to situate new parishes.

B. The Catholic Church regularly engages social scientists to conduct surveys of its members to see how to serve them better and keep up with their changing attitudes.

C. Many religious groups now require psychological or psychiatric evaluations of prospective clergy.

D. All religious groups, having limited resources, use whatever means they can deploy to find rational ways to spend them.

E. Somewhat controversially, religious thinkers have used these theories to help move their theologies forward. Liberation theologians bring the Marxist economic critique of religion and the idea of class struggle into their Christian theologies in order to help Christians avoid being oppressors.

F. Social scientific theories of religion, motivated at the outset by a masked hostility to religion and predicting its imminent demise, now play an active role in the affairs of religion.

1. Theology has shifted from a "top-down" view of pristine truth to which human beings must conform to a "bottom-up" approach wherein theology must pay attention to human phenomena in order to provide answers to questions people are asking.

2. The "top-down" approach runs the danger of irrelevance.

Suggested Reading:

Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Have your own views of religion (your own religion or in general) changed in any way as a result of learning about these theories? Why, and in what ways? If not, why not?

2. Does a three-part analysis of the human situation (psychological, cultural, and sociological) seem complete to you? If not, what dimensions might be missing?

Biographical Notes

Berger, Peter (b. 1929). A native of Austria, Peter Berger immigrated to the United States shortly after World War II, attending Wagner College and earning a Ph.D. in sociology from the New School for Social Research in 1952. He quickly established himself as a proponent of the "sociology of knowledge," which held that society defines and organizes reality, upon which individuals appropriate this reality into their own subjective consciousness as "the way things are." Religion should be seen as one of the formations in this overarching reality, called the *nomos*. He was also an early proponent of secularization theory, the view that in the modern world, religion was bound to die out (he later recanted this view). Despite these views, propagated mainly in the now-classic book, *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger claims never to have been hostile to religion (a defense he put forth in another book called *A Rumor of Angels*), and has served on theological faculties as well as sociology departments.

Bodin, Jean (1530–96). Bodin is sometimes considered the father of political science on the strength of his *magnum opus*, *The Six Books of the Commonwealth* (*Les Six livres de la République*, 1576). A jurist, historian, philosopher both natural and political, and free thinker in religion, much of his life and thought is diluted in legend. As a sometime diplomat, he was disturbed by the Wars of Religion taking place in France between the Huguenots and the established Catholic Church, and sought ways to ameliorate the conflict. As a way of addressing the problems of religious conflict, he wrote the *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime* (*Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*), which, due to its unorthodox approach to questions of religion, circulated in manuscript form until finally published in the 19th century. This work seems to indicate that his own religion came to resemble Judaism more than anything else by the end of his life, and for this work he has generally been condemned by Catholic authorities.

Comte, Auguste (1798–1857). Isadore Auguste Marie François Comte was born during the last years of the French Revolution, and its chaotic aftermath was evident to him as he grew up. He studied with the intellectual luminaries of France at that time, but surpassed his teachers. He delved deeply into the study of history, hoping to gain insights that might address the turmoil surrounding the collapse of the French Republic and the rise of Napoleon. Agreeing that the old religion of priests and church dogmatics had to go, he also realized that religion served to bind society together as well, and so in the latter part of his life, he worked to establish a new kind of church whose object of worship would be humankind itself in its apotheosis as the Great Being.

Durkheim, Émile (1858–1917). Émile Durkheim was the son of a rabbi from a small town near Strasbourg, France, though he himself was decidedly unreligious. He studied history and philosophy in school, and was such an outstanding young scholar that he won posts in prestigious institutions from the very start of his academic career, culminating with an appointment to the University of Paris in his mid-forties. He became convinced early in his training that the social group was more than just a collection of interacting individuals, but formed a reality in its own right that produced effects beyond what could be explained simply by looking at individuals. Thus, he came to believe that sociology was a foundational discipline, and he established an academic journal, gathered disciples, and wrote a basic textbook on research methods to help get it off the ground. He was active in speaking for the cause of France during World War I, and when his only son died in battle, he suffered a collapse and died of a stroke just over a year later.

Eliade, Mircea (1907–86). Born in Bucharest, Romania, Mircea Eliade enjoyed one of the most colorful lives of any scholar. A born writer, Eliade celebrated the publication of his 100th journal article by the time he was 18 years old. Going to India on a fellowship at the age of 21, he studied Indian religion and yoga in Calcutta. Returning to Romania, he became enmeshed in nationalist politics. The extent to which he participated in right-wing politics remains disputed; he always claimed he was a marginal character in the sometimes violent Iron Guards. With the rise of Communism, he migrated to the West, and took a position as a professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago, where he remained until his death.

Fontenelle, Bernard (1657–1757). A native of Rouen, France, Bernard Bovier de Fontenelle was supposed to have followed his father into the legal profession, and trained for this at the local Jesuit College. Soon after graduating, however, he decided to follow his literary passions, achieving a forgettable mediocrity in poetry and drama before finding his medium in works on religion and cosmology. For 43 years he served as secretary of the Paris Academy of Sciences, a position in which he was able to keep up with all the latest research. His nonfiction works, including *A History of Oracles* (1686) and *The Origin of Fables* (1724), were written in a novelistic and highly accessible and humorous prose that made them very popular, and Voltaire considered him one of the founders of the European Enlightenment. He died less than a month before his 100th birthday.

Frazer, James George (1854–1941). J. G. Frazer was born on New Year's Day, 1854, in Glasgow, Scotland, in a Protestant family, though he himself rejected religion early in life. He was already a prize-winning student of Greek and Latin before going to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he eventually became a fellow. He turned from classics to the new field of anthropology after reading the work of E. B. Tylor and making the acquaintance of W. Robertson Smith (1846–1894); both these men led him to see the possibilities of applying a comparative method in the study of humanity. Frazer is mostly known for his massive, multivolume work *The Golden Bough*, but he wrote numerous other books on anthropology and comparative religion, including *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) and *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion* (1933–36). Living the comfortable life of a Cambridge don, he never traveled, except briefly in Europe, and conducted his research entirely by reading. He died in 1941, leaving no children.

Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939). Freud was born in 1856 in the Moravian town of Freiberg, the first child of his father's third marriage. His family moved to Vienna, Austria, when he was four, and he excelled at school. In college he majored in medicine, specializing in neurology and physiology. Later mentors impressed on him the power of nonphysical interventions (such as hypnosis) to cure mental illnesses and Freud became obsessed with psychology. Noting that he could help some of his patients simply by talking to them, he founded the field of psychoanalysis and spent the remainder of his life promoting it, organizing professional associations and conferences on it, publishing journals, and training disciples. After an eminent (and controversial) career in Vienna, Freud's life was disrupted by the Nazi invasion of 1938. Although an atheist, Freud's family was Jewish and came under suspicion, and so he reluctantly paid the Nazi extortions and immigrated to London, where he died of cancer 15 months later.

Geertz, Clifford (1926–2006). Born in San Francisco in 1926, Clifford Geertz attended Antioch College and majored in philosophy, later going to Harvard for graduate studies in anthropology. He completed two extended periods of fieldwork in Indonesia (Java first, then Bali) during and after his graduate training, then taught at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Chicago. In 1970 he became the only anthropologist ever to gain an appointment at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He did later fieldwork in Morocco. A provocative and prolific author who gave philosophical depth to the more mundane details of anthropological reportage, he was one of the seminal thinkers who criticized the functionalist approach and used instead the analytical methods of symbolic anthropology.

Herbert of Cherbury, Edward (1583–1648). Born into a noble Welsh family and older brother of the well-known religious poet George Herbert, Edward Herbert graduated from Oxford in 1595, married in 1599, and remained in Oxford until 1608, when he moved to London. For many years thereafter, he moved around the continent working sometimes as a diplomat and sometimes as a soldier of fortune. He was appointed ambassador to Paris in 1619, and made Baron Herbert of Cherbury after his recall in 1624. A writer and poet in his own right, he sought the company of scholars when not warring or dueling, and his book *De Veritatis* (1624) gained the approbation of the intelligentsia in England. The theory presented in this book on the origin of religion and the "five common notions" gained currency for a time, and on this account he has been considered the father of Deism, a kind of theistic religion that strips religious belief down to its most spare and rational terms. He died late in the summer of 1648, and many of his literary works, as well as his autobiography, were published after this time.

Hume, David (1711–76). Born in Edinburgh, Scotland as David Home (he changed it to "Hume" later because Englishmen had trouble pronouncing "Home" in the Scottish manner), Hume was a child prodigy. While his interests were in philosophy, he made his mark and his fortune as a historian; his six-volume *History of Great Britain* was a bestseller. While he sought an academic post, his atheism was always an impediment (he was even tried for heresy in an ecclesiastical court), and so he made a living as an author, librarian, tutor, and in other pursuits. Later in his life his company was cultivated by many literati and intellectuals, but his real fame did not take off until after Immanuel Kant declared Hume's philosophical works to have been the springboard from which his own innovations arose.

James, William (1842–1910). William James was born into a prominent New England family in 1842 (his brother was the novelist Henry James). As a student at Harvard, he participated in expeditions to the Amazon led by Louis Agassiz. After graduating from medical school in 1869, he went to work for Harvard in 1873, teaching anatomy and physiology, but switched two years later to teaching psychology. He was also one of the originators (along with C.S. Peirce) of the philosophical school known as Pragmatism, which emphasized the effects that ideas have in producing actions in the world and rejected the notion that ideas have any intrinsic value in and of themselves. This led James to postulate that religion is interesting not as a set of propositions about human life and the world to be accepted

intellectually as true but as an active choice that people make to believe, a choice that has consequences in the subsequent conduct of their lives.

Jung, Carl Gustav (1875–1961). A native of Switzerland, Jung was born in 1875, and was not only very introverted and isolated as a child, but also imagined that he had two separate selves, whom he called Person 1 and Person 2. He attended medical school at Basel, and a few years after graduation married Emma Rauschenbach, a wealthy heiress who ensured his future prosperity. He associated with Sigmund Freud in 1906 and became one of his chief protégés, but the two men broke around 1913 as Jung's theories diverged from Freud's, mainly in their views of the unconscious, sexuality, and religion. Jung belonged to various German medical and psychoanalytical societies during World War II, and this has raised some questions about his cooperation with the Nazi party, but he denied any sympathy with Nazism and claimed he was trying to keep psychoanalysis alive at a time when it was perceived as a "Jewish" science. He attained greater fame between the wars, and died a celebrity in 1961.

Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804). Immanuel Kant spent his entire 80 years in and around his home town of Koenigsburg, Prussia, the son of a craftsman of Lutheran Pietist sentiments. By 1770, he was already an established professor of philosophy in a prestigious post and had already published many notable books when David Hume's criticism of the rationalist account of causality "awakened him from his dogmatic slumber" and set him searching for a new synthesis. As a result, he published nothing for the next 11 years. When he broke his silence in 1781 with the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the reading public was lukewarm–prior to his retreat he had been a lively and popular author, but this massive work groaned under its pedantic style and overflow of neologisms. Nevertheless, it finally gained, and retains, recognition as one of the most original and groundbreaking works in philosophy, and set the tone for most of what followed in Western thought. Kant never married, and later generations have repeated many spurious stories of his personal eccentricities, most of which are false or exaggerated.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (b. 1908). A native of Belgium, Claude Lévi-Strauss was the son of an artist. Taking a degree in law, with a minor in philosophy, he went to Brazil in 1934 as a professor of sociology at the University of São Paulo. During his three years there, he made some excursions into the interior of Brazil and conducted fieldwork among the tribes along the Amazon. Resigning his post, he then spent two years (1938–39) going deep into the heartland of Brazil in search of tribes who had experienced no prior contact with outsiders. For a while after that he resided in the United States, teaching at the New School for Social Research and working as the French cultural attaché. He returned to France in 1950 and worked at the University of Paris and, later, the Collège de France. He did brief subsequent fieldwork in Pakistan, and held positions in international sociological organizations. He became a member of the French Academy in 1973.

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1884–1942). Malinowski was born into an aristocratic Polish family in Cracow in 1884, and he received his Ph.D. in Philosophy, Physics, and Mathematics from the University of Cracow in 1908. Later, he went to the London School of Economics, where he earned another Ph.D. in science in 1916. It was there that he read Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and developed an interest in anthropology. Though Frazer had conducted his studies entirely from his own office and relied on field reports, Malinowski decided to take a new tack, going into the field himself so that he could gather reliable information and could study a single local culture intensively. So from 1915 to 1918 he resided among the Trobriand Islanders in New Guinea, and wrote several influential books based on his field notes. Despite reports of a break with Frazer over method, the two men remained friendly, Frazer contributing a preface to one of Malinowski's books and Malinowski writing a glowing obituary for Frazer upon the latter's death in 1941. Malinowski, along with A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, is credited with founding the anthropological school known as functionalism.

Marx, Karl (1818–83). Born in Trier, Prussia, the son of a Jewish lawyer, Karl Marx would later reject all religion and write against Judaism in particular, all the while exhibiting throughout his life the typical Jewish patterns of thought and action. He majored in philosophy at university, at first following the dominance of Hegelian thought, but later turning it inside-out to assert that matter, not spirit, is primary, and developing a materialistic philosophy on that basis. Seeing the plight of the working classes in the slums that crowded the cities of Europe in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, he sought to find a way of viewing history that would offer them hope for a better future where they would not be exploited and dehumanized. His writings were seen as revolutionary by unfriendly government and industrial interests, and he moved frequently until he settled in London for the last 30 years of his life. A dedicated intellectual, he lived in constant poverty until close to the end of his life, when an inheritance finally gave some security to him and his family.

Otto, Rudolf (1869–1937). A native of Hanover, Germany, Otto studied theology at Erlangen and Goettingen. He finished his doctoral work with two dissertations, one on Martin Luther and one on Immanuel Kant, an interesting juxtaposition of two thinkers whose experience and thought he synthesized in the work for which he is best known, *The Idea of the Holy* (first German edition 1917). In it, he argued in Kantian fashion that an impressive religious experience such as Luther's could be understood as an encounter with "the holy," or "the numinous," something really existent that produces a response of awe and fascination. He went on to study in Japan, and intended to write a comprehensive study of the world's religions, but most of his work was in Protestant theology.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1881–1955). Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown was a native of Birmingham, England, and spent much time traveling during his early academic career. He had postings in Tonga and Cape Town, Chicago and Sydney, Alexandria and São Paulo; and did fieldwork among the Andaman islanders and the aboriginal tribes of Australia. Deeply influenced by the sociological theories of Émile Durkheim, he sought to bring theoretical rigor to the enterprise of field research, and is credited as having founded the functionalist school of anthropology along with Bronislaw Malinowski, though the two men were quite different in their temperament and approaches. His peripatetic life settled when he returned to England in 1937 to accept an appointment at Oxford, where he finished his career having trained some of the most influential anthropologists of the next generation.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1857–1913). Saussure was a Swiss linguist who had a simple idea: that the meaning of words derives from their relation to other words and an internal mental division of sense data into concepts, and not from reference to items in the real world. These concepts are arranged into structured relationships, which give rise to language. From this proposition arose an entire new strain of thinking, not only in linguistics, but also in philosophy, anthropology, and sociology. Although he was an influential scholar and teacher who held posts in Paris and Geneva, and had many publications that helped shape modern linguistics, his best-known and most influential book is the posthumous *Course in General Linguistics*, a reconstruction of lecture notes published by his students.

Stark, Rodney (b. 1934). Rodney Stark grew up in Jamestown, North Dakota, and served a while in the United States Army before earning his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. Since that time, he has held positions at Berkeley, the University of Washington, and, since 2004, Baylor University. He is noted as one of the most prominent exponents of "rational actor" or "rational choice" theory in religion, a position holding that people make decisions about their religious lives and beliefs on rational (specifically, goal-oriented) bases. A prolific writer, he has authored more than 25 books and around 150 articles.

Tylor, Edward Burnett (1832–1917). Tylor was the son of a liberal Quaker family from London that operated a brass foundry. At age 16, Edward was taken out of school to work in the family business, However, after seven years behind a desk, health problems forced him to resign and his family allowed him some money to travel, hoping a change of climate would help him. He set out in 1855, and after some leisurely journeys he ended up in Mexico, where he began taking notes on local native culture. This sparked an interest in primitive cultures, and upon his return, he wrote up his notes into a book, *Researches into the Early Rise of Mankind* (1865). On the basis of his writings, he was given an appointment at Oxford despite the fact that his formal education had been cut off when he was 16 years old. Honors followed thereafter, and he became the first professor of anthropology in England, a member of the Royal Society, and a knight. His best known publication is the two-volume *Primitive Culture*, in which he set forth his theory of early religion.

Vico, Giambattista (1668–1744). Giovanni Battista Vico was a professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples, though his own intellectual interests were much broader and included philology, philosophy, and classics. He was not well-known in his own day; J. S. Preus believes this is because his ideas were simultaneously ahead of and behind his times. His major work was the *Scienza Nuova*, which he first published in 1725 and later in an expanded edition in 1730, and finally in a third edition in 1744, the year of his death (finally published in 1928). In this book, he postulated that religion, as a human phenomenon, can be studied scientifically with better success than nature, since religion is a human invention and we can know best that which we ourselves have created.

Weber, Max (1864–1920). The son of a prominent lawyer and heiress mother, Max Weber grew up not only intellectually precocious but socially well-connected. After training in history, philosophy, law, and economics in university, he began a fast-track career in academics. Underneath, however, there were some apparent psychological problems: After marrying, he and his new wife apparently agreed to a completely nonphysical relationship, and after a dispute with his father followed by the latter's death before any opportunity for reconciliation, Weber fell into a depression that crippled his career and caused him to withdraw from all academic posts for many years. Nevertheless, his writing and editing activities were prolific, insightful, and highly influential. Two years after regaining enough composure to accept a new academic post at the University of Vienna, Weber contracted pneumonia and died in 1920.

Bibliography

Essential:

Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1967. Peter Berger's classic study of religion as a social phenomenon from the "sociology of knowledge" point of view. In it, Berger explores how religion is one facet of the process by which human beings build a habitable "world" (or *nomos*) for themselves from the chaos of sense experience, how they maintain and repair that world, and how the world attains a feeling of objective reality, all through social processes.

Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Oxford, 2001. The classic statement of Durkheim's theory that the objects of religious rituals are symbols whereby society represents itself to itself.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Willard Trask, trans. Orlando: Harcourt, 1959. This is one of Eliade's major statements of his theory of religion as based in an experience of the sacred. Written for a general readership, it uses accessible language and many illustrations to set forth his ideas.

Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough*. New York: Touchstone, 1995. During his lifetime, Frazer expanded his *magnum opus* several times until it swelled to a whopping 12 volumes. In 1922 he edited it down to two volumes and close to 900 pages in order to make it accessible. This is a reprint of that final, popular edition. While the heft may seem forbidding, Frazer's writing style is lively and it moves along briskly. Please note: The full text of Frazer's work is available on the Internet.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion*. James Strachey, trans. New York: Norton, 1989. A very brief book and written in a conversational style, this is Sigmund Freud's most influential statement of his theory of religion as a neurosis directed toward an illusion.

———. *Totem and Taboo*. Routledge, 2001. Freud, like many scholars of his day, was fascinated by the ethnographic reports coming in from Australia and elsewhere regarding the worship of clan totems. In this book, he presents a psychological analysis of these practices.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New ed. New York: Basic Books, 2000. Originally issued in 1973, this book contains a series of essays in which Geertz lays out his basic approaches to culture, religion, and ideology. It includes both an essay on his method of "thick description" and the now-classic "Religion as a Cultural System."

Gross, Rita. *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996. A good, basic introduction to the history and content of the feminist critique of religious studies and its contributions to the discipline's methodology.

Hume, David. *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion.* New York: Oxford, 1999. This single volume contains two of Hume's studies on religion, the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and the *Natural History of Religion*, along with his own autobiographical sketch and notes on the texts.

James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. The source for William James' pragmatic-phenomenological classification of religious experiences and the distinction between healthy and unhealthy religion. The entire text of this book, as well as his famous essay, "The Will to Believe," are available on the Internet.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Psychology and Religion*. Reprint ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960. A transcript of the Terry Lectures delivered at Yale in 1938, this book uses a case-study of dream analysis to lay out Jung's basic ideas on religion.

Leach, Edmund. *Claude Lévi-Strauss*. Reprint ed. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1989. A good, concise, readable, and somewhat tongue-in-cheek introduction to the thoughts of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Given the inaccessibility of Lévi-Strauss's original work, it is better to start with this book.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*. Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1992. While Malinowski's other books such as *Argonauts of the Pacific* might be better known among anthropologists, this is his main statement on the nature of magic from a functionalist perspective.

Marx, Karl. *The Portable Marx*. New York: Penguin, 1983. Although Marx did not write very much specifically on religion, this anthology contains the most essential writings, including "Theses on Feuerbach" and "Introduction to a Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Right," whence comes his famous dictum that religion is "the opiate of the people."

Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. John W. Harvey, trans. New York: Oxford, 1958. The standard English translation of Otto's classic *Das Heilige*, in which he sets forth his theory that religion is founded on a particular

kind of experience as the human person encounters the holy. The holy is something completely outside the ordinary world and evokes a unique response of both awe and attraction; it is the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

Pals, Daniel. *Eight Theories of Religion*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford, 2006. Pals provides an excellent survey of eight theoretical perspectives on religion as proposed by nine different thinkers since the late 19th century: E. B. Tylor, J. G. Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Mircea Eliade, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and Clifford Geertz. Each chapter presents the basic outline of the theory, followed by analysis and critique.

Preus, J. Samuel. *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud*. New Haven: Yale, 1987. A classic study of the rise of religious studies beginning with its break from theology in the 16th century to the present. Preus' thesis is that religious studies originated and subsisted for much of its early history as a rejection of theology and conventional religious thought, and for this early period took as its task the "explanation" of religion's origin and continuing appeal.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Roy Harris, trans. Peru, IL: Open Court Press, 1983. This book, which originated in a compilation of lecture notes compiled by students of Saussure's after his death, became a classic that fundamentally altered the way people thought about language and the way the human mind relates to the world. It provided the direct foundation for symbolic anthropology, but has also influenced sociological, psychological, and phenomenological thought about religion and culture as well.

Smith, Jonathan Z. "Religion, Religions, Religious" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Mark C. Taylor, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 269–84. A good, brief overview of the history of the word "religion" in Western usage.

Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. *A Theory of Religion*. Reprint ed. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. This is the original book in which Stark and Bainbridge presented the fully-developed statement of their rational choice theory of religion. This is a reproduction of the original 1987 edition, which was published by a German firm that put no effort into book design or proofreading, and so it looks very bad, but the prose is crystal clear and the presentation thorough and systematic. One will never be able to look at religion the same way again after reading it.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. A primary resource for rational choice theory in the sociology of religion. The first part of the book critiques many aspects of older sociological theories of religion before presenting the authors' alternative in the second part.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001. This was Weber's seminal contribution to the study of the sociology of religion. Although his primary subject was economics, he insightfully tied the rise of capitalism to the appearance of Protestantism and its new view of human existence and labor value. It provided the foundation for his later works on religion and economics in other parts of the world and general theories on the sociology of religion. Please note: The full text of this book is available on the Internet.

Supplementary:

Alles, Gregory D. "Toward a Genealogy of the Holy: Rudolf Otto and the Apologetics of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69/2 (June 2001), 323–41. A concise and accessible introduction to Rudolf Otto's thought which gives its outlines and its sources in Otto's life and education.

Baird, Robert D. *Category Formation and the History of Religions*. 2nd ed. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996. Of interest to viewers of this course will be the first chapter in which Baird lays out the typology of definitions that undergirds the first lecture.

Berger, Peter L. *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*. New York: Anchor Books, 1970. While this slim book largely expands on Berger's theories as presented in *The Sacred Canopy*, it also contains his defense against charges of undermining religion by subjecting it to sociological analysis.

Boff, Leonardo. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987. An introduction to Liberation Theology by one of its founders. This book includes a historical overview of this movement, and an accessible explication of its basic concepts and applications.

Boon, James A. *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions and Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Be warned: This is a very difficult and dense book to read, but if you have the patience to work through it, you will find it brimming with brilliant insights about almost every thinker considered in this course and others besides. Boon is especially good at placing

these figures in juxtaposition and conversation with each other, and then adding his own critical thoughts about the best way to read each of them so as to gain the greatest benefit from them. Out of print, but worth the hunt.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988. A fascinating anthology of articles on approaches to culture and the problems they engender. This book includes a good account of the experience of anthropologist Marcel Griaule among the Dogon in the French Sudan.

Copleston, Frederick Charles. *History of Philosophy, Volume VI: Wolff to Kant*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1960. A volume in Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, and perhaps a bit dated, but still the chapters in this volume on Kant represent one of the best and most lucid short introductions to the philosophy of this very difficult thinker.

Elder, Charles R. "The Freudian Critique of Religion: Remarks on its Meaning and Conditions." *Journal of Religion* 75/3 (July 1995), 347–70. This article does a very good job of untangling the three distinct forms of argumentation that Freud deploys in his *Future of an Illusion*.

Guyer, Paul, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. This is a collection of essays by noted Kant scholars, each of which highlights some particular aspect of Kant's thought. Of particular interest is chapter 13, on Kant's "rational theology" and his theory of religion.

Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Portable Jung*. Joseph Campbell, ed. New York: Viking-Penguin, 1971. A good selection of works by Jung designed to introduce the reader to his major ideas: the collective unconscious, the structure of the psyche, archetypes, and others.

Lambek, Michael, ed. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. An anthology of several dozen seminal essays on religion by almost all of the most eminent anthropologists of the 20th century. Each essay is accompanied by a helpful introduction that contextualizes it and clarifies its main themes.

Manuel, Frank E. *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*. New York: Atheneum, 1967. Out of print, but if you can obtain this from your library, it is a useful survey of the 18th-century philosophers' responses to and reinterpretation of traditional religion.

———. *The Prophets of Paris: Turgot, Condorcet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Comte*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962. This book, though now out of print, is an excellent source for the thought of Auguste Comte, an otherwise inaccessible and hard-to-read figure. The other philosophers whose names appear in the subtitle are also worth knowing, as they provide the inspiration and intellectual context for several other thinkers considered in this course.

Nelson, Richard K. *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. A very readable ethnography of the Koyukan Athabascan natives who live along the border of Alaska and northwest Canada. The chapter entitled "The Watchful World" provides a vivid description of an animist view of nature.

Proudfoot, Wayne, ed. *William James and a Science of Religions: Reexperiencing the Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. A collection of modern academic essays that reexamine William James's psychological theories of religion from both psychological and philosophical angles. Most of the essays are accessible to the general reader.

Raboteau, Albert. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. Updated ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. A classic study of the religious life of slaves in the American South prior to the Civil War, Raboteau draws on a wealth of recorded oral histories, memoirs (both slave and white), newspaper accounts, and histories to draw a vivid, firsthand account. This book demonstrates the complexity of religious attitudes among slaves at this time.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1965. While a few chapters of this book deal with religion (taboo, totemism, and the function of religion generally), this is primarily the vehicle for Radcliffe-Brown's method of structural functionalism. It even has two chapters on the function of jokes.

Saiving, Valerie. "Androcentrism in Religious Studies" in *Journal of Religion* 56 (1976), 177–97. A widely noticed and much-cited early criticism of "androcentrism" in religious studies. Saiving builds a strong case that this perspective, which takes the male as the norm for humanity in general, thus treating the female as a deviation from the norm, leads to bad scholarship by distorting the entire scholarly process from initial data collection to final interpretations.

Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997. A classic

study that applies sociological theories and methods to understand the rapid rise and acceptance of Christianity in the late Roman empire. A good example of "rational choice theory" in action.

Tavris, Carol. *The Mismeasure of Woman: Why Women Are Not the Better Sex, the Inferior Sex, or the Opposite Sex*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992. A good, basic, and accessible study of social psychological attitudes toward women in Western culture. It provides theoretical and empirical criticism of the idea that men's qualities and virtues represent the norm for all humanity, making women both deviant and deficient. The opening, which imagines what kind of self-help books might appear on the market for men if the situation were reversed, is amusing and eye-opening.

Taylor, Mark C., ed. *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. A collection of essays that focus on individual terms used by scholars in religious studies, arranged alphabetically from "belief" to "writing." Especially helpful is Jonathan Z. Smith's chapter, "Religion, Religions, Religious."

Helpful Websites:

The Wabash Center Internet Guide. This site is run by the Wabash Center, a unit of Wabash College dedicated to teaching and learning in religious studies. The page whose URL is previously listed is devoted to providing up-to-date links on a variety of topics related to religious studies. Going to the home page (www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu) will also serve to introduce the interested browser to the full range of the Wabash Center's offerings. www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/guide_headings.aspx

Anthropological Theories. A website prepared by the Anthropology Department at the University of Alabama to assist students in learning about anthropological theories in a variety of subjects. www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/436/anthros.htm

Good Site for Sociologists on the Internet. A British website that provides helpful pointers in tracking down information on sociology. www.le.ac.uk/education/centres/ATSS/sites.html

Internet Resources for Religious Studies. A webpage maintained by the religion department at Nazareth College that arranges helpful web links topically by religious tradition (e.g., Buddhism, Sikhism, etc.) and disciplinary approach (e.g., anthropology and sociology of religion, archeology, etc.). www.naz.edu/dept/religious_studies/intres.html

